

# EXPAT LIFE

## IN THAILAND

Aug / Sep 2019

250B

lifestyle . travel . education . nutrition . health . tourism . retirement . relationships

The Indian,  
Israeli and  
Spanish  
Ambassadors  
on record

Four Thai  
prodigies

Make-A-Wish  
Thailand

Havana  
by bicycle

The pungency  
of ginger

Madame Olga  
Shumylo-Tapiola  
the new President of  
SHOM

Solar  
Impulse  
round the  
world

The Kutch chronicles  
On the move again  
Cocoa: an elixir of life

ENGAGE AND CONNECT:



Web: [www.expatlifethailand.com](http://www.expatlifethailand.com)



[expatlifethailand](https://www.facebook.com/expatlifethailand)



Email: [subscribe@elbkk.com](mailto:subscribe@elbkk.com)



Instagram: [@expatlife\\_th](https://www.instagram.com/expatlife_th)



Twitter: [@ExpatLifeThai](https://twitter.com/ExpatLifeThai)





## THAI POLO & EQUESTRIAN CLUB

*Pattaya Thailand*



## Thai Polo & Equestrian Club

Polo took off in Thailand in the late 1990s, when polo enthusiasts led by Harald Link, President of the Thailand Equestrian Federation (TEF), set about revitalising the game by creating a world-class polo club in the beach resort of Pattaya, just less than 150km from Bangkok. Thai Polo & Equestrian Club opened in 2003, an outstanding facility that has made Thailand an international centre for polo and equestrian activities in East Asia. The Thai Polo & Equestrian Club has fun activities for the whole family yet is serious enough to be internationally recognised and registered with the The Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI). As a President of the Thailand Equestrian Federation, a supporter of the Thai National Team for Dressage, Jumping, Eventing, Endurance and other non-Olympic disciplines, Harald Link dedicated to make Thailand's equestrian arena

– Thai Polo & Equestrian club, for a usage of both national and international competitions, acknowledged by Federation Equestrian International (FEI) which will host the first FEI Asian Championships Pattaya 2019 in December 2019.

With wooded hills as a backdrop, the club's beautifully landscaped setting covering 800 acres the club has evolved to include a full range of world-class equestrian sporting facilities which has been selected to utilise and host for 2007 SEA Games and 2013 & 2017 FEI Asia Eventing Championships, includes three full-sized polo fields, two practice fields, an eventing cross-country course, 80km Endurance course, Indoor and Outdoor Dressage and Show Jumping stabling for 250 ponies, 250 paddocks, Horse Hospital and the renowned Rege Ludwig International Polo School.

Visitors can relax in the picturesque clubhouse, cricket field, saltwater swimming pool and the Chukka Bar, a re-creation of the famous polo bar at the Langham Hotel in London, complete with original polo photographs, trophies and sporting memorabilia.

Players from all over the world regularly visit the club





[www.thai-polo-club.com](http://www.thai-polo-club.com)

to play in its prestigious tournaments, such as the Princess's Cup Thai Polo Open every January and Queen's Cup Pink Polo for ladies in February. In addition to its monthly tournaments, the club is part of a unique Polo League of Thai, Malaysian and Singaporean clubs, with each club taking turns to host a round-robin.

### **Thailand's polo season runs from November to April.**

Thanks to patrons Harald Link, CEO of B. Grimm Group, and Mrs. Nunthinee Tanner, co-owners of Thai Polo & Equestrian Club, who designed all infrastructure, remarkable clubhouses, polo facilities and the complex. Polo in Thailand has enjoyed a remarkable resurgence in recent years through excellent training facilities and outstanding tournaments at the Club. However, these annual tournaments are not solely

for the entertainment of the many international players who participate, they are also used to raise funds for deserving Thai charities.

### **Charity Polo**

*The club's annual Thai Polo Open, Queen's Cup Pink Polo and Princess Pa's Cup Beach Polo tournaments have become important events not only for the sports of polo but also for charity and Thai society as they help to raise funds for foundations such as the HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Chitrlada Vocational School project, The Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast Cancer,*

*and Nabha Foundation under HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha.*

### **Accommodation**

You can also stay at the club in wonderful Thai-style houses, surrounded by paddocks and horses. One is an authentic antique Thai house, which belonged to a member of the Thai royal family and was relocated. It over looks the Stick and Ball field, a lake and rolling farmland in the distance with mountain and sea breezes. Additional Thai houses are available. One has views over the hills and a spectacular sunrise; the other has vistas of the pineapple fields and ocean sunsets.

### **Equestrian**

#### **Derby Show-Jumping**

The Thai Polo and Equestrian Club is the only place in Thailand that holds Derby Show Jumping competitions. The jumps can be as high as 140 metres with a steep incline entering the jump and a steep decline exiting the jump. It is not easy to achieve and maintain FEI recognition.

#### **Eventing**

Eventing originated with the military, which created competition in which officers and horses could be trained to face any challenge. Competitors must have experience and a precise knowledge of the horse's ability. Eventing is the most complete combined-competition discipline recognised by the FEI, and encompasses three tests: Dressage, Cross-Country and Jumping. The club's 4.5km Eventing course was designed by Wayne Copping for the South East Asian Games 2007 in Thailand.

#### **Endurance**

This is the fastest-growing equestrian discipline. It is a horse marathon and the horses and the riders have to be very fit. There are 40km, 80km, 120km and 160km races. In Thailand, there is up to an 80km race. Anyone who can ride can join an endurance race because you can walk, trot or canter and follow the signs to the end. It is a competition against the clock but the trick is that you must have a rest before the finishing line. The emphasis is on finishing in good condition and not only in coming first, so it is a delicate balance. Excessive fatigue, signs of lameness and other indications of problems are grounds for elimination by the event veterinarians.

[www.thai-polo-club.com](http://www.thai-polo-club.com)



*Get connected with us!*

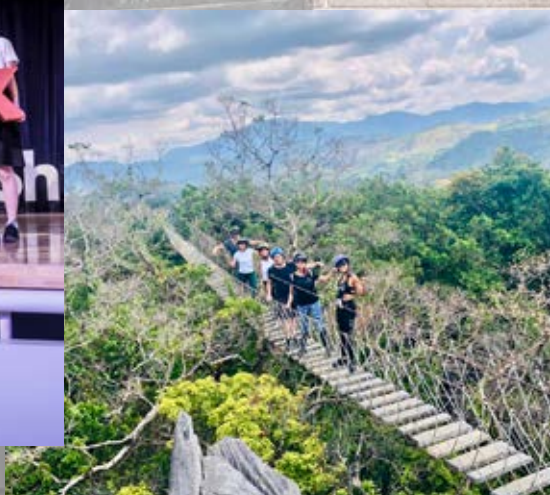
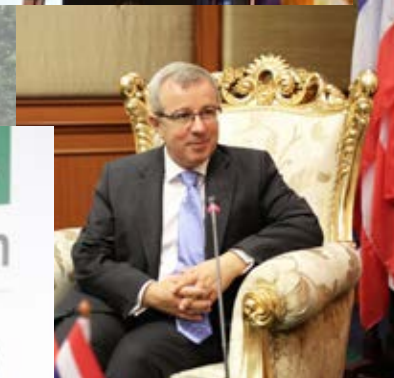
Web: [www.expatlifethailand.com](http://www.expatlifethailand.com)

Facebook: [expatlifethailand](https://www.facebook.com/expatlifethailand)

Email: [subscribe@elbkk.com](mailto:subscribe@elbkk.com)

Instagram: [@expatlife\\_th](https://www.instagram.com/expatlife_th)

Twitter: [@ExpatLifeTha](https://twitter.com/ExpatLifeTha)



# CONTENTS

## FEATURE

- 2 Thai Polo and Equestrian Club
- 10 The Ambassador of Israel to Thailand
- 18 Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Thailand
- 26 The Ambassador of Spain to Thailand
- 32 Indian Ambassador to Thailand
- 50 The new face of SHOM
- 136 A glittering look at Bangkok
- 140 Cacao: an elixir of life
- 142 A utopia called Thailand
- 153 Pu Chai – the music admist

## TRAVEL

- 36 The Kutch chronicles
- 46 Yoga for travellers
- 64 A walk on the wild side
- 72 Long weekend in Hong Kong
- 78 Khao Luang trek
- 82 Cruising the Mergui Archipelago
- 86 Havana by bicycle
- 92 Solar Impulse
- 150 Cocktail of royal and rustic
- 156 Northern exposure
- 174 The Cies Islands

## EVENTS

- 42 International Day of Yoga 2019
- 58 Four young prodigies
- 144 Women in Gastronomy

## NGO

- 54 Make-A-Wish

## HEALTH AND FITNESS

- 60 Feeling ancient healing
- 96 VitalLife
- 147 The best things in life are free
- 124 Learned happiness
- 120 Understanding depression

## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

- 160 The pungency of ginger

## EXPAT LIFE

- 76 The British Women's Group
- 128 Expat life – how it happens
- 166 On the move again
- 171 Agesim in Thailand
- 178 Acting out in Thailand

## EDUCATION

- 100 Bring the best out of Thai children
- 104 5 self-empowering messages
- 106 Meet the Principal
- 112 Incoming Head Master
- 114 Filling in gaps
- 122 Ethical consumerism

## BOOK REVIEW

- 132 The making of modern Thailand

## FICTION

- 162 Bangkok Madam: Baking Class

## FASHION

- 182 Men and women in fashion
- 184 Fashion with Talar

## GALLERY

- 188 Social events



# BRASSERIE EUROPA BRUNCH

GLAMOROUS BLACK & WHITE EDITION



‘Brasserie Europa’s new Sunday Brunch is black, white and sparkling all over’

GOURMET DELIGHTS

CAVIAR TASTING

BLANC DE BLANCS CHAMPAGNE

For more information and reservations, please call 02 162 9000





**Write:** Expat Life is created by an enthusiastic and passionate group of volunteer, talented individuals. If you have a story or experience to share or would like to join our editorial contributors, please write to:

[nick@elbkk.com](mailto:nick@elbkk.com)

**Publish or advertise:** Our editorial content is now being supplied to a host of content sharing partners copyright free who then provide, share and expose it to their respective audiences. If you would like to publish our content or would like to advertise in Expat Life in print, online or on our social media forums please write to [nick@elbkk.com](mailto:nick@elbkk.com) (English) or [daow.elbkk.com](mailto:daow.elbkk.com) (Thai)

**Subscribe:** If you want to make sure you receive your own copy please write to: [subscribe@elbkk.com](mailto:subscribe@elbkk.com) or call 02 331 3266

**Publisher and managing editor**  
Nick Argles  
[nick@elbkk.com](mailto:nick@elbkk.com)  
089 721 3384  
083 734 2333

**Office manager**  
Panumas Kayan (Daow)  
[daow@elbkk.com](mailto:daow@elbkk.com)  
**Accountant**  
Premchit Thongcharone

**Administration**  
Runnapha Doungna  
[nan.elbkk@gmail.com](mailto:nan.elbkk@gmail.com)  
Siratta Boonsri (Donut)  
[donut.elbkk@gmail.com](mailto:donut.elbkk@gmail.com)

**Social media editor and subscriptions**  
Helena Hoffmann  
[helena@elbkk.com](mailto:helena@elbkk.com)

For all advertising, editorial, marketing, social media or sponsorship enquiries, please write to or call the publisher:  
Nick – [nick@elbkk.com](mailto:nick@elbkk.com) (English) or  
Daow – [daow@elbkk.com](mailto:daow@elbkk.com) (Thai)

384 Sukhumvit Garden City, Sukhumvit soi 79, Phraknong, Bangkok 10260 Tel. **02 331 3266** Fax: 02 331 5261

**Subscribe now** Subscribe today to Expat Life in Thailand and have your issues delivered direct to your door! Simply send a bank transfer to Pareto Communications Co Ltd. Bank of Ayudhya account number 001-9-46370-4 savings account and send a confirmation email to [subscribe@elbkk.com](mailto:subscribe@elbkk.com) confirming your payment and giving us your address, email address and telephone number in case of problems. **One postal issue 250B or 1200B for six issues.**

Visit [www.expatlifethailand.com](http://www.expatlifethailand.com) or [www.facebook.com/expatlifethailand](http://www.facebook.com/expatlifethailand)

The information contained in this magazine or website, while believed to be correct, is not guaranteed. Expat Life in Thailand magazine or website and its directors, employees and consultants do not accept any liability for any error, omission or misrepresentation in relation to the information. Nor do does it accept any loss, damage, cost or expense incurred by any person whatsoever arising out of or referable to the information displayed within Expat Life in Thailand magazine or website. Any view expressed by a journalist is not necessarily the view of Expat Life In Thailand magazine or website. No part of Expat Life in Thailand magazine or website can be reproduced or copied without the express consent of the publisher.





# The finest quality beef

---

## Why pay more anywhere else!



**Why not give them a try next time you are out shopping at Big C store :** Extra Rama IV, Pattaya 1 (Central Marina), Pattaya 2 (South Pattaya), Extra Pattaya (Pattaya Klang), Extra Phuket (Jungceylon Patong), Extra Chiang Mai and Rajdamri



# Women and nutrition



**I**t is not easy navigating the difficult world of women and nutrition. Trying to manoeuvre through the incredible sea of information that is presented to us through media, friends, family or culture can be overwhelming, daunting and at times discouraging.

*The first thing we need to do is to stop looking outward for all of the answers to what our body needs. We have lost sight of our own intuition, and we have put our faith in the big business of diet culture. As women, several of us have succumbed to the trends that send us down the path of dieting, which is basically food restriction.*

Food restriction is how we create these incredibly harsh cravings that cause us to make poor food choices and create unsatisfactory health. The outcome, our bodies slowly start to lose their ability to function optimally. Symptoms for most women range from infertility to unwanted weight gain or impossible weight loss, brain fog, irritability, headaches, fatigue, bloating, indigestion and irregular menstrual cycles. How can we make a shift? It is not easy and it will not happen overnight, because we have taken several years of our lives to get to this point, yet there is a way, with patience and commitment women can shift their bodies back to working for them, rather than against them.

I think when discussing women and their health, we



need to address hormones. Hormones are usually the first culprit to why a woman's body is not functioning properly, and the truth is, if one hormone is out of balance, all of them are. The first step in balancing hormones starts with looking at our digestive tract. After years of wear and tear our gut can become worn out. This all occurs from dieting, unhealthy food choices, sedentary lifestyle and exposure to chemicals, hormones, antibiotics and pesticides. Even if you have no digestive issues, poor gut health can present itself in several different ways including skin conditions, depression, illness, weight gain, and a general feeling of being unwell. So if you do switch to a healthy diet without 'fixing' your gut, you may find that you are not feeling much better or obtaining the results you were looking for. Our gut can lack important digestive enzymes and healthy bacteria that allow us to properly breakdown the food we are eating. If we do not have these tools, absorption of important minerals and vitamins can be





impaired. In this case when absorption is impaired then vital nutrients are not getting into our body and hormones that we need to function are not being built.

Step one in rebuilding good gut health is to add in a solid probiotic to establish the good bacteria in the digestive tract and use digestive enzymes to help breakdown the food that we are eating with each meal. Adding in fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kefir, kombucha, kimchi, and tempeh into our diet is also helpful, as they all carry healthy bacteria for our gut. I recommend keeping a food journal or having

a food allergy test to see what foods suit you and do not suit you. When people ask me, 'What should I eat?' I always tell them, 'I have no idea!'. We are all individuals, and we are taught uniqueness at such a young age, well, our gut health is extremely similar, what works for one person may not work for another.

After re-establishing gut health in our body, the next step is to look at our food choices. Proteins and amino acids are essential for the development of our hormones, but it is crucial to realise that not any old protein will do. We need to be eating healthy proteins to get the proper building blocks in our diet. For women who eat a lot of grain fed, antibiotic and hormone injected animal protein (including dairy) can actually shift their body out of hormonal balance, causing high oestrogen levels, inflammation and acidity. Inflammation and acidity leave our body open to a host of different diseases like cancer and autoimmune disease, as well as the inability to properly create the tools we need to function. This is also true for women who have a high intake of simple carbohydrates (think white rice and white pasta) or sugar, as well as eating lots of processed foods. Symptoms of too much oestrogen in the body can range from mood swings, headaches, and bloating to PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) and irregular menstrual cycles. Eating clean healthy protein with lots of fruit and veg, to bring the body away from the inflammatory state and balance out our oestrogen levels is an important step in fixing our body. Healthy proteins that help balance us out usually come from legumes, seeds (think hemp, flax, and chia) and nuts, as well as tempeh, grass fed organic meats and a variety of vegetables.

The above is just a stepping stone to start you off on a health journey to balance your body. Please do not forget that there are several other factors to take into account to achieving overall wellness. If you do not have proper sleep, exercise, and self-care as well as if you have too much stress in your life, it is impossible to obtain a feeling of complete wellbeing and health. My recommendation to you is that women should start by making 3 to 5 achievable goals each week to get your body and mind on track. These goals can be simple like cutting down on sugar or reading a book for pleasure, it does not always have to revolve around food. Remember if we do not take care of the mind, the body will not follow and vice versa. Make a commitment to not only eating healthier to create hormonal balance, but take steps to creating an overall lifestyle of goodness and health.

Be well.

**Tara Conrad, Nutritionist and Diet Consultant**  
**Verita Life, Integrative Cancer Centre**

[www.veritalife.com](http://www.veritalife.com)

+66 2 554 8333

[info@veritalife.com](mailto:info@veritalife.com)



# The Ambassador of Israel to Thailand, H.E. Dr. Meir Shlomo



Expat Life sat down with the Israeli Ambassador to find out about his appointment to Thailand and his route to the post.

## How long have you been the Ambassador to Thailand?

I assumed the role of Ambassador of Israel to the Kingdom of Thailand in August 2017 and presented my credentials to His Majesty the King in November. I am also non-resident Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

## Did you arrive to Thailand from direct home, or were you posted somewhere else before?

Yes, I came direct from Israel. My first overseas posting was as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Israel in El Salvador. Before that I was also posted in Peru, Denmark

and India. I was appointed as Consul General and Head of Mission in Boston, Massachusetts in the USA. Later, I was Consul General and Head of the Israeli Mission in Houston, Texas. After obtaining a PhD in History and Communications, I became Head of the North American Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, prior to my current post in Thailand.

## Where were you born and brought up?

I was born and raised in Tel Aviv in 1954. My grandparents came to Jerusalem in 1927 from Aden which was later called the Democratic Republic of South Yemen. Both of my parents were born in Israel. I received my Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Tel Aviv University and my Master's





in Mass Communications from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

**At which age did you decide you wanted to become a diplomat?**

That was probably after I completed my three year military service and backpacked around Asia with my girlfriend, who later became my wife. After returning to Israel and resuming my studies, I joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 1981.

**Do you have more diplomats in your family?**

No only me.

**How do you look at Thailand today? Have you had many encounters since you arrived?**

I first came to Thailand in 1980 and spent two months here. I have been drawn back a few times since my first trip. In 2009, I was invited by the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct a workshop on public diplomacy. At that time, I was impressed at the flourishing Bangkok that has become an international city and it's progressive changes. The skyline is amazing and getting better everyday. This country is moving forward in all aspects towards Thailand 4.0. 40 years has passed but the wonderful Thai hospitality extended to my wife and I has not changed.

**Do you see any similarities between your country and Thailand?**

Yes, I think that the warmth of the people towards each other and the way that they treat foreigners is quite similar. Israelis are well known for their warmth and openness towards foreigners, and Thai people are in many ways the same. Other than that, I think that both societies are blessed with hardworking and dedicated people, who are passionate about their country and their fellow citizens.

**Do you and your wife have children? If so what age are they and where do they go to school?**

Yes, we have a son Ido and a daughter Noa who just got married last year. They are both grown up and now my son is a big-data scientist in the USA and my daughter works in hi-tech in Israel. Neither of them has followed in my footsteps in diplomacy.



**How do you look upon your work here? What does an average day look like?**

Our work covers so many dimensions, to name a few, politics, economics, culture, media and social issues. There is never a dull moment at our Embassy. Still, it does not stop us enjoying every task that we aim to achieve. A normal day – there is never a normal day, may include a political briefing to learn about recent developments in Thailand.





It may also include a meeting with Thai senior government officials or captains of industry from the business sector to promote our cooperation through the government. For example, I just met a delegation from Chulabhorn Royal Academy who are travelling to Israel this week to learn about the emergency medicine model which we operate in Israel. It often includes meetings with other foreign Ambassador's, politicians, journalists, decision makers and heads of cultural institutions.

**As with every Ambassador, I assume you have some goals you really would like to reach/fulfil before you leave Thailand. What are they?**

It is our aim to increase tourism, bilateral trade, investment, innovation and the exchange of technology. We always have a large number of Israeli tourists in Thailand, but sadly we do not see that many Thai tourists travel to and enjoy Israel. It is a beautiful country located in the Middle East on the Mediterranean Sea. It is regarded by Jews, Christians and Muslims as the biblical Holy Land. Its most sacred sites are in Jerusalem. Within its Old City, the Temple Mount complex includes the Dome of the Rock shrine, the historic Western Wall, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Israel's financial hub, Tel Aviv, is known for its Bauhaus architecture and beaches. Israel has a population of just over 9 million now.

The majority of the Thai people that travel to Israel are the 25,000 workers who work in the agricultural sector. We highly value their hard work and dedication, we know that when they return to Thailand they will have accumulated not only a lot of practical knowledge in advanced agriculture techniques, but also, that they get to know Israel so well, that we consider them as "Ambassadors of goodwill".



However, we would love to see more Thai people coming to Israel as tourists. Therefore, it leads me to one of my ultimate goals - that is to see Thai Airways flying direct to Israel. I believe that it would introduce and deliver the Thais to Israel and will eventually bring the people of both countries closer together and fulfil all of my aforementioned ambitions.

**Have you been travelling around in Thailand?**

I am very lucky to have the opportunity to visit many other provinces for both work and pleasure. I have travelled to Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Pai-Mae Hong Son, Kanchanaburi, Koh Kood, Koh Samui, Koh Phi Phi, Ko Pha Ngan, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phuket, etc., and, we are not done yet. I am always greeted with warmth and respect wherever I go and I am very thankful to the Thai people for their kindness and hospitality.







spend a few days in Bangkok, then, go south to the beaches or head north to Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son.

It is an interesting fact that Thailand started as a popular destination for young Israelis as backpackers. Nowadays, it is a family destination. Israelis love Thailand and the Thai people. They express admiration for the famous hospitality, the rich and diverse culture and authentic Thai cuisine that just cannot be found elsewhere.

### **Do Israel and Thailand have any exchange programmes for students today?**

Israel offers 100 one year scholarships every year for Thai students to study agricultural subjects in Israel. We have a special one-year programme for the undergraduate students to work and study simultaneously whilst gaining work experience in large farms in Israel whilst earning an income. The programme allows them to return to Thailand after gaining experience in advanced technologies of smart farming, irrigation, post-harvest and more, and whilst studying how to run a successful farm. All of these topics are extremely valuable for their future career as farmers. In this regards, they can transfer credits from Israel to complete their Bachelor's degree.

### **Until now, your favourite destination in Thailand?**

For me, Thailand is not so much great beach and islands – it is about the people. The Thai people are the greatest asset of Thailand and the way they treat you is what really conveys an amazing experience.

### **When and if, you have a day off, what do you prefer to do? Do you have any special hobbies?**

Travelling, travelling and travelling.....

### **How many of your countryfolk are resident in Thailand? When and why did Thailand become a desirable destination for your people?**

There are few hundred Israelis living here year round, not only in Bangkok but also in other provinces across the country. Thailand is a fascinating country for tourists from all over the world and a very attractive destination for Israelis since the 1990s when the first flight of El Al Israel's flag carrier landed in Bangkok. Now El Al operates seven flights a week. We also have another three flights a week by Arkia, the second airline. Indeed Thailand is, the second most popular destination in the world for Israeli travellers. Over 200,000 Israelis visit Thailand every year, mainly for leisure. This number may not be high compared to those from other countries but it is about two per cent of our entire population. According to recent data that we have received from the Tourism Authority of Thailand, on average the Israeli tourists stay in Thailand longer than other nationals, normally more than 17 days, and spend relatively a large entertainment budget during the trip. They usually





**If you could choose your next destination, where would you like to go?**

For me, my native city of Tel Aviv would be the choice.

**Any memory from Thailand that you'd like to tell us, an awkward situation, a fun moment etc.?**

I came to Thailand during two historic occasions. I shared the grief with the Thais when I attended the royal cremation ceremony for the late His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great in October 2017. I witnessed and was impressed with the unfathomable love and respect of the people to King Bhumibol. This year, I joined the Thai people in celebrating the auspicious coronation ceremonies of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua. Again I was fascinated with the grandeur of the royal ceremonies, the sophisticated Thai traditions and the unity of his subjects.

**Do you regularly meet up with your community?**

Frequently. We gather at various occasions, namely the Jewish holidays, the Independence Day celebrations, and on many other festive moments. We also meet during the sad moments such as the Holocaust Memorial Day when we share our feelings for the millions of Jewish victims in Europe who were systematically murdered by the Nazi regime during WWII.

**What do you believe is your most important task as an Ambassador?**

*The most significant assignment for me is to strengthen the friendship between Thailand and Israel at both government-to-government and people-to-people levels.*

**What else would you like the expat community to know about your efforts?**

There are so many things to talk about. To make it easier for your readers, please follow our Embassy's social media. We have a very active website, twitter, Facebook and Instagram. [@israelinthailand](#) and my young communications team is doing an excellent job in these channels of "Digital Diplomacy". As Israel is referred to as a "Start-Up Nation", apparently we as diplomats are also active through these new innovative channels, and it is a lively platform for communication, with the Thai society, especially with the future generation.





# SUKHUMVIT GALLERY

*Indulge in the untold History of Sukhumvit  
with Inspired Sukhumvit Gallery Afternoon Tea*



Available daily from 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM at THB 950++ per set for two persons

Sukhumvit Gallery | Level 4 | Hyatt Regency Bangkok Sukhumvit

Reserve your table now  02 098 1234 or [bkkhr.marketcafe@hyatt.com](mailto:bkkhr.marketcafe@hyatt.com)

 **HYATT REGENCY**  
BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT

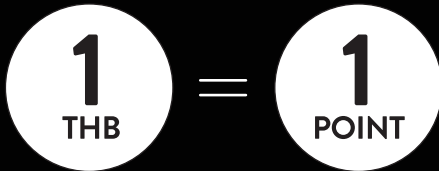


# JOIN THE CLUB

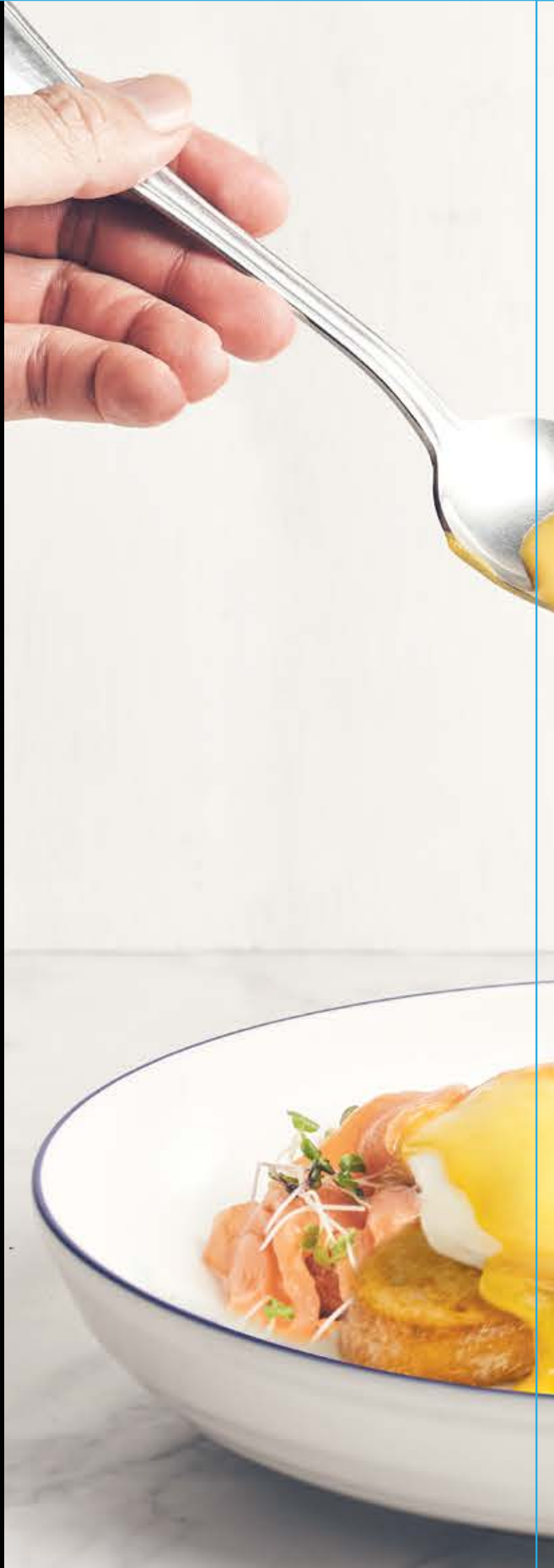
**1** SCAN QR CODE TO DOWNLOAD  
THE COFFEE CLUB APPLICATION



**2** EARN POINTS WITH EVERY BAHT SPENT  
(1 BAHT = 1 POINT)



**3** ENJOY PRIVILEGES





THE  
COFFEE  
CLUB®

Where will I meet you?

# WHERE WILL I MEET YOU?

CLASSIC EGGS BENEDICT  
SMOKED SALMON







## H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Thailand

**E**XPAT LIFE sat down with H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Thailand to find out more about him and his posting to Thailand.

### **How long have you been the Ambassador to Thailand?**

Well, as you say, time flies. It has been almost two years now. We arrived at the end of June 2017. I had the great honour of presenting my credentials to His Majesty the King on 28 November 2017.

### **Did you arrive to Thailand straight from home, or were you posted somewhere else before?**

We came from Islamabad, yes. In the Foreign Service of Pakistan, there is a system of rotation, whereby normally you are abroad for about 6 years with two consecutive postings of 3 years each, and then about 2-3 years back home. So I was at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before coming to Thailand. Prior to that, I was assigned at the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York.

### **May I ask where were you born and brought up?**

Lahore is my place of birth and hometown. Our family has lived in Lahore for generations, initially in the famed walled city, and then also moving out and spreading around as the city expanded and transformed into a big metropolis. From childhood to university, most of my time was spent in Lahore until I moved to Islamabad, the capital, after joining the Foreign Service. Belonging to and growing up in Lahore is quite an experience. Lahore is a historical city, as well as the cultural capital of Pakistan, a major centre of sports, education and literary activities. It is the hub of politics, and home to the country's film, music and fashion industry. With its wide variety of cuisine, Lahore is also a haven for food lovers. Lahore is most famous for kite flying and that is an activity that thrilled me most while growing up in the city. In Pakistan, we say "one who has not seen Lahore is not yet born". "Lahore is Lahore" is the famous adage referring to the lively city.

### **At which age did you decide you wanted to become a diplomat?**

I cannot say exactly, but it was certainly not a childhood dream or anything like that. I was always fascinated by sports, and would not miss a chance to play different sports in school and college days. But perhaps I did not have the kind of exceptional talent that is required to excel at a more competitive or professional level of sport. Somehow the academic side was much better and also took most of my



time, with sports relegated to leisure activity. Anyway I pursued my studies in engineering, and whilst I did pretty well, I also realised that I had not developed the special liking that would keep you going in that field. Besides, from my initial work experience, I felt that the Civil Service offered more avenues and space to bring about progress and real change in various fields through improvement at systemic and policy levels. Also at the back of my mind was the longstanding desire of my father that I join the Civil Service. So I decided to take the Civil Services entrance exam. Having qualified, what remained was to choose a particular line from amongst many in the civil service. There, I had little hesitation in opting for the Foreign Service.

#### **Do you have any other diplomats in your family?**

Not in my immediate family. But we have had relatives from the extended family who have been diplomats, and posted abroad as Ambassadors and at other senior positions in the Foreign Service of Pakistan. Two of my cousins, senior to me in service, are also Ambassadors currently.

#### **How do you look at Thailand today? Have you had any obstacles since you arrived?**

I had never been to Thailand before, and it was a unique and pleasant experience setting foot in the Land of Smiles as the Ambassador of your country. From a personal and professional point of view, it has been smooth sailing ever since our arrival here. Thailand is a beautiful and friendly country, and we simply love it. The people here are so kind, open, respectful and welcoming. Settling down was easy. And very soon you get into the busy but quite absorbing and diverse lifestyle and work environment in Bangkok and Thailand.

Thailand and Pakistan are old friends and close partners. Our bilateral relations are excellent and growing. We see Thailand as an important country and a leading voice in SE Asia. It is an anchor of regional cooperation, widely appreciated for its objective and pragmatic policies. It has

achieved commendable economic development and export potential. Like any other country, it also has its own set of challenges, which are for the Thai people and the leadership to address in a manner that is best for the country. The recent elections and formation of the new government should provide the way forward, based on popular will, political stability and maturity.

We have also witnessed the historic coronation of His Majesty King Rama X, manifesting a tremendous expression of love and respect by the Thai people towards their Monarch, and the sentiment of patriotism and unity that gears the Thai nation towards greater progress and prosperity.

#### **Do you see any similarities between your country and Thailand?**

I think we have a lot in common. In terms of policies and global outlook, Pakistan and Thailand have shared interest in peace and development and a strong commitment to regional and multilateral cooperation. We are keen supporters of the United Nations. We also work closely in a number of regional organisations and forums. We have a lot to share and learn from each other's development experience, and to forge deeper partnership as we advance to the next stage of our development. Inclusive and sustainable growth is the priority of both countries. Thailand and Pakistan are strategically located in SE Asia and South Asia. This enables the two countries to be at the centre of major connectivity and infrastructure projects that promote development through regional and cross-regional economic cooperation and integration.

Interestingly there are many similarities in the social and cultural norms. Like the Thai people, Pakistanis are also known for their warmth and hospitality. You will feel at home while in Pakistan. As I see, the traditional family system and values including respect for elders are very strong in Thailand like in my country. You can also draw parallels in the lifestyles in urban and rural areas. The youth are attracted to music, art and fashion. Both nations are sports lovers and have produced great champions.







trade, education and culture, tourism and other areas that keep us engaged. Besides, we also take care of the year round multilateral work at UNESCAP. Then there is outreach to business community, civil society, media and academia, universities, as well as interaction with the Pakistani community. Evenings are often occupied by social gatherings, receptions and cultural events. And

Many Thais are also aware of the historical linkage between our two countries and peoples rooted in the glorious Buddhist heritage of Pakistan dating back to the Gandhara Civilisation and prominent centres of Buddhist teaching and learning including UNESCO World Heritage sites of Taxila (Takshashila) and Takht-i-Bahi. I would like to invite our Thai friends to visit these and other Buddhist sites in greater numbers.

This brings me to another sector to which both Thailand and Pakistan pay a lot of importance and attention i.e. tourism. Similar to Thailand, Pakistan has a wide array of tourist attractions - from historical and cultural sites, serene towns to busy cosmopolitan cities, and the diverse landscape ranging from beautiful coasts, to unruffled deserts, fertile planes, to splendid valleys, lakes and breathtaking views of the highest mountains of the world. So for our Thai friends, there is a lot to experience and enjoy out there in Pakistan.

#### **Do you have children? What age and where do they go to school?**

We are blessed with three daughters. The eldest, Noorain, is a doctor of medicine in Pakistan having graduated this year. Nawal finished her High School last year here in Bangkok and has since joined Chulalongkorn University in its renowned Faculty of Arts. The youngest, Iman, will complete High School next year.

#### **How do you look upon your work here? What does an average day look like?**

Contrary to general perception, Bangkok is quite a busy station. There is a substantial agenda on the bilateral side comprising political, defence, economic,

one has to take into account the Bangkok traffic in planning the day's programme, which as you see from the above is a mix of various activities, all equally important.

#### **As with every Ambassador, I assume you have some goals you really would like to reach/fulfil before you leave Thailand. What are they?**

We are actually pursuing multiple objectives. On the political side, our aim is to strengthen the existing ties through engagement and visits at higher levels. We are also looking to revitalise the Joint Economic Commission. Security and Defence relations are being expanded through high-level visits and other cooperative endeavours including training and joint exercises. An overarching defence cooperation agreement is ready for signatures.

One of our top priorities is enhancement of trade and investment. Significant results have already been achieved with bilateral trade touching all time high of 1.68 billion \$ in 2018 up from 1.5 billion in 2017. We organised Pakistan's first-ever Single Country Exhibition in Bangkok in July last year. We are also negotiating a bilateral Free Trade Agreement, which we expect would be mutually beneficial in terms of expanding the trade volume and also addressing





the current imbalance. The Embassy is promoting exchange of business delegations and awareness of opportunities in Pakistan to promote trade, investment and joint ventures.

Another goal that we have set for ourselves is to create greater awareness among the Thai people about the Buddhist heritage of Pakistan, and to have more and more Thai friends going to Pakistan for tourism. Summer, for example, is a good period to enjoy the mountainous northern regions of Pakistan with cooler temperatures and spectacular landscape. There is a large choice of places – Kaghan, Swat, Hunza, Gilgit, Chitral, Skardu, Astore, Neelum, Kamrat, Nagar, Naltar to name a few. We have also taken steps to facilitate travel by introducing visa on arrival for business and tourism. Recently we have launched the e-visa facility, wherein Thai people can obtain visas online. We expect this will lead to more Thais travelling to Pakistan.

#### **Have you been travelling around in Thailand?**

Yes, we have been to many places in Thailand and have thoroughly enjoyed them. I don't miss an opportunity to travel outside Bangkok. These visits, apart from the interaction with people, provide a useful perspective about the level of development, economic activity, special products, tourist attractions and culture of the area. Wherever we have gone, we have seen good infrastructure and services. The provincial administration system seems quite effective.

#### **Until now, your favourite destination in Thailand?**

It is difficult to choose because all places are good and have something special about them. We have been to Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, Mae Sot, Phitsanulok, Buriram, Surin, Phetchaburi, Chumphon, Surat Thani, Songkhla, Trang, Krabi, Phang Nga, Phuket, Pattaya, Rayong and many other places. In destinations near to Bangkok I like Hua Hin and particularly Khao Yai. Ko Samui and Phuket are also worth going to again and again.

#### **When you have a day off, what do you prefer to do? Do you have any special hobbies?**

I like to spend time with my family. We either go out of Bangkok or roam around in the city, which has a lot to offer in terms of entertainment, culture and cuisine. Chatuchak market is a favourite spot of my wife. If I can sneak out for tennis or golf, I would gladly do so.



#### **How many of your country folk are living in Thailand? When and why did Thailand become a desirable destination for your people?**

There are around 5,000 Pakistanis in Thailand. Most of them are in business, especially trading, or jobs of different kinds. Many have been here for long time, others come for specific assignment periods such as with the UN and other international organisations or multinational companies. It is a very dynamic and enterprising community. I believe that among other reasons, business prospects, and Thailand's position as a trading hub and regional headquarter of many organisations and companies attract expats.

Let me also add that there is also a large Thai Pakistani community, also known as Thai Pathans, who are Thai nationals of Pakistani origin and have been here for some generations now. Well integrated in Thai society, they are settled all over Thailand, and have gained prominence and made significant contributions in all walks of life. This is a unique linkage between the people of our two countries, which I greatly value.

#### **Do your country and Thailand have any exchange programmes for students today?**

Students from our two countries are pursuing education and training courses on both sides under different arrangements including technical assistance programmes, scholarships, grants and self-financing. TICA offers courses from time to time. Many Pakistani students come to study in Thailand, especially at AIT, on our own Government's funding. Some others avail various kinds of scholarships via Thai universities. Many Thais have studied in Pakistan in the past, and this trend continues. A number of top-level public and private sector universities in Pakistan offer a wide range of programmes. We also offer courses in diplomacy, banking and public administration. I would like to see the number of students going up on both sides.



**If you could choose your next destination, where would you like to go?**

Not an easy question and there is no simple answer. In fact as part of Foreign Service, we should be prepared to serve anywhere. Every place is interesting and full of challenges and opportunities. Various factors are at play when it comes to postings such as past assignments, relevant expertise, vacancies available, personal preference, etc. I have so far served in Africa, America and now in Asia. I wonder if Europe is next.

**Any memory from Thailand that you'd like to tell us, an awkward situation, a fun moment?**

It has been a memorable time altogether. That is to be expected when you are in a lovely place and among friendly people. Travel to the provinces is an unforgettable experience. Every destination is unique. Services are great. Local handicrafts, traditions and culture are well projected. Entrepreneurship is remarkable.

Language is sometimes a barrier, but interestingly, many things get done without the need for a real conversation in English. I fondly remember when on our way to Phuket, at the airport a person approached us, asked to see our passports and led us to a kiosk on the side. First I thought he must be some airport official. Soon I realised he was from a tour company, and in no time he had sold a tour package to us, which when I had time to check once we were in Phuket, was actually a very good package, and even if there were a chance to negotiate in English, we would not have obtained a better one. That also reflected on the integrity of the salesperson.

There is one thing that I would like to specially mention that would be etched on my memory forever. When we arrived here in mid 2017 it was the period of mourning for His Majesty Late King Rama IX. The highest regard and the spontaneous outpouring of love, respect and admiration for the revered Monarch by the millions of Thai people was something really impressive and exceptional.

**Do you regularly meet up with your community?**

Yes, interaction with the community is quite frequent. In my view taking care of the interests and wellbeing of the community is one of the prime functions of diplomatic missions. Keeping in touch is essential for that. To attend to any issues or problems and to receive any suggestions or opinions we have a walk-in and open door policy at the Embassy. We also reach out and respond to the community through social media. There is also regular interaction with the major representative organisations of the community.

**What do you believe is your most important task as Ambassador?**

Ours is a multi-dimensional relationship with efforts directed on several fronts in parallel. My job is to build on the substantial work that has been done by my predecessors. In fact everything is important, from political to defence ties to people to people contacts. In terms of our overall goals, we have prioritised trade and economic relations, wherein we have made very good progress and that is something we would like to consolidate further. We would like more Thai business houses to invest in Pakistan. As I said earlier, another objective is to create greater awareness about Pakistan and to have more and more Thai people going to Pakistan for tourism, especially to the picturesque northern region and the famous Buddhist sites in Pakistan.

**What else would you like the expat community to know about your efforts?**

We are here to promote friendly ties between the two countries and generate further contacts and goodwill among the people. At the same time, we also look beyond the bilateral affairs. In this globalised world, there is ever increasing interconnectedness and inter-dependence. Bangkok itself is a hub of regional and multilateral activity. The large expat community in this country, the success they have enjoyed and the contributions they have made towards

its development are manifestations of the positive impacts of globalisation and harmonious co-existence. As a democratic and progressive country, Pakistan is very much attached to this worldview. We are committed to promoting greater understanding and interaction between various cultures and civilisations for shared peace and prosperity for all. I see that as our collective effort for our common good.





BANGKOK'S ULTIMATE IN AL-FRESCO ROOFTOP  
**VERTIGO AND MOON BAR**

There's a *new Moon* Over the Banyan Tree!

Enjoy a drink 200 metres above the city at the recently renovated Moon Bar boasting a dramatic new design complete with a stunning diamond-shaped bar and new "Moon Walk" extending 2 metres off the building for heart-racing panoramas.

**Dine at Vertigo for premium quality steaks, ocean-fresh seafood and gourmet western fare with the views of glittering Bangkok skyline from every table.**



BANYAN TREE  
BANGKOK

For more information and reservations

tel. + 66 2 679 1200, email : [hostesses-bangkok@banyantree.com](mailto:hostesses-bangkok@banyantree.com)

21/100 South Sathorn Road, Sathorn, Bangkok 10120, Thailand





# Genomic profiling in cancer: matching patients to the right treatment

Bumrungrad  
International Hospital  
raises the bar of innovative  
cancer treatment with  
comprehensive genomic  
testing in Thailand

---

*Bangkok, Thailand – Bumrungrad International Hospital is at the forefront of personalised cancer care with comprehensive genomic testing that will lead to a more accurate diagnosis and better analysis of outcomes for cancer patients.*

**B**umrungrad International Hospital, a medical tourism and healthcare leader for more than a decade, was the first hospital in Asia to be accredited by Joint Commission International (JCI) for American-equivalent clinical operations standards in 2002. A one-stop-shop of multidisciplinary medicine, Bumrungrad International provides comprehensive care in over 70 specialties clinical and sub-specialties for patients from over 190 nationalities all over the world and underlined its pioneering position in cancer treatment with a commitment to the latest innovations in cancer prevention, treatment, and research.

New comprehensive genomic profiling includes an updated gene list and alterations in the most commonly mutated genes that are known to drive the growth of cancer. New tests detail genomic signatures which can better direct treatment decisions. Since all patients are different, specific individual treatments, often called targeted therapies or precision medicine, are personally customised to each patient and can be more effective than standard cancer treatments.





Dr. Harit Suwanrusme, an Oncology Specialist at Horizon Regional Cancer Center, Bumrungrad International Hospital, stated that today's technology makes diagnosis faster, more precise and personalised, which is vital since cancer is the leading cause of death in most developed countries.

Dr. Harit, said that some cancers could be found more often in some families. Therefore, genetic prone testing will benefit some patients by giving more information about patient and family members' genetic prone.

"Everybody has a different genetic make-up which makes us susceptible to different diseases and means medication can work in different ways for different



people. In some cases, we can use targeted therapy to help control the cancer," he said.

Dr. Harit added that whilst standard treatments are still effective; some cases require greater insights. This is where the new technology that helps assess tumour genomic alterations and could broaden the treatment options for some patients.

Today, comprehensive genomic

profiling (CGP) of tumours can provide insight into clinically relevant genetic alterations, with goals of guiding clinical decision-making and augmenting therapeutic options. Bumrungrad International has been collaborated with various partners to provide this well-established diagnostic technology and now able to do some in-house genetic tests including comprehensive liquid tumour biopsy to detect tumour DNA floating in patient's blood stream.

Bumrungrad International Hospital, is one of the only hospitals outside of the United States to utilise IBM Watson for Oncology, an advanced machine-learning AI supporting doctors in diagnoses and treatment plans with the aggregation of all past and current clinical trial and research data.

In 2019 Bumrungrad International will start to utilise IBM Watson for genomics as well.

**For more information please visit:**  
[www.bumrungrad.com](http://www.bumrungrad.com).



# H. E. the Ambassador of Spain to Thailand

## Mr. Emilio De Miguel Calabia

Expat Life sat down with H. E. the Ambassador of Spain to Thailand, Mr. Emilio De Miguel Calabia to find out what he thinks of his posting and how he has enjoyed the last two years.

**Emilio did you arrive to Thailand from home, or were you posted somewhere else before?**

I came directly from Madrid. I had been there for six years in the position of Deputy Director for the Pacific, SE Asia and the Philippines. So, before my arrival, I was already up to date with the issues I would find in Bangkok.

**May I ask where are you born and brought up?**

I was born and raised in Madrid. I lived there until the moment I left for my first post abroad, Cameroon. (Madrid is the capital of Spain and the largest municipality in both the Community of Madrid and Spain as a whole. The city has almost 3.3 million inhabitants and a metropolitan area population of approximately 6.5 million. It is the third-largest city in the European Union, smaller than only London and Berlin, and its mono centric metropolitan area is the third-largest in the EU, smaller only than those of London and Paris. The municipality covers 604.3km<sup>2</sup> (233.3sqm). Madrid lies on the River Manzanares in the centre of both



the country and the Community of Madrid (which comprises the city of Madrid, its conurbation and extended suburbs and villages); this community is bordered by the autonomous communities of Castile and León and Castile-La Mancha. As the capital city of Spain, seat of government, and residence of the Spanish monarch, Madrid is also the political, economic and cultural centre of the country).





**At what age did you decide you wanted to become a diplomat?**

At about twenty years old. I was studying law at the university at the time following the advice of my father, but I didn't like either the career nor the idea of becoming a lawyer. However I had always liked and followed politics, international relations, was interested in other cultures and travelling, so I think that it was only normal that the idea of becoming a diplomat came to me.

**Do you have more diplomats in your family?**

No not that I am aware.

**How do you look at Thailand today?  
Have you had any obstacles since you arrived?**

The first time I arrived in Thailand was in 1996. Many things have changed since then. Thai society is more open to the world and increasingly vocal. The old Thai shyness and unwillingness to express one's own thoughts and feelings is disappearing, which is a positive thing.

The new generation is creative, original and full of curiosity. Thailand has become a regional hub for SE Asia and Bangkok, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. It is a pity that a prize has had to be paid in terms of a certain loss of tradition and the destruction of the old Bangkok. That has been replaced by high condominiums undistinguishable from similar towers in any other city of the world. To me Bangkok has sadly lost part of its identity.

I cannot think of any major obstacles that I have met. It is the third time I have been posted to Thailand, so I feel at home. Besides I was lucky to find a great team at the Embassy – both the local staff and those coming from Spain – who have helped me immensely.

**Do you see any similarities between your country and Thailand?**

Yes. First of all, both Spain and Thailand are very family oriented. Family plays a central role in our lives. Second, both of us like sharing a good meal and talking with close friends. For Thais and Spanish people gastronomy is not only about eating tasty foods. It is much, much more.

**Do you have children? What age and where do they go to school?**

My eldest son is twenty two and will finish university this year in the US. I have two more children who are at school in Spain.



**How do you look upon your work here? What does an average day look like?**

I can honestly say the same that the character of Brad Pitt used to say in *"Hearts of Steel"*: "This is the best work I have ever had".

There are not average days. I am also credited to Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, so I travel quite regularly. I have many meetings, receptions, dinners... Really I cannot say what it is like in my average day, because every day is different.





**As every Ambassador, I assume you have some goals you really would like to reach/fulfill before you leave Thailand. What are they?**

My first goal is personal: to discover the region, to learn, to have a fulfilling life, to get to know interesting people, to have time for myself. I think we must start by setting personal goals for ourselves. If our lives don't work and if we are not fulfilled, our professional goals cannot be reached.

On the professional side, I am working to increase the mutual knowledge between Thailand and Spain. I feel there is a lot of mutual sympathy, but it is sympathy born out of lack of real knowledge about each other. My colleagues and I at the Embassy endeavor to ensure that any cultural or business activity that we are involved in becomes an occasion to promote the image of Spain and to make Spain better known to the Thai people.

I am also in the lookout of niches where Spain can have a high added value for Thailand and vice versa. And I may say, I have found some and I am working hard to develop them.

Upon my departure I would like to leave behind, two countries that know each other better and have a higher profile and understanding in their relations.

**As it is your third posting to Thailand one assumes that you have you been travelling around in Thailand?**

**May I ask if you have any particular favourites?**

Yes I have enjoy travelling around the country.

I do not have a single favourite destination in Thailand – I have three:

1) Sukhothai. I have already visited three times its historical park, as well as the one of Si Satchanalai; 2) The valley of Pai; 3) Khaolak, for the nature and for the diving.

**If and when you have a day off, what do you prefer to do? Do you have any special hobbies?**

If I am not travelling, very often the only thing I want to do is to recharge my batteries. Then I wake up late, I read, I write, and rest beside the swimming pool, I meditate. I am Buddhist and meditation is an important part of my life... If I am in the mood, I may like to go with friends to a nice restaurant. My main hobbies are reading and writing.

**How many of your countryfolk are living in Thailand? When and why did Thailand become a desirable destination for your people?**

More than 1,000 Spaniards live permanently in Thailand.

I think that Thailand became a major tourist destination for the Spanish in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



The Spanish tourist felt attracted for the same reasons that tourists of other nationalities from around the world: the beaches, the shopping, the friendliness of Thais, the food, the culture...

**Do your country and Thailand have any exchange programmes for students today?**

Sadly not at the moment but it is something that we would like to investigate.

**If you could choose your next destination, where would you like to go?**

Myanmar. Its recent political history is underlined by its struggle to establish democratic structures amidst conflicting factions. This ongoing political transition from a closely held military rule to a free democratic system is widely believed to be determining the future of Myanmar. The resounding victory of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy in the 2015





general elections has raised hope for a successful culmination of this transition.

**Is there any memory from Thailand that you'd like to tell us, an awkward situation, a fun moment, etc?**

Once, when my daughter was four years old, she came into a temple and she saw, as usual, a big Buddha statue surrounded by some smaller ones. She told me very excitedly:

"Look Daddy. Many baby Bhuddas".

On another occasion, my parents came to visit me. For dinner I called telepizza and I ordered in Thai two small seafood pizzas. The pizzas came and my housemaid received them. We ate the two pizzas and the maid asked: What should I do with the other ten pizzas? Apparently I had mispronounced and had ordered twelve pizzas.

**Do you regularly meet up with your community?**

I meet my community less than I would like as they are spread around the country.

**What do you believe is your most important task as Ambassador for Spain to Thailand?**

Public relations and meeting people.

It allows me:

1) To strengthen the links between our two countries;



2) To promote a certain image of Spain;

3) To learn and to get ideas. Many of the initiatives I have taken came from ideas I got during a casual conversation. Maybe for an Ambassador, even more important than meeting people is listening carefully to them.

**What else would you like the expat community to know about your efforts?**

There is a stereotype that I would like to dispel: the idea that diplomats are always in formal dinners and receptions and having fun. Receptions and dinners are of course part of our job. They are the places where we can meet people, make contacts and forward issues. However most of us would prefer to be resting at home.



We add a little something extra to your holidays  
***DELIGHT IN THE GRAND EXPERIENCE***

A one-off exclusive summer deal you don't want to miss  
**THB 5,000 net**

From indulging in complimentary snacks to signature desserts, enjoy all the best that the Royal Cliff Grand Hotel has to offer while experiencing an amazing stay at the all-new Grand Sea View Plus!



To book the **"Grand Experience Package"**, please visit <https://bit.ly/2DQQ6vf>, call (+66) 38 250 421 ext. 2878 or send an email to [creative@royalcliff.com](mailto:creative@royalcliff.com)



## A GLOBAL DESTINATION OF EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES

ONESIAM the 'must-see' destination for all the family in the centre of Bangkok



*ONESIAM is a Global Destination of Extraordinary Experiences in Thailand. The premier entertainment attractions in Thailand and the best selection of restaurants in Bangkok all under the same roof.*

If you are visiting Bangkok from overseas, having a day out in the capital or you are an international resident in Thailand there is no better one-stop destination than ONESIAM.

No matter what your age, or the members of your friends, family or group, ONESIAM can provide the answer for a complete experience.

As a global destination it has few rivals as the eclectic range of world-class brand names and the Siam Paragon department store has some of the best designed and well stocked emporiums in Thailand.

Gentlemen, leave the ladies to browse and they will shop to their hearts delight, just arrange to meet them at a designated location in a couple of hours or for lunch to take the shopping bags before they embark on a second sortie. Whilst you browse at your speed, find a comfortable chair to view proceedings or rest whilst they shop.

For the children, of any age, there is something for everyone. On B1 floor Siam Paragon they have 'Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World' the only one in Thailand. This world-class aquarium apparently showcases over 8,000 species. Check out the spider crabs and octopus at Rocky Hideout or challenge yourself to take the Shark Walk where a thin sheet of acrylic underneath separating you from the five different species of sharks in a school, gam or frenzy!

For the little ones KidZania Bangkok again the only one in Thailand allows them to experience different types of 'role playing' for the future – a firemen, construction worker, police officer and or a fashion designer. They even teach them the value of money with 'kidZo' – their very own currency where they get paid and have to plan and learn about money management.



Sea Life Bangkok (the only one in Thailand)



KidZania (the only one in Thailand)



@Cosme Store



Madame Tussauds Bangkok

**The Edutainment Zone** on 4/4a floor of Siam Paragon immerses children in a learning environment and presents educational opportunities for both kids and adults to learn new skills in languages, the arts, music, dancing sport and IT.

The world famous **Madame Tussauds Wax Museum** is also on the 4th floor of Siam Discovery, the Exploratorium. Have your picture taken with the stars of film, pop, politics and sport. It's not just life sized wax figures but there are interactive activities along the way and the figures can all be touched and make great selfies with.

For the movie lovers amongst us the **Paragon Cineplex**, located on the 5th floor of the Siam Paragon, is home to 16 luxurious theatres showing the latest releases. The 'Honda Ultimate Screen' offers a laser projector and 4K projector or the Krungsri IMAX theatre screen which offers an 8 storey building height silver screen. Or the True 4DX theatre which offers a 'real time' experience as if you were actually part of the film with special effects including shaking, flashing lights and wind blowing. For those who have little ones, the Kids Cinema at Siam Paragon offers the full service to entertain the





kids with movies and play areas. They even have a babysitter service!

Wandering on we came upon the **Ecotopia Zone** at 4th floor, Siam Discovery. Visitors can immerse themselves in an eco-loving lifestyle of over 1,000 products from more than 100 brands of eco-friendly products covering fashion, beauty, food, gadgets, stationery, home and garden decoration, all of which have been specially designed to be friendly to our environment.

ONESIAM will definitely enable you to tick off your entire shopping list. For an exclusive shopping experience apply for VIZ card or ONESIAM-KBank Credit Card for a privileged shopping spree.

With all that walking, fun and entertainment you will need to stop on a frequent basis during the day to refuel and take on supplies and ONESIAM offers a host of coffee stops, dining and afternoon tea opportunities. Check out Charna, inspired by Thai local house's balcony on the 2nd floor, Siam Center, with healthy food of organic ingredients delivered from trusted farms under the concept of "feel good food". Or the famous Taiwanese original bubble tea store "Coco Fresh Tea & Juice". To eat there is every cuisine known to man, but we settled for **Jamie's Italian Restaurant** on G Floor, Siam Discovery from world acclaimed British chef Jamie Oliver. The menu was varied and suited all palates and ages, the food was delicious and they had even adapted some of the dishes to appeal to local tastes.

The table was full of signature dishes which included cured salmon, roasted shellfish, crab, avocado bruschetta with mayonnaise. Pizzas, pastas and grilled dishes of perfectly cooked fish and meat. The children had smoothies, the ladies talked through the spritzers and the men enjoyed a mix of imported beers and wine. A good time was had by all!



Ecotopia



O.D.S.



Paragon Cineplex



Jamie's Italian Restaurant





# H.E. Mrs. Suchitra Durai, Indian Ambassador to Thailand



Foreign Service. She also has two Master's degrees from the University of Madras, one in English and another in Defence Studies. In addition to English, she also speaks Hindi, Tamil and Spanish. Her Thai is in the works. Her husband R. Swaminathan is a former Permanent Secretary and a retired Ambassador.

Since 1988, she has worked in various capacities for the Indian Foreign Service. Before being appointed to her position as

**D**id you know that the origin of the Thai greeting sawasdee (hello) comes from the Sanskrit word स्वस्ति (svasti) meaning blessing or well-being? After a morning with HE Suchitra Durai, Indian Ambassador to Thailand, I had the opportunity to learn so much more about the deeply rooted connections between these two ancient cultures. The ubiquitous wai (hands together and bowed head) also originated in India as did Thai script and Pali language which is what the most sacred Buddhist religious texts are written in. Even the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration logo reflects the close ties as it showcases the Hindu God, Lord Indra. Ms. Durai is a wealth of information about the history and connection between Thailand and India but she is also very excited about the constantly evolving relationship and the multi-faceted contemporary ties.

Public service runs in the family in the case of Suchitra Durai; four generations of her family have worked in government positions in India so it seems almost fated that she would as well. Looking many decades into the past, her grandfather was a very senior level government official when India was still part of the British empire. Her father encouraged both her and her sister to be well educated and economically independent. Government service jobs in India offer the type of security he was seeking for his daughters as well as the opportunity to contribute something back to the country. After graduating from university with a bachelor's degree in English, Ms. Durai worked for three years as a journalist before taking the challenging All India Civil Services Exam. Because she scored well, she was able to have her choice of departments to work in and she opted for

Ambassador to Thailand 7 months ago, she served as the High Commissioner of India to Kenya, Ambassador to Somalia and Permanent Representative of India to the UN office in Nairobi. For a while she was also concurrently accredited as Ambassador to Eritrea. Prior to these major appointments, she worked in various other capacities for the Indian Foreign Service both at home and abroad, including positions in Vienna, Cairo, Buenos Aires and Madrid.

When I asked what drew her to a career in diplomacy she said with a smile, "Diplomacy combines patriotism with living abroad which is very attractive to many, including me." After nearly three decades as a career diplomat, she is particularly excited about her appointment to Thailand. She has felt comfortable in her adjustment to the Kingdom and couldn't recall any major stumbling blocks in her settlement into her new position. The cultural connection to Thailand and many years of cordial diplomatic relations have formed a strong foundation for her to build upon. There are nearly 80,000 Indian nationals living in Thailand and the approximately 250,000 Thai-Indians help form a unique bridge between the two cultures.

One of Ms. Durai's main goals is to help Thai people understand contemporary India across all disciplines whether it be economic, cultural, scientific or political. Because of all the history between the two cultures, one of her challenges is communicating to the average Thai person what modern India is all about. India is not just the birthplace of Buddhism and ancient temples. She is seeking to promote India as a place to get a world class education, a place to visit as a tourist (outside of the religious sites) and of course, as a major economic partner.



Currently, there are nearly 5000 Thai people enrolled in higher education programs in India. Ms. Durai would like to see that number increase steadily during her tenure. Technology and science are flourishing in India and the academic institutions are largely to thank for this. Whether you want to study robotics, nuclear power, artificial intelligence or something even more cutting-edge, India is a major global player in high-tech education. There are 25 university level scholarships available to Thai people to come to India for higher education.

The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation is another opportunity for Thai people to study in India on scholarship. MGC was established nearly 20 years ago and comprises six member countries: India, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. The focus is on cooperation in tourism, culture, education and transportation. India is the lead country for the education working group of MGC. She further explained that the opportunity for educational cooperation isn't only for university students; India also welcomes Thai military personnel to train with the Indian military.

Thailand and India are no strangers to massive influxes of tourists. Every year, there are almost 1.6 million Indians who come to the Kingdom for tourism. Conversely, there are only 150,000 Thai people who visit India every year, the majority of them to visit holy Buddhist sites such as Bodh Gaya. "India has temples, of course, but also snow, adventure tourism, wild life sanctuaries, beautiful beaches and a lot more to offer tourists," Ms. Durai said. She believes if more Thai people were aware of the diversity of activities that India offers, it would become a much more popular destination. She sees tourism as a real area for growth. In her short time in Thailand, she has done some tourism herself. She visited ancient Khmer ruins in Phimai, Nakhon Ratchasima province, Ayutthaya, Chiang Mai, Pattaya and Phuket.

Economic collaboration is her major focus. Right now, there is about \$12.5 billion USD worth of trade between Thailand and India; \$7.6 billion in Thai exports to India and \$4.86 billion in Indian exports to Thailand. In the ASEAN region, Thailand ranks as India's fifth largest trading partner behind Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia, so there is certainly room for growth. Trade between these two countries has been growing significantly in the last few years and shows no sign of slowing down. Reduced tariff rates and new initiatives, which both countries adhere to, have resulted in an eightfold increase in bilateral trade since 2000.



2017 saw 35% growth and 2018 saw 20% growth. By 2021, Ms. Durai aims to put that trade number at \$20 billion USD. She recognises that this is an ambitious goal, but believes they can reach it. The active India-Thai chamber of commerce and India-Thai business association coupled with the 2013 establishment of a Joint Business Council all stimulate bilateral trade and investments and present opportunities for business networking.







Outside these major diplomatic initiatives, Ms. Durai and her team have lots of exciting cultural events that they would like to share with both the Expat community and Thai nationals. This year is the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth and there are many talks and events scheduled to celebrate this milestone including a tree planting ceremony, a community bike ride and a children's drawing contest. Check out the embassy's website for a schedule of upcoming events. Ms. Durai generously gifted me a copy of Gandhi's autobiography after our interview which I have truly enjoyed reading. The Indian cultural centre has been operating for ten years and offers a wide range of courses in language, dance, music and culture. For the recent coronation of Rama X, India brought a famous dance troupe to celebrate. At the time of publishing, we have just missed International Yoga day 2019, but put it on your calendar for next year. The Indian embassy hosts an event for nearly 7000 people at Chulalongkorn University to practice yoga together. The Indian Social Club Fun Fair is another annual event that draws crowds of over 10,000 people. If sports are your thing, register for the Sikh Association's annual road race. I did it a few years ago and it was a lot of fun. If you attend any of the myriad of events sponsored by the Indian embassy or any of the Indian associations, keep an eye out for the ambassador as she makes a point to be very involved in her expat community.

Remaining consistent with her theme of making contemporary India more visible to Thailand, Ms. Durai is responsible for a major construction project as well. Despite the fact that India has had an embassy in Thailand since their independence in 1947, they do not have a formal residence for the ambassador; they have always rented. Ground has been broken and construction begun on the first official Indian ambassador's residence which will be completed during her tenure.

The dynamic relationship between Thailand and India continues to evolve. Economically, culturally, educationally there are so many opportunities for growth and partnership, all rooted in a shared cultural background. With Ms. Durai's leadership and passion driving diplomatic efforts, there's a lot to be excited about for relations between these two old friends.





# A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

Through learning environments such as our on-site Outdoor Classroom, we inspire children to discover passions and interests by exposing them to experiences in and beyond the classroom. This combined with the rigour of a strong academic programme gives them the foundations to become global citizens who shape their world through independence, empathy, creativity and critical thinking.



**Bangkok Patana School**

*The British International School in Thailand*  
Established 1957

[admissions@patana.ac.th](mailto:admissions@patana.ac.th)

Tel: +66 (0) 2785 2200

[www.patana.ac.th](http://www.patana.ac.th)

Bangkok Patana is a not for profit, IB World School accredited by CIS





## The Kutch chronicles: A journey into the arts and crafts of Kutch

*by Aparna Sharma*

I was super excited to go to Kutch, it has been on my travel list for sometime now and I am happy I can finally tick it off. Although I grew up in India, it was not until recently that I decided to travel solo to destinations in India whenever possible.

I have been interested in fashion and textiles ever since I was a kid and the concept of 'Farm to Fashion' is intriguing to me. I wanted to go to the grassroots level of block prints, tie and dye and the stunning embroidery made by the women of Kutch.

**T**here are so many different textiles and crafts in this area which spans across forty-six thousand square kilometres of land I have been to a few textile rich areas before but the astonishing diversity of crafts found in this area is perhaps unmatched anywhere in the world. Travelling within Kutch is time consuming because everything is spread out but I managed to see a few interesting textiles and crafts related villages in my six days there. From block printing to tie and dye, from bell making







to woodcarving, Kutch has a colourful crafts tradition that has been maintained over the centuries by the communities that have migrated to this region. For anybody who has a love for crafts and textiles and wants to visit this region, I have shortlisted the villages you should include to your itinerary.

#### **Tie and dye – Anjar:**

Anjar, this a region best known for the Jesal Toral Samadhi and its very busy with many artisans at work. The art of tie and dye has been practiced in this region for centuries. I enjoyed visiting the factories or Khar Khaanas as they are called locally. Most people are extremely patient and they show you the entire process from dipping into the dye and tying it. There is a local market in Anjar to shop the finished products. You can also buy finished products directly from the factories.



#### **Blockprint – Ajrakhpur:**

This was my personal favourite place. I love the different block designs used in this region, I probably shopped the most in this village. It is fascinating to watch the process of block printing that uses natural dyes made from turmeric, pomegranate, ink etc., to create endless yards of fabric. The printing blocks are carved and shaped with absolute precision and skill and the designs are beautiful. Traditionally, ajrak is the name of a block printed cloth with deep crimson red and indigo blue background, they have symmetrical patterns interspersed with sparkling white motifs.

#### **Khavda pottery:**

This village is very popular for the famous flamingos and its a treat for wildlife photographers who love to click these beautiful birds in this unique landscape. It is very close to the Indian border. I visited a family which specialises in the art of making pottery. The terracotta pots of Khavda looked different from the ones I saw elsewhere, the lady whom I visited was unfortunately not well on the day I visited and could not show me the entire process but I definitely enjoyed visiting this remote village.







### **Ludiya:**

Ludiya is one of the most beautiful villages I have seen. The main occupation of the womenfolk in the village is making lovely embroidery work and traditional crafts while the men make decorative furniture. I met a very enterprising mother and daughter here, I saw some pieces of cloth I wanted to convert into earrings. They understood what I wanted quickly and made 3 pairs of earrings for me in 30 minutes. The houses of the village have a typical structure called bhunga with intricate decorations both inside and outside. While the outside is decorated with vibrant motifs, the inside has had clay designs with mirror work. This village also had a small bazaar selling embroidered jackets, stalls etc.

### **Hodka:**

This is the village I stayed at near the Rann. There are so many beautiful tents and bhungas available for staying around this village. The women in this village make beautiful embroidery and there is a family which makes leather shoes using different textiles like mushroom silk, embroidered cloth etc. I saw so many different styles of embroidery, there are definitely more than 15 different styles I observed. As per reports by Shrujan which is an NGO in Kutch, there are around 16 different styles of embroidery identified in this region. You can buy the finished products directly from the villagers, I felt so close to the process of farm to fashion .



### **Jura copper bells:**

There is a family in this village which specialises in making copper bells. They show you the entire process and all the different sounds each bell makes.

They are made from scrap metal, the copper is moulded and crafted into bells of all shapes and sizes. No two bells are alike in their chimes which was extremely interesting for me, I keep ringing them and loved the differences in the sound. These bells were formally used for animals by pastoral communities but are now often used in urban homes as decorative pieces.







### Nirona Rogan art:

The Khatri family in Nirona, a small village are the last surviving custodians of the art form but they told me that they have set up a school which teaches girls this art form. They are ensuring that this art survives because it is truly unique. The 'Tree of Life', is their signature painting and most in demand thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi who took it as a gift to the then U.S. President Barack Obama during his visit to America.

### Recommendations for places to stay:

#### Ganeshbaugh:

This is a beautiful bungalow amidst 30 acres of farm in Anjar. The price range is around Rs.2000 per person.



#### SharadBaug

##### Homestay:

This is a beautiful home stay in Bhuj, the price range is 1500Rs to 5000Rs.

#### Shaam E Sarhad:

This is a property with beautiful bhungas and tents with a price range of 2000Rs to 6000Rs.





# BEAT THE TRAFFIC, LET US TAKE CARE OF IT!

## Your groceries delivered within 3 hours

[www.villamarket.com](http://www.villamarket.com)



call : 02-779-1000 email : [online@villamarket.com](mailto:online@villamarket.com)  @villa.supermarket  villa market  villa.supermarket

### HOW TO PLACE AN ORDER

#### 1 SIGN UP

Sign up at [www.villamarket.com](http://www.villamarket.com) (Please, fill in Vplus member no. to earn automatically reward points when you shop online.)

#### 2 ADDRESS

Please verify your address

#### 3 + ADD PRODUCTS

Add products to your shopping cart

#### 4 SELECT SCHEDULE

After check out your cart please choose your delivery option and choose your payment method.

#### 5 ✓ COMPLETE ORDER

Please follow the check out process, and complete your order.

### CONDITIONS

1. Same day delivery service is available to make before 6 p.m. (self-pick up until 9 p.m.) After that, orders will be delivered in the next day.
2. Your order can be requested up to 7 days early.
3. Additional terms and conditions are designated by the company, please refer to [www.villamarket.com](http://www.villamarket.com).



# "SAY NO TO PLASTIC BAGS!"

## EVERY 4<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> OF EACH MONTH

### SHOP ONLINE @ VILLA MARKET

FREE REUSABLE CLOTH BAGS!

(When spend over THB 2,000  
with VM Shop Online in a single order  
on 4<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> of each month)



**VILLA MARKET**  
WORLD OF FOODS SUPERMARKET

## Vplus Membership

เปลี่ยนการ SHOPPING ของคุณให้ง่ายขึ้น  
พร้อมรับสิทธิประโยชน์อย่างคุ้มค่ากับ VPLUS WALLET

SPEND

**20 = 1**

บาท / THB

คะแนน / point

BECOME A VPLUS MEMBER TODAY  
to get experience rewards & exclusive offers



Available on the  
App Store



Get it on  
Google play



REDEEM

**4 = 1**

คะแนน / point

ROP mile

REDEEM

**500 = 100**

คะแนน / point

บาท / THB

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT  
[www.villamarket.com](http://www.villamarket.com)





# Celebrate International Day of Yoga 2019

*by Helena Hoffmann*



How it all began...  
Yoga took its time to have its 'own' day. In 2015 the United Nations General Assembly declared June 21 unanimously as the International Day of Yoga (IDY). This year IDY was celebrated for the 5th time and the anniversary became a tradition worldwide with a yearly growing number of people who join this celebration. Many places all around the world organise special events for Yoga Day and Bangkok is one of them with a high participation of yoga practitioners.

As yoga is such an ingrained part of India's history and lifestyle, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to the United Nations in 2014 with a proposal to create a special day for yoga. Thanks to him, yoga gained more significance around the world, and since then observed and celebrated across the globe.

In the UN General Assembly (UNGA) he gave an inspiring speech which convinced 177 out of 193 countries (the highest number of co-sponsors for any UNGA resolution in history) to approve the International Day of Yoga.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon added in a message, "Yoga can bring communities together in an inclusive manner that generates respect and can promote peace and development."

Going beyond the view of yoga as physical and mental disciplines, Modi promoted it as a holistic way of life that stresses "harmony between man and nature" and simpler







lifestyles. With all these positive prospects and benefits, no wonder the proposal was so highly accepted and adopted.

The annual IDY celebration is a reminder that yoga is for everyone regardless of our physical aptitude, age, beliefs or religion. It is about raising awareness of this practice and all the benefits anyone can attain through it. Yoga teaches us to take charge of our entire being. From stress relief and a more flexible body to a healthier lifestyle, everyone definitely benefits from a little bit of yoga.

*“Yoga is an invaluable gift from our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action... a holistic approach that is valuable to our health and our wellbeing. Yoga is not just about exercise; it’s a way to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help in wellbeing. Let us work towards adopting an International Day of Yoga”*

— Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN General Assembly.

Yoga is not about doing some fancy postures or gymnastics but rather a way of life and a self-care tool (to honour our body, mind and soul).



*“We have to take care of our body as a friend and not to fight with our body.” <sup>1</sup>*

Yoga is very beneficial for physical fitness, muscular-skeletal functioning and cardiovascular health. It also helps in lifestyle disorders like depression, fatigue, anxiety, diabetes, hypertension and other stress-related issues. It stresses the importance of taking care of our earth and ourselves. The practice teaches us to connect with nature and respect all forms of life and be kind to each other.

This year on Sunday, June 16, again more than 5,000 yoga enthusiasts and yoga friends participated wholeheartedly in the celebration on the grounds of Chulalongkorn University in the early morning hours to pay gratitude to the sun, our life force and to enjoy our healthy lifestyle with likeminded people.



As in previous years the biggest and healthiest event in Bangkok was hosted and organised by the Embassy of India to Thailand in partnership with various supporting organisations. Everyone in Bangkok was welcome to celebrate the holistic approach to physical wellbeing, mental peace and emotional balance.

The opening remarks were held by H.E. Mrs Suchitra Durai (Ambassador of India to Thailand) and Professor Bundhit Eua-arporn Ph.D. (President of the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok). The Common Yoga Protocol was lead by Master Sanjiv Chaturvedi from Divine Yoga, Bangkok.

This was undoubtedly again a great success for India, for the Indian Embassy in Thailand and for the yogic culture and tradition. Photos and videos of the yoga event in Bangkok were sent to Delhi to the Ministry of AYUSH (Abbreviation for: Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani 'herbs', Siddha 'ancient medicine' and Homeopathy) and were broadcasted on India's news channel. More and more people are making the effort to adopt yoga as a lifestyle and stay committed to it.

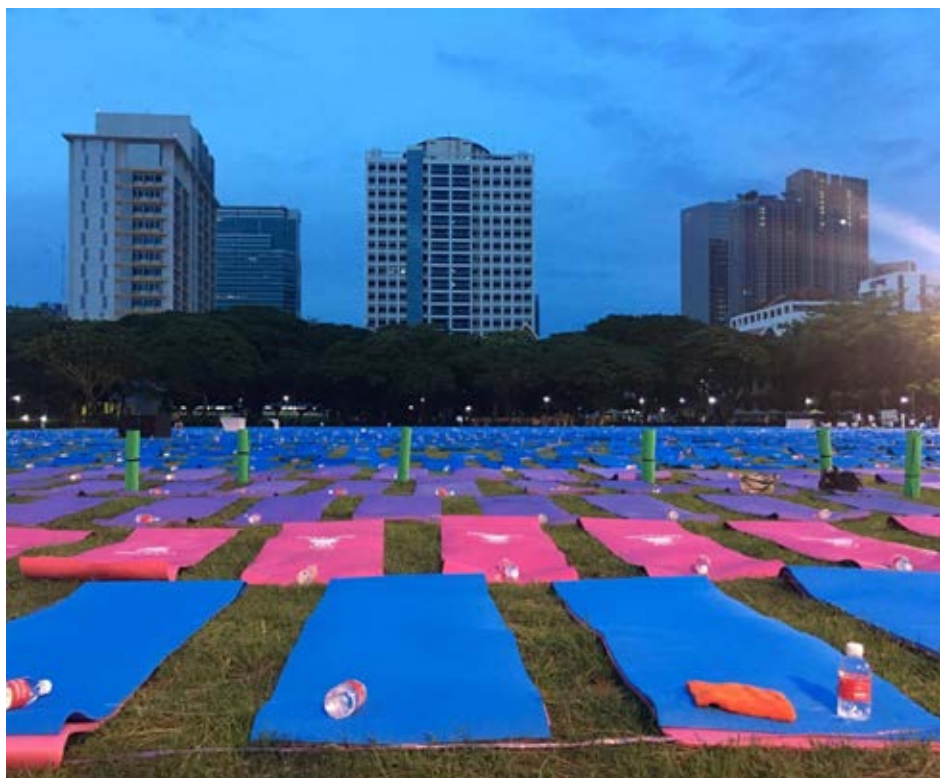
The true beauty of yoga is, that everyone can do it. You can start today and whatever your current knowledge of yoga is, everyone can join the annual celebration. See you next year for the 6th International Day of Yoga here in Bangkok.

<sup>1</sup> Master Sanjiv Chaturvedi,  
Divine Yoga Bangkok

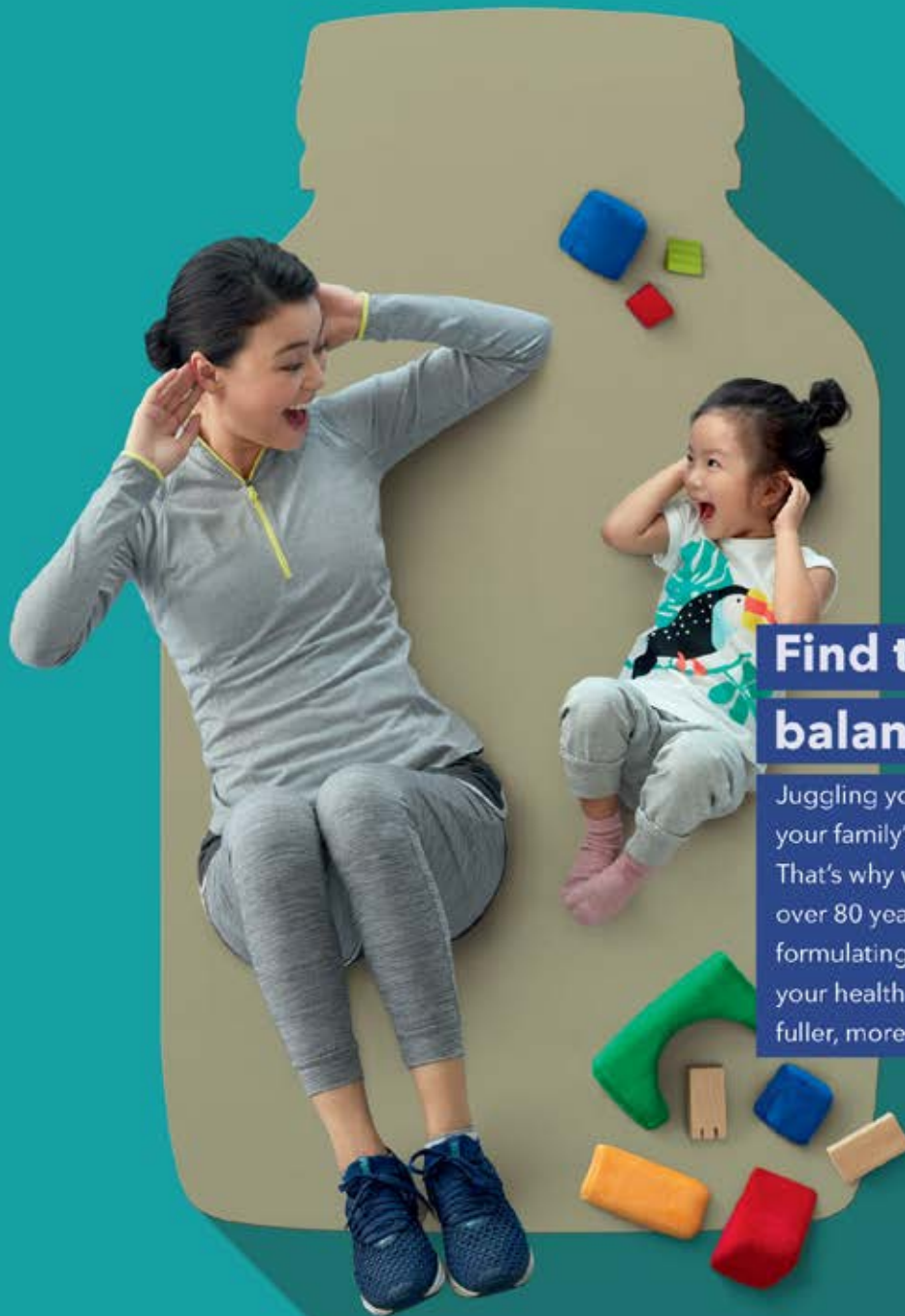


**About the author: Helena Hoffmann** is originally from Germany but lives for more than 13 years in Bangkok. She founded and worked for her own travel

agency "[www.bangkok360.de](http://www.bangkok360.de)" for German speaking tourists for the last 7 years. Looking for something new, since February she joined the "Expat Life in Thailand" team as Social Media Editor. What else? Married, having two wonderful boys 13 and 10 years old, live and practice yoga every day, have a passion for cooking and eating as well reading. ☺







## Find the perfect balance in life.

Juggling your career and your family's well-being is not easy. That's why we've spent over 80 years researching and formulating natural ways to better your health. So that you can live a fuller, more complete life each day.

**80** 

Over 80 years of expertise in natural health



Our ingredients are rigorously checked for quality



BLACKMORES  
INSTITUTE

Supported by  
Blackmores Institute

• CELEBRATING •

**10** years  
of trust  
BLACKMORES

**Begin  
Better  
Every  
:Day**

#ReachForBetter



# YOGA FOR TRAVELLERS

Create Inside Harmony  
During Your Journey



## Yoga for travellers

*by Sanjiv Chaturvedi*

**T**echnology and travelling have made our world a global village. This phenomenon is called globalisation. It is a process of interconnection between people around the globe. We have access to all information worldwide and we can quickly and easily travel wherever we want.

People are coming closer and sharing their knowledge and experiences. It has always been exciting for people to travel around the world for wanderlust, getting new ideas, discovering new cultures, education, making trade and visit family or friends. In ancient times travelling wasn't that simple and safe but today travelling becomes so easy, safe and exciting. That's why we like it and enjoy it so much. But there are two sides to everything. Travelling, especially excessively, has some adverse impact on your health.

Frequent travelling and or travelling through more than 4 time zones are not always pleasant or fun. The difference in quality of water, air, food and a sudden change of weather and temperature is not easy for our bodies to adjust.

**Following circumstances significantly lead to physical and behavioural health risks such as:**

- jet lag, our natural body clock gets confused
- deep vein thrombosis
- viral infections
- less or no physical activity or exercise
- trouble with sleeping, through late nights, early mornings, and terrible eating habits
- indigestion and constipation

- obesity
- alcohol dependency, to compensate stress
- increased consumption of cigarettes, to compensate stress
- restlessness
- depression
- lose our sensations
- more stiffness than usual, aches and pain become worse
- thirsty and tired most of the time.

Disruption of our body cycle is linked to higher risk of cancer, obesity, heart diseases, nausea, diabetes, low libido, stress and imbalance in menstrual cycle for women.

### **Staying healthy**

Most of the time we cannot cut back on business travel. Thus, to manage these health issues, we tend to neglect the symptoms or rely on medicine. So how to manage the potential hazards of too much travelling with a holistic approach and without medicine? Stress management, mindfulness and gentle yoga movements including conscious breathing practices are important parts of taking care of ourself while away. Depending on your time and favourite praxis choose one, two or all practices to stay fit and healthy.



## 1. PAWANMUKASANA Series 1 (PW1)

These series of practices are divided into 3 groups and allow practitioners of all physical aptitudes to benefit from its healing properties.

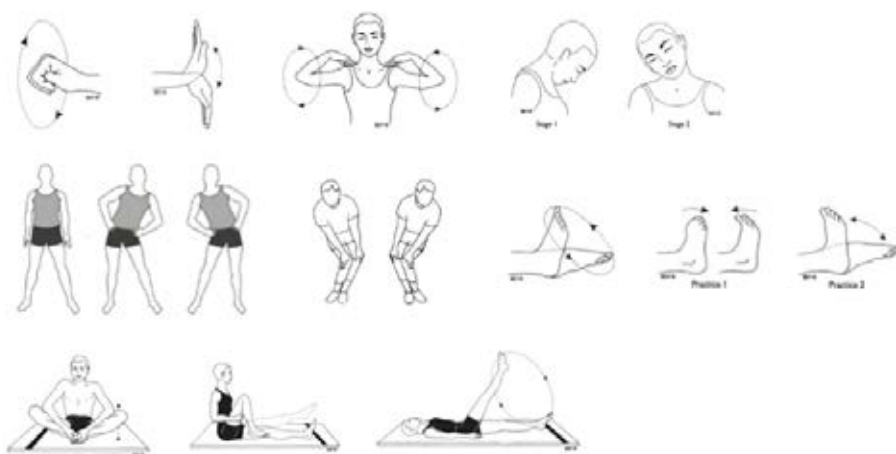
PW1 is a sequence of anti-rheumatic asanas.

PW2 is a sequence of anti-gastric asanas.

PW3 is a sequence of energy releasing asanas.

To manage health problems related to frequent travelling the PW1 series is the easiest, safest, time saving and most beneficial remedy. It prevents all joints, muscles and nerves from stiffness and encourages blood and prana circulation to every cell and tissue. The sequence consists of rotation and bending of joints and stretching of muscles as well as nerves. It gives profound relaxation to the heart, muscles, nerves, brain cells and mind by encouraging smooth blood and prana circulation.

The pawanmuktasana series was introduced by Swami Satyananda Saraswati from Bihar School of Yoga, India.



Everyone can do this practice, without any exception. Even people with health issues or injuries can practice it. There are no negative side effects or any harm even if you do the practice incorrectly. People having high blood pressure, heart ailments, diabetes, stress, cramp tightness in muscles and nerves benefit from this practice. This practice doesn't require a yoga mat. It can be done on a chair or bed and at any time of the day.

**Recommended amount:** 10–20 rounds each side (left and right)

## 2. Sun salutation

Regular yoga practitioners and those who prefer a slightly physical approach can choose the sun salutation sequence to stay fit. Depending on the pace and the repetition of rounds this practice is a great cardio workout as well. Advanced practitioners go with breath awareness, beginners do it with normal breathing. Sun salutation rounds are an effective way of loosening up, stretching, massaging and toning all the joints, muscles and internal organs of the body. Its versatility and application make it one of the most useful methods of inducing a healthy, vigorous and active life. For this practice morning time is the best to increase the energy level for the whole day. Precaution: People with heart problems, high blood pressure or any severe injuries or surgery should refrain from this practice.

**Recommended amount:** 3-6 rounds. After the sun salutation rounds relax in Savasana for 3 min.

## 3. Recommended short asana travel sequence



These movements are particularly useful for those who spend a lot of time sedentary, have stiffness or pain in the back. These movements improve body posture, stretching the whole body, strengthen the muscles, and increase oxygenation and lung capacity. They are great for the internal organs. They massage and stretch the abdomen organs (like stomach, liver, kidney and pancreas) and increase bowel movement.

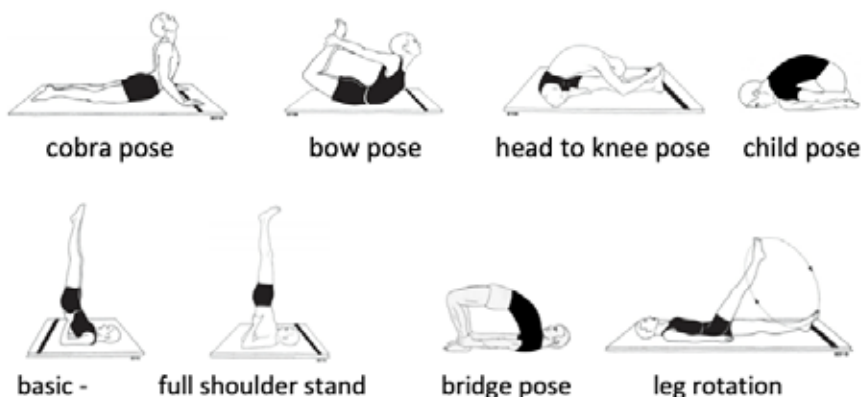




If you have more time add first some backward and later some forward bending.

If you want, you can add shoulder stand and those who cannot do shoulder stand, can do bridge pose. Add as last asana one leg raise pose and finish your practice with savasana.

Do each posture 10 times each side or counts.



**4. Pranayama** People who don't like physical practices, can do pranayama on a chair or bed. Real yoga starts with pranayama and not as most practitioner think with asanas. Asanas are just a warm-up for the advanced practice of pranayama. The different pranayama techniques have variant purposes and benefits. But overall, they balance the body clock, increase the capacity of breath, make us feel centred and focused, and control our mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

**a) Kapalbhathi** recharge the whole respiratory system and is a great detox practice. It cleans the lungs and the frontal lobe (sinus area). It is very beneficial for the lungs and the digestive system. It is ideal to do it in a cold climate, because it creates heat in the body and energises. So, you feel more alert and active throughout the day. Precaution: Kapalbhathi should be performed on an empty stomach. People with high blood pressure, acidity, vertigo, epilepsy, stroke, gastric ulcer, or who have gone through any surgery recently should refrain from this practice. Pregnant woman should not do this practice.

**Recommended amount:** 30–50 breaths in one round (do 3 rounds)

**b) Sheetkari** is a cooling practice and ideal to do in a hot climate. It cools down the body and mind. It is very good for people with high blood pressure, acidity, severe heart problem and continual sensation of thirst. It should be done inside.

**Recommended amount:** 10–20 breaths

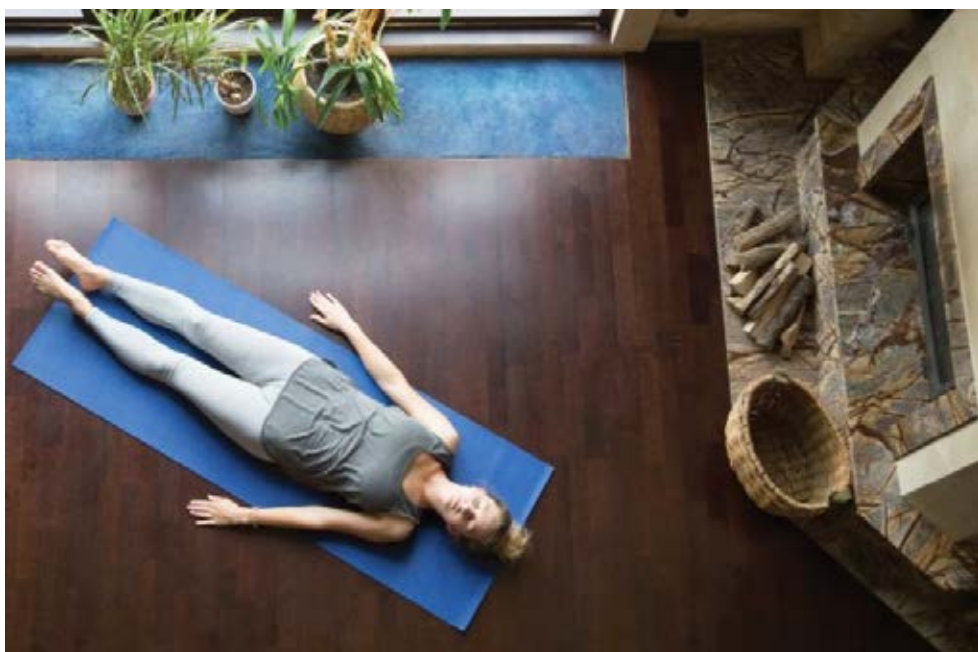
**c) Nadi Shodana** is one of the best practices for everybody even for people with severe illness. It recharges each and every cell to control the mind and our emotions and to make us feel calm, quiet, peaceful and centred. It is the most effective healing method in yoga.

**Recommended amount:** 10-20 rounds according to your time.

## 5. Yoga Nidra/relaxation

This is true meditation where there is nothing to do but to 'notice and witness' – your feelings, thoughts, breath and body parts. Yoga Nidra brings awareness to every level of being. It includes the body, energy and breath, mind and emotions and this in return, allows each level to relax. Best of all, 20 minutes of Yoga Nidra is said to be equivalent to three hours of sleep! The best time to do it is in the afternoon (after your meetings) or night time before going to bed. All you need is a comfortable place to lie down.

- Scan your body, gradually move your awareness through your body (from top to toes right side and from toes to top left side and from back to front side). Rotate and visualise each and every part of your body. Experience sensations in single body parts.
- Bring attention to your breathing (do deep abdominal breathing). Observe the natural flow of air in the nostrils, throat and rib cage and the rise and fall of the abdomen with each breath.
- Count backward on your breath from 11 to 1.
- Recall your day mentally, all your activities from the morning to the evening. That gives deep relaxation.







If you feel it is difficult to follow your own instructions, then it might help being guided by an instructor's voice. Follow the YouTube link below! This Yoga Nidra instruction is the one from my Guru and from the first Yoga University in India, "Bihar School of Yoga". Search on YouTube for: "Yoga Nidra – Beginners by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4fO1istXvo&t=4s>

### AUM Mantra chanting

All mantras have intense physical and mental benefits. They relieve stress and tensions. The rhythm and sound of the chanting moves energy through the body. The movement of energy regulates the chemicals in our brains. Mantras enhance positive alpha waves which give deep mental relaxation.

The easiest and most beneficial mantra is the 'AUM' Mantra. For this as well, if you feel uncomfortable to hear your own voice alone, you can chant synchronic with one of the many Aum mantras you can find on YouTube. It can be done in the sitting position on a chair or on the bed.

**Recommended amount:** 5-11 times.

---

*About the author: Master Sanjiv Chaturvedi received his Masters Degree in Applied Yogic Science from the Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first yoga university in India in 2004. His studies focused on the understanding of modern medicine as well as mastering the application of yogic science. He is as well a certified yoga therapy master with more than 15 years of teaching experience.*





# Meet the new face of SHOM

## The Association for the Spouses of the Heads of Missions

by Kathleen Pokrud

*Behind every successful man or woman, there is always a dedicated partner who works behind the scenes. In the case of the diplomatic corps, spouses and partners stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their Ambassadors who are reaching the pinnacle of their diplomatic careers.*

On a very busy long weekend afternoon, I was welcomed to the classy penthouse residence of the Ambassador of the European Union to the Kingdom of Thailand. I was there to meet with Madame Olga Shumylo-Tapiola, the spouse of H.E. EU Ambassador Pirkka Tapiola. Prior to the meeting, I felt a bit overwhelmed, as I have often encountered this powerful couple at social functions. The Ambassador always looking impressive whilst Madame elegantly dressed, the couple present a formidable sight. Fortunately, the current president of SHOM Bangkok put me right at ease with her warm hospitality. Our meeting was to get to know about SHOM and to learn more about her personal story and role as an Ambassador's spouse.

### SHOM: Spouses of the Heads of Missions

SHOM stands for "Spouses of Heads of Missions". In Bangkok, it was founded 15 years ago to serve as a club for the spouses to meet up and assist newcomers to settle down into their new environment.

Throughout the years, the group has evolved to be



more structured and formal, with regular monthly meetings and interest groups in various fields. Frequently, well-known Thai and international speakers are invited to help SHOM members learn more about Thai society and culture. Historically, Embassies participated in the YWCA and the Red Cross Diplomatic Bazaars held annually to raise funds for local charities with SHOM members taking a leading role in helping with the organisation of these events. SHOM members are invited to model for the "Celebration of Silk" fashion show to champion Thai silk in honour of the Queen Mother Sirikit's project.

Over the years, SHOM has established itself as an influential and high profile group in Thailand. Its charity events attract many prominent Thai and foreign guests. Its fundraising efforts cover areas from sustainability to education, to raising awareness about various social causes and inclusivity.







### The new phase of SHOM

This year, SHOM is looking further afield and Mrs. Tapiola's job, as the new president from January 2019, is to help the group reach new objectives. Her first remark was, "The credit for SHOM's name, visibility and influence goes to my predecessors – Mrs. Lucia Costantini and Mrs. Gracita Tolentino Sieber – and other prominent active members of the group, many of whom have already left Thailand. My task is to take SHOM to a new level – listening to the members and making sure we act according to our values, capabilities and capacities. At the beginning of 2019, we conducted a survey among the members and identified three areas of activities – sustainability issues, children's wellbeing and women's rights."

There is a new Sustainability Group within SHOM being set up with the members meeting regularly to discuss important environmental projects such as on waste management, eradication of plastic waste, green cooking etc. August Kleven of Finland and Susie Ruff of Denmark are leading the pack. The first group's initiative is to support sustainability - and environment related projects of the BMA school. Also, SHOM is looking into joining efforts with the Precious Plastic Thailand initiative to help recycle certain type of plastic. Recently, SHOM members met with the team of Operation Smile Thailand to learn more about the initiative that aims at providing medical guidance and safe surgeries to underprivileged children with facial deformities in remote rural areas across Thailand. Ideas for further cooperation between the groups were discussed.

"There is a strong desire within the group to be as practical as possible when it comes to our support. We are eager to humbly share our own skills, knowledge and ideas coming from our different countries with the local benefactors. In addition to our charitable efforts, we are willing to invest time and energy on a daily basis," – said Mrs. Tapiola.

Mrs. Tapiola claims that this work would not be successful without support of her colleagues who serve on 2019 SHOM committee – vice president Mrs. Marie Cotter

of Ireland, Mrs. Ewa Dubaniowska of Poland, Mrs. Christina Macpherson of New Zealand, Mrs. Gracita Tolentino Sieber of Switzerland, Dr. Kevin Colleary of Portugal, and Mrs. Ximena Rios of Peru. SHOM's experience in Thailand would not be as rich and enlightening without Karin Herrstrom of Sweden's Book Club and Katharina Cornaro of the Netherland's Movement Group.

### Life as a Diplomat's spouse

Thailand is not her first posting as an Ambassadorial spouse. Ambassador Tapiola served previously as EU Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova, prior to their move to Thailand.

Born in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, Madame Olga served as a political analyst and later on as director of one of the leading think-tanks in her home country until her marriage almost a decade ago. The couple met in Crimea, Ukraine. Mrs. Tapiola moved to Brussels to follow her husband.







A professional with two Master's Degrees – MA in International Relations from the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, and MSc in Political Economy of Transition from the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, Mrs. Tapiola does not stop learning. A few years ago, she retrained as a group psychotherapist in Psychodrama method at the Moscow Institute of Gestalt and Psychodrama.

Mrs. Tapiola is enjoying her life in Thailand. "Supporting my husband in representing the European Union is an honour and privilege that I do not take that for granted. The significant issue about the European Union is that by sharing sovereignty and values, 28 European member states have made conflict and war virtually impossible within their borders," she admits.

Despite the challenges of diplomatic life, Madame Olga has no intention to lock up her knowledge during her term in Bangkok. She works as a volunteer with local NGOs providing psychological support to groups of adults facing various life challenges. She says: "I am an advocate of mental health. I love group therapy, its power and potential. I am privileged to be able to walk next to my group members and provide support on the way. I am learning more about Thai people and trying to tune in my support with the local culture."

She is also running a support group within SHOM that meets on regular basis to discuss challenges of diplomatic life. While not being a therapy group, it serves as a platform for the members. "We are grateful for the experience that our spouses' roles grant us. Yet, with the beauty of moving to a new country and learning new cultures, comes the challenge of relocation, of adjustment to the new environment, of not having a job, reinventing ourselves with every posting. We all know how to pack up an old life, move, unpack and build a new one from scratch. It helps to know that there are other people who are there for us – understanding, not judging, supporting."

Mrs. Tapiola's experience of running an office, her research and organisational skills, her interest in people and their lives – all come handy whether she is supporting her husband in representing the European Union, coordinating

SHOM life, or trying to understand the host country. "My philosophy is to enable people, to offer space for them to grow to their best potential wherever I go."

### Impressions of Thailand

Like many expatriates, Madame Olga has enjoyed visits to Phuket, Krabi, Chiang Mai and Hua Hin. Prior to this posting in Thailand, the couple had visited the country a number of times as tourists. When the news about the posting came about, they were delighted for the move.

With the celebrations of the Royal Coronation of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua, Ambassador Tapiola and Madame Olga were invited on the third day to attend the Royal Audience Grant by His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen to Heads of Diplomatic Missions and their spouses. Like many others, they were glued to the television on the first two days, watching this historical outstanding event.

My last question to the graceful Madame, "What was your impression of the Coronation celebrations?" Her straightforward reply was, "It was impressive, beautiful, something truly unique. It was an honour for us to have been part of one of the ceremonies of this grand event. It will certainly stay with us for the rest of our lives."





# ISB International School Bangkok

*where you belong*



## Join the ISB Native Language Academy

We know that native language learning benefits a child's emotional well-being, enhances academic success and promotes the acquisition of additional languages. Through the ISB Native Language Academy, children are able to maintain their native language through ISB's engaging and innovative learning approaches, in an environment where they feel linguistically and culturally at home. Current languages on offer:

**DANISH DUTCH FRENCH GERMAN**  
**HEBREW ITALIAN SPANISH**

**JAPANESE KOREAN**  
**MANDARIN THAI**



39/7 SOI NICHADA THANI, SAMAKEE RD., PAKKRET, NONTHABURI 11120  
TELEPHONE: 0 2963 5800 | [ADMISSIONS@ISB.AC.TH](mailto:ADMISSIONS@ISB.AC.TH)

[nativelanguage@isb.ac.th](mailto:nativelanguage@isb.ac.th), [www.isb.ac.th](http://www.isb.ac.th)





# Make-A-Wish<sup>®</sup>

THAILAND

It's life changing. Without Make-A-Wish, these modest requests would be unattainable for the sick children and their families.

For children to be eligible to apply for the programme, they must be critically ill and between the ages of 3 -18 at the time of referral. They need to be referred to the programme by either a parent or legal guardian, by the medical professionals treating the child or by the child themselves. The applications are reviewed by the foundation who then grants as many wishes to deserving children as they are able to. Not all children's wishes are granted but there is something we can do.

Unfortunately, in Thailand, despite the many critically ill children, the wish programme has not taken off the way it has in America, the UK, Australia or Europe. Lots of wishes have been granted but more can be done to help these kids. **It's well documented that Make-A-Wish is totally committed to using donor funds for the benefit of the children, not to carry inflated administration costs.** The global reputation of Make-A-Wish as a financially responsible non-profit means that donors can be confident that their contributions are going to be used in a responsible manner. Make-A-Wish takes their transparency a step further and shares photographs and documentation of the wishes with donors. Thailand is a hotbed for non-profit charities but Make-A-Wish has proven its value, stability and impact around the world making it one of the worthiest causes to support.

Besides financial support, there are several other ways you can help these kids have one last unforgettable memory before they pass. The final wishes of these kids come in all shapes and sizes so there are options for the average person as well as the multinational corporation to help.

Volunteers give an extremely valuable gift, their time. Make-A-Wish needs volunteers who share in their commitment and passion to see these kids smile.

There are three types of volunteers: supporting, cooperation, collaboration. Supporting volunteers give venues or food to support the wishes. Cooperation volunteers work with the foundation to plan and prepare activities. Collaboration volunteers do activities along with the kids. Volunteers are critical to the foundation and you can apply to be a volunteer by writing to [thailandmakeawish@gmail.com](mailto:thailandmakeawish@gmail.com).

Granting these wishes does more than allow for some photo ops and a fun day out for the kids. These events have much further reaching effects. First, the wishes help children to replace fear with confidence, sadness with joy and anxiety with hope. The positive emotional repercussions are really important for the children's mental state. Second, the wishes allow the kids to see outside their sickness, even if it's just for

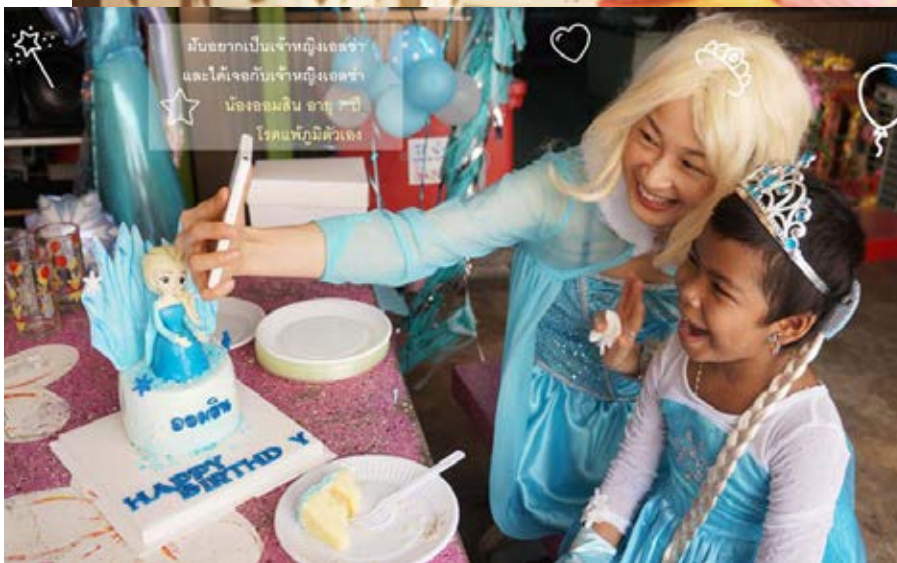
**T**erminal means incurable, inoperable, untreatable, mortal, deadly, lethal, fatal. Many of us have felt the pain and shock of finding out that a family member or close friend has a terminal illness. But can you imagine getting this news about your young son or daughter? Your niece or nephew? For too many families, this news is a reality.

*In the moments of darkness, anxiety and sadness surrounding these diagnoses, there is a ray of hope. Since launching in Thailand in 2012, the Make-a-Wish Foundation has been putting smiles back on the faces of many of these critically ill children.*

For those unfamiliar with the Make-A-Wish Foundation, it's an American non-profit organisation, operating in over 50 countries, that grants last wishes to terminally ill children who would not otherwise be able to have these experiences. It was started in 1980 with the wish of one American boy and the foundation has granted over 480,000 wishes to children around the world since then.

As adults, we often forget the beautiful simplicity of a child's desires. Many of the wishes are quite simple – a party with friends, a trip to the beach, a tea party with Elsa from Frozen. But the joy that they bring to these children and their families in a time of immense sadness is far from simple.





one day, and feel like a kid again. This, in turn, brings a sense of normalcy and stability back to the struggling family. Lastly, forty years of research shows that wishes can improve the children's quality of life and produce better health outcomes. Physicians agree, which is why so many medical practitioners support this foundation. The ripple effect of just one small wish being granted has positive effects on all parties involved.

Children accepted into the Make-A-Wish programme would not be able to have these experiences without the hard work, donations and kind hearts of everyone who supports this organisation.

If you feel compelled to help out in any way, contact Make-A-Wish Thailand and see how you can get involved with this worthy organisation. Grant these kids their wish and to give them some hope and a little happiness, they deserve it.

095 451 5565 083 734 2333  
[thailandmakeawish@gmail.com](mailto:thailandmakeawish@gmail.com)  
[www.makeawish.or.th](http://www.makeawish.or.th)





# First in the World

*In June, Wellington College Bangkok ended a hugely successful first academic year, capped by a global-scale achievement.*

In May 2019, Wellington College Bangkok became the first school in the world to successfully complete the six-month COBIS Patron's Accreditation process inside its first year of operation, and the first in Thailand in any year. COBIS, the Council of British International Schools, is the largest and most important network of British schools across the globe, representing over five hundred educational organizations in seventy-five countries.

The Inspection Report notes: 'the school offers a curriculum that allows all pupils to excel'; 'the pupils are independent learners who ask challenging questions'; 'Parents have an extremely high level of satisfaction with the school'; and 'the school has exceptionally detailed and effective ways of monitoring pupils' progress'. 85% of all educational provision at Wellington College Bangkok was judged to be not only very good – but 'an example

to all COBIS schools of best practice', a notably impressive accomplishment for a school that had not even completed its first full academic year.

The Inspection visit itself lasted for most of a week and coincided with a highly successful Wellington College Annual Review inspection. The positive report from Wellington College's inspector confirmed the high quality of Wellington College Bangkok in the context of Wellington College International, likely the world's top school brand in terms of ethos, prestige and excellence.

An area of great anticipation for the upcoming academic year at Wellington College Bangkok is the new Top Floor. The oldest students will take advantage of the ground-breaking provision here, including the Meitner Laboratory, Harkness Rooms, Learning Studios, Drama Studio and the Lovelace-Babbage Computing Lab.

## Wellington College Bangkok according to COBIS:

*'The school offers a curriculum that allows all pupils to excel.'*

*'The pupils are independent learners who ask challenging questions'*

*'Parents have an extremely high level of satisfaction with the school'*

*'The school has exceptionally detailed and effective ways of monitoring pupils' progress'*



Top Floor Learning Studio







White Room - Harkness Learning

The Meitner Laboratory is a teaching lab and classroom where students from Year 3 (7 years old) learn practical, experiment-based science from a specialist science teacher. The impressive and expansive lab is fully CLEAPSS-compliant, which represents the UK's highest standards for laboratory safety, and features a separate prep room staffed by a dedicated lab technician.

Two brand-new Harkness Rooms (the classic, polished-wood Exeter Room and the sleek, modern White Room) are to be utilised in Harkness Learning, which is a powerful form of discussion-based, student-led learning that promotes independent critical thinking as well as individual confidence and maturity. According to Founding Master and Head of Senior School Chris Nicholls, "When done properly, Harkness learning resembles the inner workings of a very good boardroom. While Harkness is used quite extensively at Wellington College in Berkshire, UK, from age 13, we introduce it in Bangkok from the age of 8."

The Learning Studio stretches the

length of the Top Floor and provides a comfortable co-working environment for students and staff to engage in small-group discussions and individual work, as well as being a venue for social interaction. At a preview event for Wellington families, parents remarked that the ambience reminded them of a business class lounge at the airport, or a university library.

New Art and Design Technology rooms in the school, linked to the Lovelace-Babbage Computing Lab on the Top Floor via the innovative 'Control Room', a space designed for open-ended problem-solving in any area of study, add cutting-edge creative and technological options.

As developments continue apace, construction of The Theatre—a grand, professional-grade 600-seat performing arts space (with full orchestra pit)—is on schedule for completion in early 2020 and the innovative and extraordinary Senior School is set to open for the 2021-2022 academic year.

As for 2018-2019, Wellington College Bangkok enjoyed enormous success in its inaugural year, bringing in a very

strong cohort of UK-based teachers, who not only have made excellent progress in moving the teaching and education of students forward in the classroom, but also have produced exciting musical productions, led day and residential trips across all age groups, and arranged a slew of competitive sporting fixtures almost since Day 1. The most important metrics—the outstanding progress that students have made in their learning and personal development, as well as high parent satisfaction with the school—have been a resounding success, making Wellington College Bangkok already, and clearly, one of the top international schools in Thailand – and the world.



WELLINGTON COLLEGE  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL BANGKOK

*For more information about  
Wellington College Bangkok*

*call 02-087-8888,*

*email [info@wellingtoncollege.ac.th](mailto:info@wellingtoncollege.ac.th)*

*or visit [www.wellingtoncollege.ac.th](http://www.wellingtoncollege.ac.th)*



Exeter Room - Harkness Learning



Meitner Laboratory



# Four young prodigies in a Thailand Showcase

*On Tuesday June 18th at The Bangkok Club in Sathorn a memorable event took place. Four young Thai artists performed a concert of classical repertoire which amazed the select VIPs in attendance.*

Three pianists and one violinist performed famous and challenging classical pieces of the concert repertoire and I have been told as I am certainly no expert on the subject that talents of that kind are a rare occurrence in Thailand.

Brilliantly played, works of Beethoven, Chopin, Ravel, Prokofiev resonated in the lobby of The Bangkok Club like it had never experienced before.

Classical concerts are rather sparse in Bangkok, especially a recital of very young Thai soloists.

The concert was organised by The Bangkok Club with the help of two sponsors who are also helping some the performers in their aspiring career: The Path Foundation of Mr. Danai Pathomvanich and the Knight Foundation of Mr. Jeremy King.

Virtuosity and expressiveness were on the programme that evening and watching these young 12, 13, 16 and 17 year old artists in the brightly lit arena stood alone in front of an attentive audience, playing from memory, intellectually and physically challenging pieces of the Grand Masters of the past was a pure delight. Who would dare to do that, if not courageous and extremely well prepared, motivated and self-secure talents? Only the very brightest I thought and indeed they were.

The first performer, Phungsontombat (Non), 16 years old, sponsored by the Knight Foundation, played the infamous Chopin Scherzo No. 2, an act of pure musicality and

virtuosity with long melodic lines that touches the heart and a sense of almost movie like dramatic moments exploding at the end in a final explosion of energy.

"Starting with this piece a concert is very daring and Non certainly did a great job," said his coach. Polsid Sobhanasiri (Ohm), 17 years old, the violinist of the evening, thrilled us with the great Ludwig Van' Concerto, with at first a introvert slow movement followed by a last movement full of 'dancing like' thematics, structurally a perfect construction, triggering an intellectual as well as an emotional response from the audience, a specificity of the classical grandmaster.

Very few violinists in Thailand have achieved his quality and his hard work is already being recognised with the winning prize at the Settrade Competition and at the Kalayani Institute of Music Concerto competitions.

The third and youngest performer, Wipasatharitsakul (Plub), 12 years old, showed us in Schumann's "Carnaval" an extended array of musical characters. We were amazed by the variety of sounds and colours coming out of the piano from his already, highly trained fingers and he ended his performance in a firework with Debussy's "Jardins Sous la Pluie".

The last performer, Suthasinee Vongjindasak (Hong), just 13 years old, sponsored by the Path Foundation, captivated us with Ravel's "Alborada del Gracioso", a piece that she performed a couple of months ago for HRH Princess Sirinthorn. Alternating between



Spanish flamenco dances, melodic and rhythmical patterns and impressionistic colours and atmospheric passages, we were left wondering how such a young girl from Hua Hin could provide us with such diversity of touches and styles... Finishing in a missile like Prokofiev piece, the audience was enchanted and flabbergasted.

Where does this all come from I asked myself? After all, the pieces performed are from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe and these kids





Scholarship and a full scholarship at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music in California for 8 years. He specialised himself even more and graduated with the famed "Artist Diploma", a distinction for concert

artists considered even a higher achievement than a regular Doctorate degree.

Performing extensively throughout the USA and Europe, (Koch even performed in the Berlin Philharmonie and the Concertgebouw Amsterdam as a soloist!) the maestro went on trips to discover Asia and fell in love with Thailand. He taught at the Alliance Francaise and Mahidol College of Music for many years. He has dedicated himself to helping young Thai talents ever since and is pursuing this noble goal relentlessly, helped by his lovely Thai wife.

Talents come randomly says Sebastien Koch, la preuve: not only Bangkokians, but also some people from the provinces like Hua Hin have exceptional talents! To give you on more example, one of his best ever Mahidol students, San Jittakarn,

was so exceptional that he went all the way to study at the famed Juilliard School in New York on a scholarship! He recently won the third prize at the Geneva International Competition, one of the most prominent in the world and originally came from Mae Sot from parents who had never even touched an instrument!

When Hong (the young 13 years old girl who performed this week) was presented to him a few years ago, he was simply amazed by her sound and profound understanding of music which seemed so far from her culture and upbringing. Yet she "had it all" already, instinctively, and "he must acknowledge, he instantly thought about reincarnation!" he says.

Plub, 12 years old, and the youngest performer of the evening, is another case of exceptional talent: a student of Harrow International School Bangkok on a full scholarship for his musical abilities (who would have thought otherwise...), he came to the maestro to improve his technique and deepen his musical understanding. "The ability of Plub to learn perfectly such an immensely difficult repertoire in such a short time is simply put a true amazement to me" says Koch.

For these great talents, a commitment and long hours of practice are necessary. Between 4 to 6 hours each and every day are required to be able to master these monuments of music and there is no way round that. The discipline needed to achieve this level is mind blowing and they deserve huge respect. Their goals are to be concert artists on an international level. There are only a very few Thai classical artists nowadays on the world stage, and these are definitely the next generation in preparation.

A long and winding road awaits them, full of success and maybe some disappointments, with international competitions in sight and auditions for the major conservatories and universities around the world, like the above mentioned Juilliard School in New York, but hopefully not limited to.

There are about five to ten top music schools for high end performers in the world, they are located in the USA and in Europe and we will definitely strive for one of these for each of them. These students deserve nothing but the best and they will have a successful path, there is no doubt about it" says Sebastien Koch.

In the light of what we heard that evening at The Bangkok Club, and the impression these young artists made to the public, I have absolutely no doubt about it. We hope to hear them again perform in the near future in Bangkok as more of this music and its message is needed more than ever nowadays..."



seemed to already perfectly master the technique necessary to perform this music, giving a convincing impression to fully understand their diverse styles and even their "substance"... this being the ultimate grail of any classical performer!

The answer of all that may well lie, aside from their inherently born talent which is undeniable, in their coach, namely French artist and pianist Sebastien Koch.

Born in Forbach, France, after graduating in Europe from Metz Conservatoire, Paris Ecole Normale de Musique and Freiburg Musikhoschule, all highly reputable institutions, Koch went on to complete a Soloist Degree on a French Government "Lavoisier"





## Feeling ancient healing

by Nikki Busuttil

*Exploring wellness the Thai way: Thai massage has, on occasion, been called the lazy person's guide to yoga, or a way to exercise without lifting a finger.*

**Y**ou never forget your first Thai massage, especially the day after. You're pressed, pushed, circled, slid, stretched, rolled, shaken, chopped and patted, for a good two therapeutic hours. Tiny, deceptively strong hands, thumbs, feet, knuckles, forearms, knees, palms and elbows, twist, bend and mould you into poses, lull you to sleep and seemingly rudely awaken the senses. Your initiation into

coconut leaves, documenting the origins and techniques were said to have been held in the old capital of Ayutthaya. These were mostly lost to eternity, when the Burmese stormed the city in 1767 and burned it to the ground. The few surviving fragments of documents were apparently carved into stone by order of King Rama III in 1832, in an attempt to preserve what remained. These are currently stored in Bangkok's famous Wat Po temple, which is also still an important centre for the teaching and passing on of traditional massage know-how.

What is widely accepted is that the ancestry of traditional Thai massage, which is part of traditional Thai medicine and healing, can be traced back some 2,500 years. The roots of Thai massage are believed to be anchored to the private physician and friend to Buddha, Shivaka Komarpaj, who combined stretching with massage and herbal remedies, to heal ailments amongst monks and nuns.

Traditional Thai massage is a total bodywork that involves motions similar to acupuncture, shiatsu massage and yoga stretching. It aims to realign and harmonise the body, balance the meridians, release tension and increase circulation. Performed on a mat or firm mattress on the floor, the patient or guest is fully clothed, usually in loose-fitting pyjamas, or the like, that allow for freedom of motion and stretching, since no oils are used.

This massage style blends pressure point focus, the stretching of muscles and compression methods, with stop and flow







of blood circulation and gentle rhythmic rocking. When professionally applied, traditional Thai massage can not only help relax and balance the body and mind, but also stimulate the nervous and circulatory system, release blocked energy flow and ease muscle tension and pain. It can do wonders for headaches and migraines, and is also said to help relieve the discomfort of numbness, arthritis, back pain, constipation and other mild conditions. Other benefits can include increased flexibility over time, due to the yoga-style stretching, and also a reduction in stress, replaced by a stronger sense of wellbeing and relaxation.

Typically, a treatment session lasts one to two hours. If you are expecting an instant sense of calm and wellbeing, such as with a more gently applied aromatherapy massage, then think again. Motions can be rigorous and vigorous. In places where the massage therapist finds blockage or muscle tension, he or she usually gets to work on it. Assisting removal of the tension can be somewhat painful. However, you don't have to politely suffer in silence. Simply signal to your therapist, to ease up a little, while in places of intense pain or injury, you can advise them, in advance, to avoid further aggravation.

Beginning with the feet, if you've ever tried foot reflexology, you will notice the similarity of strokes and pressure. The soles, insteps and toes are pressed, squeezed, pulled and, if necessary, cracked, with that cringe-inducing sound that seems it should hurt, but strangely doesn't. Traditional Thai massage tends to spend a long time on the legs next, what with so many different muscle groups and long energy lines to work through. Sometimes up to half of the entire treatment time

deals with the legs alone. This is explained by the implication that the effects of the legwork extend beyond the confines of these limbs, to provide relief for internal organs and overall nervous system relief.

The arms are then followed by the hands, which receive similar treatment rituals, as described for the feet. Whether midway or later, you are then turned, over to focus on the rest of the upper body. Lying face down, over a pillow, the neck, back, shoulders and buttocks are kneaded and pressed, which is possible the most restful part of the session. Following this, a few more stretches are prompted and craftier yoga poses are held, with the help of your massage therapist, twisting and bending you, accompanied by a symphony of cracking and popping, like a bowl of cereal with the milk added. Once you are suitably patted down, you are then left to change back into your own clothes. The treatment is complete.

Traditional Thai massage is not recommended for everyone. If you have irritable skin conditions, open wounds, or have any serious conditions, be sure to consult your doctor first. Otherwise, just avoid the obvious, such as eating too heavy a meal right before treatment. No one wants your meal to repeat on you!







Nana BTS Skytrain station. For a more intense healing experience, try their four-hands Thai massage, performed by two spa therapists, integrating a fresh 120 minutes Four Hands Thai Massage at 1,800 without Herbal Compress and 2,000 with Herbal Compress.

For the ultimate in luxury, CHI The Spa at The Shangri-La Hotel, Bangkok ([shangri-la.com/bangkok](http://shangri-la.com/bangkok)), is highly recommended for unparalleled extravagance and memorable service. The opulence of treatment rooms at this spa makes for an incredible

Massage places abound all over Thailand, and live here long enough or visit frequently, and you will find your local. Often there will be one particular therapist that just suits you and knows exactly how to unknot your stressed-out back or shoulders best.

Traditional Thai massage treatments vary widely in price, often starting at 300B for two hours, all the way up into the thousands, at five-star locations. Whether cheap or expensive, there is a huge array of locations and surroundings, spas or massage shops, in which to indulge in a little ancient Thai healing.

If you prefer your massage experience a tad more luxurious, then check online for your nearest Let's Relax Spa ([letsrelaxspa.com](http://letsrelaxspa.com)). With locations all over Thailand, as well as in China, Cambodia and now Myanmar too, it's easy to come by a four-star traditional Thai massage, at one of their urban boutique spas.

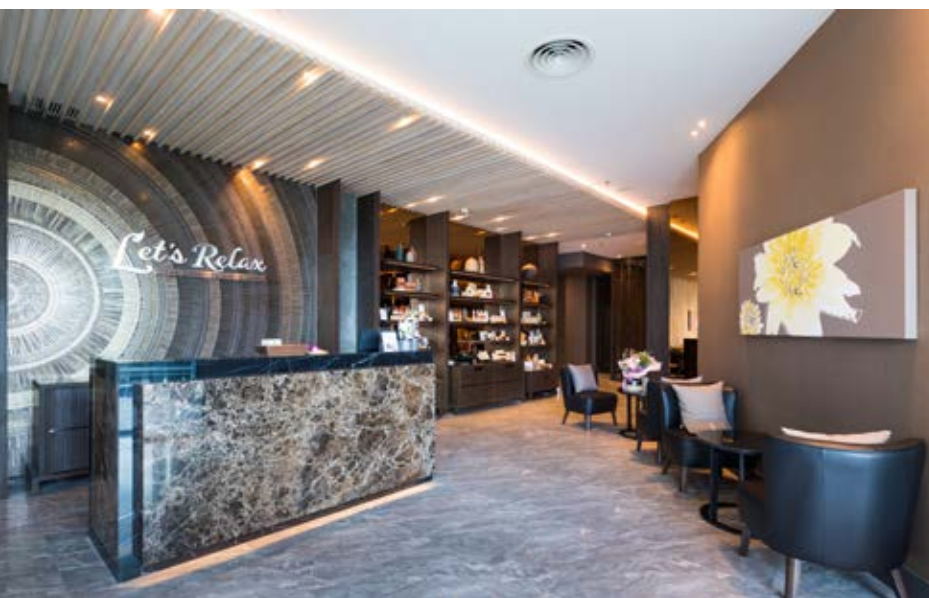
Slide into their silk pyjamas for a 120 minute Thai massage at 1,000B (price includes all tax and charges). Although there are multiple Bangkok locations, check out one of the newest, on the third floor at The Allez, adjoined to the



experience of wellbeing, for those with deep pockets and discerning senses. Located on the Chao Phraya River, in the Krungthep Wing's third floor, CHI The Spa's traditional Thai massage is priced at 3,600B++ for 90 minutes.

*Whatever your choice of locale, this ancient practice of healing has the tried and tested potential, to add value to your weekly wellness routine. Why not pull on the pyjamas and give it go? At the very least, you will get a lazy, stretchy workout, and be able to switch off from daily life for an hour or two.*

[www.nikkibusuttil.com](http://www.nikkibusuttil.com)  
[@rollergirlnikki](https://twitter.com/rollergirlnikki)







# New Platinum plan!

Offers superior coverages for actual medical expenses.

Up to THB 30 m. per disability\*



Special! Get a complimentary flu vaccination, for new policy members who purchase our policy within 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019.



- Offer the inpatient hospitalization benefits up to THB 30 million for any injuries or sickness per disability
- Special offer 24/7 emergency medical assistant, up to USD 1,000,000



\*\* Life-time renewal guarantee



Standalone health insurance. No life insurance is required.



Worry free with Aetna extensive medical network of over 400 hospitals and clinics nationwide.

Remark : \*Terms may vary depending on the policy selected. Please refer to plan documents for a complete description of benefits, exclusions, limitations and conditions of coverage.

\*\*Applicable to members who take out their Aetna policy before the age of 60 and are up-to-date with premium payments.

Aetna is a trademark of Aetna Inc. and is protected throughout the world by trademark registrations and treaties.





# A walk on the wild side: Masungi Georeserve, Philippines Geotourism

by Lori Blackburn

I took a deep breath and adjusted my helmet. My face was flushed from humidity and exertion. I stood on a high jungle platform scanning the skyline. My friends and I were halfway through Masungi Georeserve's ([www.masungigeoreserve.com](http://www.masungigeoreserve.com)) exhilarating eco-adventure experience.

Gianna, threw us a crazy grin before disappearing over the cliff's 'no joke' rope wall. I peered over the steep drop as she manoeuvred the ropes with style that would make Spiderman jealous. Trish (nicknamed 'Trish the Dish' because she's hot) went next with a carefree wave. I rubbed my sweaty face. How did Trish still look sexy in this heat? The boys, Mike and Carsten, were long gone to the sound of Carsten's words, "My son would love this!" Vicki and I looked at each other and laughed. She threw me a high-five. Wow. This was beautiful... and wild. Yup, definitely wild. We loved it.

Over the last few years, I'd heard about Masungi Georeserve from Manila friends. Their social media posts proudly shared, "We just booked our Masungi spots! Can't wait." Their excitement was palatable. Several weeks later, their photos showcased dramatic jungle punctuated by jagged limestone formations. The mountains stretched wide and wonderful. Big smiles played upon their faces as they

traversed ropes far above the trees. You could feel their energy in each photo.

I was awestruck and wondered, "Where in the world is this?" Well, it is Masungi Georeserve, a conservation area within the mountain rainforests of Rizal, Philippines. This wildlife sanctuary is located an hour's drive from Manila, the capital city. I had followed stories about Masungi for years until I finally had the chance to visit. What I initially pegged as a 'pretty cool obstacle course', ended-up being a profound conservation story that moved far beyond our playful wilderness day trip.

Masungi Georeserve isn't an outdoor obstacle course. It is a work of art. It is a trail experience that was built to share nature, rather than exploit it. In addition to exceptional concept and craftsmanship, the trail reflects Filipino heritage. It was created by an all Filipino team who have loved this land for years. They used extreme care and determination to build a course that enhanced the landscape without altering it.

The practical rope courses allow people to move around with minimal environmental impact and without creating too many permanent fixed structures.

The trail is inspired by nature (biomimicry) with points-





of-interest named in Filipino language. This means that you can walk over the Sapot, a giant metal spiderweb which hangs over immense limestone shards. You can rest in the bamboo Patak, a raindrop-shaped air house located along a hanging bridge. Finally, end the course on the Bayawak, a massive rope wall shaped like a monitor lizard.

The landscape offers rich biodiversity, eerie caves, lush rainforest, and 60 million year old limestone formations. Wildlife includes stunning plant species and endemic animals (wildlife only found in one specific area) such as the Philippine Serpent Eagle and the Philippine Flying Dragon Lizard.

As artist and cultural icon Andy Warhol once commented, “Land really is the best art. I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want.” Andy Warhol is famous for his iconic pop art and 1960s New York City bohemian enclave, The Factory. If decades ago in one of the world’s biggest concrete jungles, Andy Warhol could see the

value in preserving land, then he is one more voice urging the world to listen.

If we travelled a hundred years before Warhol’s swinging 60s and headed for the California coast, we’d meet mountain man, activist, and ‘Father of National Parks’ John Muir. Old man Muir worked endlessly to preserve majestic forests such as Yosemite Valley and Sequoia National Park. One of his famous quotes is often plastered upon nature t-shirts and memorabilia: “The mountains are calling and I must go.” This inspiring catchphrase embodies a yearning for nature, but the deeper meaning is about conservation and understanding nature... to save it. John Muir went to the mountains to save the land from industrial development. He helped create National Parks to protect them.

These two historical figures saw how people can ravage land. Their words also show how people can save it. This brings us back to the present day and the folks at Masungi Georeserve. The Masungi team works tirelessly to

spread awareness on their neverending battle to conserve land, wildlife, and legacy. In addition to activism, their work includes intense physical labour to create geotourism opportunities.

Most of all, Masungi Geoserve promotes nature awareness so that people can behave responsibly. The more we know about nature, the more we can help preserve it. Since 1996, Masungi has protected the land against mining, illegal logging, land-grabbing, and quarrying. In 2015, Masungi welcomed the public to learn about conservation through geotourism. So, what is geotourism? National Geographic describes geotourism as “sustainable tourism and destination stewardship – where tourism also takes care of the land and community.” Right on.

Masungi provides an interactive opportunity to learn about nature. Masungi’s name originates from the word *masungki* meaning ‘spiked’. This refers to the area’s ragged karst rocks.





The most popular way to explore the conservation area is through a day or night Discovery Trail experience. On this guided 3.5 hour hike, visitors can expect rock scrambles, suspension bridges, rope climbing, and cave walks. Although Masungi is working on a child friendly course, current requirements state that guests must be at least 13 years old to participate.

Visits to Masungi are confirmed through prearranged, online reservations. Walk-ins are not allowed. This private-group booking system helps preserve the land's integrity while providing a quality experience. Reservations are easily processed through their website. Just book ahead as weekend slots fill-up. Weekdays offer more options.

The admission (Conservation Fee) starts at Php1500 (Philippine Peso) per guest. Transportation options include driving independently, booking a car/van and driver, or checking Masungi's website for more options. Before arrival, eat a healthy breakfast. Bring your own refillable water bottle and trail snacks. Admission includes post-hike sandwiches.

Upon arrival, a Park Ranger briefs guests in the beautiful *Silungan*, sheltered garden area. Masungi works hard to create an environment that ensures wildlife is respected. Even the bathrooms are beautiful and feature organic materials such as rocks and huge snail shells. The message is clear – sometimes the simple things are best.

We left Masungi Geoserve exhilarated, inspired, and excited to spread the word. Nature should not be observed from a car window. It should be inhaled from a mountaintop, explored within a thriving jungle, and felt in the damp earth of a cave. Most of all, it should be protected. If you have the heart for adventure and nature, then Masungi Geoserve invites you to play.



## Conservation Crusaders

### Meet the people behind Masungi Geoserve...

In an age of industry and development, we often wonder, “How does land become at-risk? Who are the people taking care of the environment? Who stands-up to big businesses, government, and policies to make positive changes in conservation?” A few of these individual share their stories.

#### Victor Y. Rodriguez / Project Manager

I've worked for Blue Star (the development organisation who initiated Masungi) and Masungi Geoserve since 1996. This is my second home. I want new generations to see its true beauty. My tasks include Masungi's development, restoration, and conservation. My job is challenging and takes courage. If you are not brave enough to face challenges, then you can easily give-up and leave.

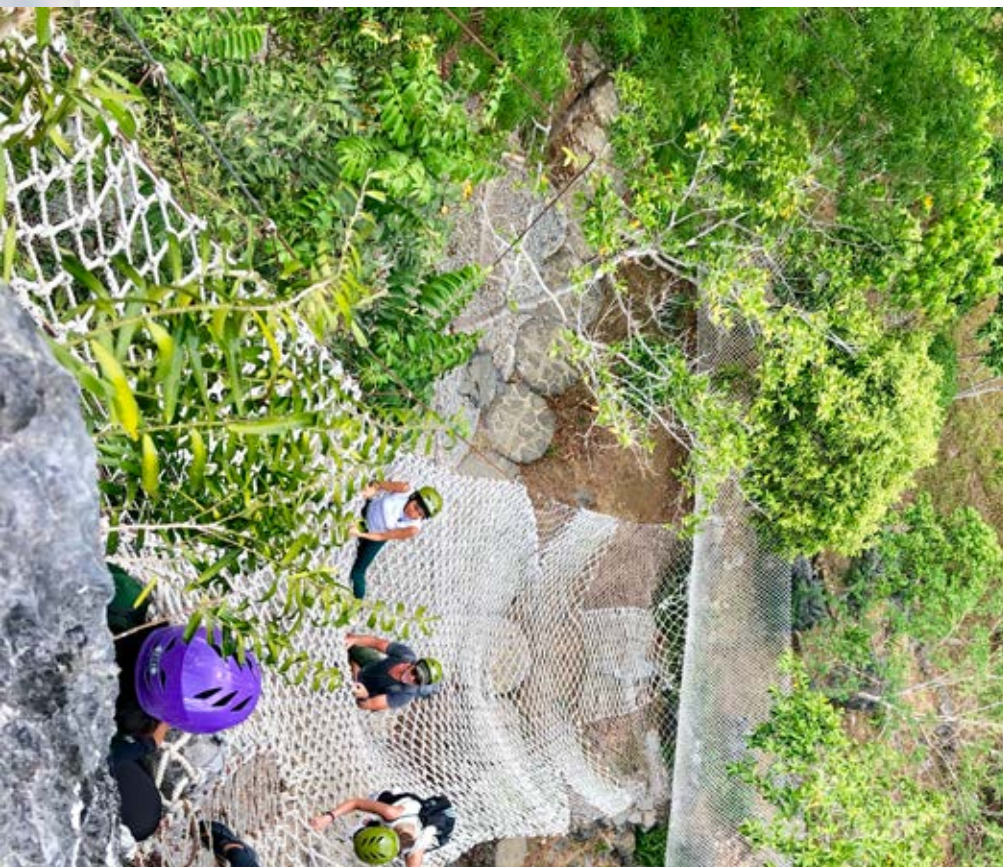
Conservation is important because this area is East of Manila. Its mountains feed water into the surrounding communities including Metro Manila. Land stripped of wildlife and trees can have terrible results both on humans and nature. Around the 1990s, land squatting syndicates migrated here. They illegally occupied and sold large tracks of land. Their caretakers cut trees for charcoal. Quarrying companies also altered the landscape and extracted resources. This area was devastated when we arrived.

Masungi worked hard to restore it. We started by planting trees to reduce the risks of floods and landslides within lowland city areas. In 2006, Typhoon Ondoy was horrible as it flooded many places. Stripped land was part of the problem. We want to prevent this from happening again. The challenges exceed just planting trees. It involves steadfastness, courage, and integrity in confronting illegal groups, facing legal battles against offenders, and tirelessly lobbying for positive change.

Personally, Masungi is an interesting workplace as it lets me integrate my job with my sport. I'm an ultra-runner. Masungi is one of my favourite training grounds. In addition to regular training, I help my fellow workers bring heavy







This work also helps broaden youth knowledge, including mine. This knowledge can be shared with future generations.

## Visitor perspective

### What were your impressions about Masungi Georeserve?

**Anna Patricia 'Trish' Xavier**

Masungi is doing it right. They limit visitors, respect nature, and adhere to strict guidelines. They are passionate and serious about conservation. It sets a great example. I would definitely recommend Masungi. I had no idea that Masungi had such a terrible past. It was heartbreaking to hear that illegal loggers stripped the land of precious, ancient trees that affected the ecosystem. This also deprived us of the opportunity to ever see such a landscape. I hope that eco-tourism spreads widely in the Philippines to educate the young, stir public emotion, and raise awareness. My favourite part was the limestone Masungi Rock. It is 60 million years old and presents a powerful connection to our past. It is a magical experience to be surrounded by landscape that has lasted for millions of years.

materials like seedlings, cement, and gravel long distances and heights within Masungi. If I didn't really love my job, I would have resigned already. The job and lifestyle can be hard, but it's not a reason to give up. I love Masungi. It will always be my home.

**Danilyn Monzada / Park Ranger**

As a child, I loved plants. They made me feel happy and at ease. I would talk to plants when I felt alone. It may seem weird, but I feel like they also talk to me. When I discovered Masungi, I was

curious about joining the team. Initially, I thought I would only be in-charge of a garden, but little did I know, my task would include talking to different people. At first, it was hard, but I got used to it. By working here, I began to know myself better. I overcame my fear of talking to people. My weakness now serves as my strength. I'm grateful that I'm part of Masungi's conservation efforts and have the opportunity to share my knowledge with others. The work can be hard and tiring, but I don't give up because I know my work will bear fruit.

Masungi has many challenges as it pursues conservation. One of these is illegal logging. Conservation helps people understand that illegal practices should be prohibited because we are the ones who benefit from our natural environment. At Masungi, we accommodate guests and share knowledge to bring them closer to nature. With this, they can understand the importance of conservation. If we continue, we might prevent calamities such as flooding from overlogged land.







### Gianna Kessler von Sprengisen-Stormer:

I had heard about Masungi and was excited to experience the reserve. It was spectacular to be immersed in nature, experience the landscape, and explore the fun, artful obstacles. I would certainly visit again! The Philippines faces many challenges in illegal logging which the government must address. Our forests are in a very bad state. At least 90% of the primary rainforest has gone. There is always big talk about conservation and eco-tourism, the Masungi Georeserve has done things right. Everything is possible with vision, funding, and community support. The trek was more challenging than expected. It is 3-4 hours depending upon your pace, but very do-able for someone who is not very active. The climb was an artful experience. The courses were done in good taste. I commend the designers. The whole experience was breathtaking.



### Carsten Stormer:

Before the trip, I had seen pictures of Masungi and thought, 'Wow – that looks great,' but I didn't know what to expect. I was just excited to hang out with friends in a natural, protected environment. Afterwards, I felt that Masungi is awesome. It is something close to Manila that you can experience with friends and that supports conservation. The people who work there are dedicated. The place is beautiful. It's really worth visiting. I love their work with

environmentalism, planting trees, and great eco-tourism. Masungi serves as an example for other places in the Philippines and beyond. It is also affordable. The course had an Indiana Jones feeling because of the bridges linking the rugged areas. I found the course easy and pleasant. My family enjoys hiking in the mountains around Manila. This is a fantastic addition to Philippines' eco-tourism.



### Vicki Abary:

This was my second trip to Masungi. This visit made the course easier because I knew what to expect. I was also with a smaller group which made it easier to navigate and enjoy the scenery. Masungi is a hidden gem located only one hour away from the city. I truly enjoyed being with such a lovely group of friends who enjoy eco-tourism, new discoveries, and all care deeply about our environment. We all had a wonderful time exploring and learning about beautiful Masungi. I love how nature allows you to bond with your environment and friends.

### Mike Feldkamp:

Masungi is truly a unique experience. While there are some places that have suffered from over-tourism in the Philippines, Masungi has really managed to avoid this by focusing upon conservation and a sustainable experience. I loved the fresh air. It was great to get exercise while seeing the natural beauty of the area. The diversity of plant life really makes an excellent contrast to the typical beach experiences we've enjoyed in the Philippines. I look forward to returning and trying Masungi's Night Trail where you spend more time in the caves.







# RUAMRUDEE RIS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2019



**12** offers to top  
25 universities \*

**66** offers to top  
50 universities \*\*

**150** offers to top  
100 universities \*\*\*



**43** offers to medical and  
dental programs



**149** graduates

## AUSTRALIA

Blue Mountains International  
Hotel Management  
Macquarie Community College  
Monash University \*\*\*  
Queensland University of Technology  
University of Adelaide  
University of Melbourne \*\*  
University of New South Wales \*\*\*  
University of Sydney \*\*\*

## CANADA

Queen's University  
Ryerson University  
University of British Columbia \*\*  
University of Toronto \*  
University of Waterloo

## CHINA

City University of Hong Kong \*\*\*  
Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Hong Kong University of Science and  
Technology \*\*  
Les Roches Jin Jiang International  
Hotel Management  
The Chinese University of Hong  
Kong \*\*\*

## FRANCE

The American University of Paris

## JAPAN

Kwansei Gakuin University  
Nagoya University of Commerce and  
Business  
Ritsumeikan University  
Tokyo International University  
Waseda University

## KOREA

Hanyang University  
Sogang University  
Sungkyunkwan University  
Yonsei University

## NEW ZEALAND

Le Cordon Bleu New Zealand

## NETHERLANDS

Utrecht University

## SINGAPORE

SIM Global Education  
Yale NUS

## SWITZERLAND

École hôtelière de Lausanne

## THAILAND

Assumption University  
Bangkok University  
Chiang Mai University  
Chulalongkorn University  
HRH Princess Chulabhorn College of  
Medical Sciences  
Khon Kaen University International  
College

King Mongkut's Institute of Technology  
Mahidol University  
Rangsit University  
Sirindhorn International Institute of  
Technology  
Srinakharinwirot University  
Stamford International University  
St. John's University  
Thammasat University

## UNITED KINGDOM

Exeter College  
King's College London \*\*  
Lancaster University  
Queen Mary University of London  
School of Oriental and African Studies,  
University of London  
United College London \*\*\*  
University College London\*  
University of Bath  
University of Birmingham  
University of Bristol \*\*\*  
University of College London  
University of Essex  
University of Glasgow \*\*\*  
University of Kent  
University of Manchester \*\*\*  
University of Nottingham \*\*\*  
University of Reading  
University of Sheffield \*\*\*  
University of Sussex  
University of the Arts London  
University of York

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

American University  
Aquinas College  
Boston College  
Boston University \*\*\*  
Calvin College  
Carleton College  
Chapman University  
Clark University  
Clarkson University  
DePaul University  
Dodge College of Film and Media Arts  
Drexel University  
Emerson College  
Fordham University  
George Mason University  
George Washington University  
Illinois Institute of Technology  
Illinois Wesleyan University  
Indiana University at Bloomington  
Lewis & Clark College  
Loyola Marymount University  
Maryland Institute College of Art  
Michigan State University  
New York University \*\*  
North Dakota State University  
North Park University  
Northeastern University  
Orange Coast College  
Oregon State University  
Otis College of Art and Design  
Pace University  
Pennsylvania State University \*\*\*

Purdue University—West Lafayette \*\*\*  
Quinnipiac University  
Reed College  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Rice University \*\*\*  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Santa Clara University  
Seattle University  
Southern Methodist University  
Stanford University \*  
Syracuse University  
The University of Texas at Austin \*\*  
Trinidad State Jr. College  
Trinity University  
University of Arizona  
University of California, Berkeley \*  
University of California, Davis \*\*\*  
University of California, Irvine \*\*\*  
University of California, Los Angeles \*  
University of California, Merced  
University of California, Riverside  
University of California, San Diego \*\*  
University of California, Santa  
Barbara \*\*\*  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
University of Colorado Boulder  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
University of Illinois at Urbana-  
Champaign \*\*  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
University of Michigan  
University of Minnesota Duluth  
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities \*\*\*  
University of North Carolina at  
Chapel Hill \*\*\*  
University of Oregon  
University of Pennsylvania \*  
University of Pittsburgh  
University of Richmond  
University of San Francisco  
University of Southern California \*\*\*  
University of St. Thomas  
University of Virginia  
University of Washington \*\*  
University of Wisconsin-Madison \*\*  
University of Wisconsin Platteville  
University of Wisconsin Superior  
Virginia Tech  
Washington & Jefferson College  
Washington State University  
Wesleyan University  
West Virginia University  
Westminster College  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

\* \*\* \*\*\* Based on Times Higher  
Education and QSP World University  
Rankings 2019







# Luxury urban wellness

*by Nikki Busuttil*



**W**ith the many excellent spa options in Thailand, being spoilt for choice is most definitely one of the more extravagant first world problems...

How does one sort through the mass of luxury spa experiences in Thailand, to discern the right choice for a complete five-star treatment? Myriad factors come into play for the experienced luxury wellness seeker.

Foremost, service must be discreet and preemptive. The location should be easily accessible and desirable, with ample parking and/or a valet. The décor ought to be refined and calming, whilst the overall ambience feels entirely immersive and indulgent.

The scent adds to the sense of arrival and needs to be utterly evocative. The treatment menu has to be comprehensive, and refreshments truly tempting. In short, every touchpoint must be impeccable. Attention to detail is everything.

Walking into RarinJinda Wellness Spa Resort, the realisation immediately washes over your soul that you have uncovered a gem, in the heart of Bangkok: a gem by name and by nature. For the curious, 'Rarin' refers to the element of water – a strong feature in the spa's design – and 'Jinda' denotes a jewel. Tucked away over two floors, inside the Grande Centre Point Ratchadamri, this spa ticks all of the boxes, as a peaceful and opulent oasis, seemingly remote and removed from the hustle and bustle of the city.

You check in at the eighth floor spa reception, directly adjoined to the carpark, and check out from the rest of the world. Here, you are pampered royally, from the moment you arrive and your consultation begins. As if from nowhere, your welcome drink and cold towel present themselves, and you are assisted with treatment selection, depending on your needs. You can choose from signature experiences and procedures, or customise your own massage, and have any combination of indulgences, tailored to your spa desires.

Not only does RarinJinda





offer a wide range of massages, scrubs, wraps and facials, but also hydrotherapy, chromotherapy and sound therapy, plus Ultratone slimming programmes, heat treatments and decadent soaks. On the menu, you find many ancient Eastern healing influences, such as traditional Thai, Ayurveda and the Himalayas, combined with contemporary Western techniques and technology. The best of both worlds compliment each other, with the caring touch of expertly trained hands.

All treatments, whether for men, women or both, begin with a lavish herbal foot soak and guava scrub, which has an almost sedative effect on the brain. Donning comfy slippers, you are then escorted to a suite or a treatment room, allocated for and suited to your particular choice. Each room bears the name of a jewel, such as emerald, ruby, topaz or amethyst. RarinJinda has no shortage of space: there are three double Thai massage rooms, six spa suites, two hydrotherapy rooms, two Elements of Life rooms, one foot massage room, one Ultratone room, and even facilities for post-natal wellness care. On balance, it is evident that no expense has been spared.

The Elements of Life rooms were specifically designed for their eponymous signature packages (2,800B++ each for 90 minutes), available with either a Royal Thai Touch or the Himalayan Touch. The hypnotic effects of sound and chromotherapy are integrated into these rooms, which each have a custom-designed, warm sand bed. According to the 'touch' you prefer, your sensory journey concludes with 15-20 minutes of either a Thai herbal compress or a Himalayan salt pot compress.

For both a relaxing and reviving experience, the Hot and Cold Stone Massage (3,500B++) is a two hour must. Heated black volcanic stones have a penetrating effect on sore and tired muscles, and simultaneously open the pores for better massage oil absorption. You select your favoured essential oil from a tray of six aromatic blends. Towards the end of the treatments, the black stones are switched out for chilled white marble stones, which are guided over the skin, promoting good circulation, while soothing and invigorating the body.

The only potential complaint is about how quickly time seems to elapse, while you are entranced by your spa therapist's methodical and professional banishing of all worries and cares.



You wish the clock would just freeze for a while longer. However, once the treatment is over, you are encouraged to take whatever time you need to recompose yourself. You are not ushered immediately to a cashier, but invited to the sixth floor relaxation lounge. There, you are served a choice of hot and cold beverages, and an afternoon tea style tower of exotic fruit and temptingly ripe mango with sticky rice and coconut sauce. The real world can wait a little, as serenity continues.

**RarinJinda Wellness Spa at Ratchadamri, Bangkok**, is open later than most other luxury spas, in the City of Angels. Guests can arrange treatments daily from 10am until midnight. Reservations can be made by calling 02-091-9088, or by emailing [sparsvn@rarinjinda.com](mailto:sparsvn@rarinjinda.com). Further details on treatments and packages available are to be found at [www.rarinjinda.com](http://www.rarinjinda.com)

RarinJinda also has two other luxury destination spas. One is close by in the Grande Centre Point Ploenchit while the other is up north, in Chiang Mai, on Chareonrat Road, complete with a lavish, full-sized, eight-station hydrotherapy pool, which sounds an irresistible temptation unto itself.

[www.nikkibusuttil.com](http://www.nikkibusuttil.com) @rollergirlnikki







# Long weekend in Hong Kong

*by Jocelyn Pollak*

I have lived in Bangkok for nearly 7 years and it seems almost a crime that my first trip to Hong Kong was only just recently. I really have no good justification for why I never visited this incredible city but after my recent long weekend there, I'm sure it will not be another 7 years before I return; I'm ready to go back in 7 days! I'm going to share some tips for a long weekend in Hong Kong. Whether you're a veteran Hong Kong visitor, or a criminal like me, I'm sure there will be some useful tips or perhaps reminders for you.

Hong Kong is only about a 3 hour flight from Bangkok making it the perfect distance for a weekend getaway. There are flights going almost all day every day so you should be able to find something that suits your schedule. I opted for a 3:30am red-eye on Hong Kong Airlines. I am used to flying budget regional carriers but I was pleasantly surprised by this one. After the one hour time change, I arrived at 8am. There is an express airport rail link that takes you right downtown. I got a roundtrip airport rail link ticket and a 3 day MTR pass and it was absolutely worth it.

I headed straight to my hotel, The Olympian in West Kowloon. Perfectly situated just a few stations away from the airport express train dropping point and within a short distance of the heart of the city, I knew I had made the right choice. I wanted to treat myself a little bit as I don't go on vacation often so I chose this boutique hotel for a few reasons.

First, the location was fantastic. Second, I know from living in Bangkok that at the end of a long day in a hectic city, I want to go somewhere peaceful that feels like home. Third, all the reviews I read and all my interactions with the staff prior to my arrival were superb. An 8am arrival can be tough for some hotels, especially on Easter weekend when they are running at a high occupancy rate. The staff at the Olympian got me straight into my room and offered me breakfast as soon as I arrived. I have to say, having a couple hour rest at the hotel and some good food really made it so much easier to make the most of my time in the city. When I walked in, I was shocked by the high ceilings and huge windows with a view of the harbour and skyline. I literally went to sleep looking out a wall of glass onto the water/park/skyline. The suite was spacious and had plenty of room for either a couple or a family. The real indulgence of the room was a bathtub with an incredible view. I took full advantage of that.

After my chill out and breakfast at the Olympian, I walked through the local park and headed to the gondola that takes you up a mountain to see a big Buddha statue. I was shocked at the amount of green in Hong Kong. It's like a polar opposite from Bangkok where there are about 3 trees. I had no idea I would be breathing so much fresh mountain air. I used a site called Klook to book a faster pass for the gondola but be prepared to wait in line even with the special pass.





There is a crystal cabin option, but I went with the traditional. A lot of people actually hike the mountain and there are well laid trails to do it, but it's a pretty serious hike so that might be a "next time" activity for me. The temple village complex is great. There are restaurants serving all sorts of international things and a few fun tourist attractions. Besides the big Buddha, there is another temple and monastery nearby with some beautiful architecture.

Now, here comes my first major tip: if the forecast says chance of thunderstorm, bring an umbrella and or a raincoat. I got up to the top of the mountain without any issues. There was a little bit of drizzle but not enough to bother me. Just as I was getting ready to leave, the sky opened up and the gondola shut down, essentially trapping everyone on the top of the mountain. So, when the gondola shuts, they bus people down the mountain one small group at a time. This resulted in a two and a half hour wait for a death-defying bus trip down to the base. Luckily, I got in line "early", comparatively, so I was undercover, but the majority of people were stuck standing in the pouring rain for hours. Come prepared.

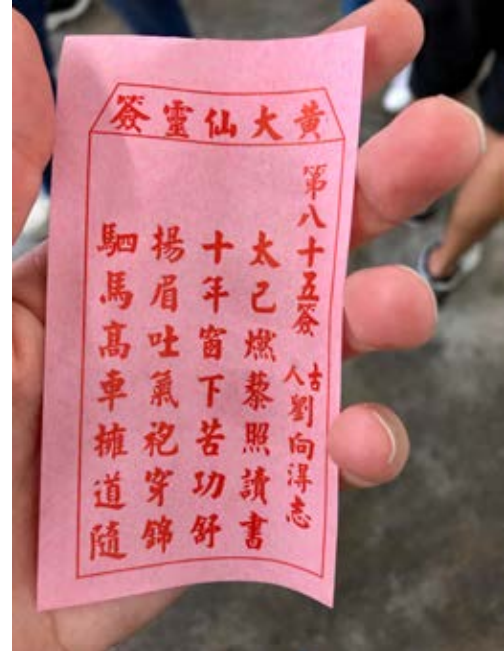
Originally, I had planned to go back to the Olympian after my gondola trip to freshen up before a nice dinner that I had made a reservation for at Above and Beyond at Hotel Icon. But because of the rain, I was scrambling to make it to my reservation on time. I went to this restaurant upon the recommendation of a friend and while the website is great, reading about this place or seeing photos simply can not do it justice. It was probably the most fantastic view I have ever seen from a dining room. It's on the 28<sup>th</sup> floor with a full view of the Hong Kong skyline. This restaurant specialises in Cantonese cuisine and is well known as one of the best in the city. I know nothing about Cantonese food so I figured I'd just jump in head first with one of their tasting menus. I was served a 6 course meal of small plates including beef brisket, lobster, soup, dumplings, garoupa and dessert. The courses were paired magnificently with 3 glasses of wine and I treated myself to a glass of port at the end. If you're looking for something a little bit fancy with an unbelievable city view, Above and Beyond is the place. Keep in mind that I had flown in on a red eye, walked around all afternoon, had a full stomach and 4 glasses of wine so my bed at the Olympian was calling me. Much to my surprise, when I arrived at my room, I had a bottle of sparkling wine waiting for me. Oh, one more glass won't hurt. Zzzzz.

The next morning, I woke ready to tackle the day! The only issue was that there was another warning of thunderstorms. I learned my lesson and brought my umbrella for day two and I'm glad I did; it poured rain all day. I wanted to check out some of the major temples so that was my first half of the day plan. With my unlimited metro card, it was really easy.

I went to downtown Hong Kong to

visit the oldest temple in the city, Man Mo. This temple is small and truly unique because it has coils of incense hanging from the ceiling which creates a captivating ambience. Wong Tai Sin temple in Kowloon was the next stop. The temple complex is huge, 18,000 square metres with several areas dedicated to Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. I have never seen so much fortune telling at a temple. There is a large designated area where you can shake a can of sticks (same as in Thailand) and the one that falls out has a number on it corresponding to your fortune. But ah, you can't get your fortune unless you pay one of the hundreds of fortune tellers in their stalls outside the temple to give you the paper. It's written in Chinese, so you can kick them some more money to interpret it for you. Lucky for me, I have some Chinese friends that helped me out. I got a good one! The final temple stop is one that was recommended to me by Thai people, Che Kung temple, and it was swarming with Thais. This temple was built in 1993 so the architecture isn't particularly stunning and it's a bit bare inside besides a large statue of the military commander Che Kung. The unique point for this temple is there is a fan that they believe will bring you good luck if you spin it. It's a bit far away and if you're running short on time or aren't a believer in the magic fan, it's skippable.

I was in for a real Hong Kong experience by the time I made it to lunch, a "red rain advisory" had been issued. I didn't know what this meant so after some Googling, I discovered that it means big rain is coming, stay inside. This is the kind of rain that an umbrella is useless.







back to the Olympian I went for a good night's sleep.

Sundays in Hong Kong are a really interesting spectacle. Because there are so many Filipino domestic workers who live with their employers, their expat community is huge. Sunday is their day off and they can't hang out with their friends at their employers' houses so they take to the streets, sidewalks, bus terminals, parks, markets, staircases or just about any outdoor space where they can lay down a sheet of cardboard and hang with their buddies. I've never seen anything like it.

Sunday morning started with brunch at Maxim's with a family friend that lives and works in Hong Kong. Maxim's is a bit of an institution in Hong Kong, I'm told; be prepared to wait if you show up at peak hours. I had a few more iconic Hong Kong spots to hit on my last day. First stop were the expat strongholds of Repulse Bay and Stanley Market. These are an easy bus ride from downtown and the views of the beach as you come in to town along the mountain side are great. I was lucky to be there for a dragon boat regatta so there was lots of activity. After strolling around these neighbourhoods for a little while, it's clear to me why they are so attractive for expats. I felt like I was back at home, something I've never felt in any Asian city.

The final stop of the trip was up to the top of Victoria Peak for a full view of the city. This is another easy bus ride that winds

through the mountains on the precarious cliffside. The tip here is to sit on the left side of the bus on the way up and the right side on the way down to get the best views as you snake up the mountain. The view from the top is just magnificent. To go from street level looking up at all the towering sky scrapers to a mountain top looking down on all of them gives two really interesting perspectives of the city.

For anyone who's looking for a great long weekend destination, Hong Kong will certainly not disappoint. From my brief experience, it's clear that there's something there for every kind of traveller. I'm looking forward to going back and spending more time getting to know this vibrant city a little bit better.

#### Olympian Hotel:

<https://www.sino-hotels.com/en/hk/the-olympian-hong-kong>

#### Above and Beyond restaurant:

<https://www.hotel-icon.com/dining/above-beyond>

*About the author: Jocelyn Pollak has been living in Bangkok for 7 years. She is an English teacher/teacher trainer, writer and the co-owner of [TEFLPros.com](https://www.teflpros.com).*

So, I sat in Yeun Kee, a very local (and quite delicious) rice and meat place and waited out the storm. They had one of the best sauces I've ever tasted; it was a combo of garlic, ginger, green onions, oil and salt. I'm determined to make this at home. My next stop was unconventional, but pretty cool if you like to do stuff with locals. I got a gym pass and went to a yoga class since walking around outside was basically off the table. I'm into fitness so I enjoy trying classes wherever I go. It's definitely not a touristy thing to do and I always have a great time.

By the time my class finished, the rain had stopped but definitely threatened another downpour. I took my chance to go see the city skyline from the Harbour View Plaza. Even though I'd seen it the night before from the restaurant, seeing it from the water and being able to get the full perspective with the mountain backdrop is truly impressive. I took the ferry over to Central Station in Hong Kong and grabbed some Mexican food at Lan Kwai Fong. Good Mexican is hard to come by in Thailand so when I walked past Cali Mex, I just had to go. Luckily, I timed everything just right and the rain held off so I took the ferry back to Kowloon just as the 8pm skyline light show started. If you can time it right, this is an awesome way to see the show so you aren't packed in with the throngs of people on the Harbour View Plaza. Into a taxi and





**TCIS**  
**THAI-CHINESE**  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

## Trilingual instruction

- English
- Chinese
- Thai

## Best

**Mandarin Chinese**  
program in Thailand

## English

is the language  
of instruction

**American**  
curriculum with  
AP classes

## Native English

speaking teachers

PK 2  
to  
Grade 12

Located  
**10 mins**  
from  
**MEGA**  
BANGNA

Graduates  
are accepted to  
**top universities**  
worldwide

## Contact Us

to schedule a visit  
or to enroll



Tel.  
**02-751-1201**



Website  
**tcis.ac.th**



Email  
**info@tcis.ac.th**



Facebook  
**TCISbkk**



**ISAT**



# The British Women's Group history Bangkok

by Ailsa Kneath Chairman  
of the BWG

Prior to 29<sup>th</sup> May 1969, British women in Bangkok had no organised way of meeting one another. They only saw each other at social functions, or shared the rather dubious thrills of coping with children and shopping in a city that might have been quieter than today, but which was certainly not as convenient and much more of a challenge. As usually happens, groups would gather for informal coffee mornings at each other's homes.

It was suggested that a meeting should be held to discuss the possibility of establishing a permanent group along more formal lines, which would present opportunities for British women to meet each other on a more regular basis.

This meeting took place at The British Club on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1969, when the Chairwoman of the temporary committee, Mrs. Lily Milne, introduced her fellow temporary committee members. They presented a constitution to the assembled ladies who were then invited to vote. The constitution was accepted unanimously, the temporary committee was elected en bloc and by the end of the meeting all 57 ladies had signed on as members.

The British Women's Group was born! Thus the reason that 29th May 2019 was chosen for our Anniversary Lunch.

Lady Pritchard, The Ambassador's wife, graciously accepted the role of Honorary President and today, the Ambassador's partner continues that tradition as our Patron.

Our range of activities and

services has altered and expanded over the years to meet the requirements of our membership, and are continually being revised to keep abreast with the times.

Although we are primarily a social group through our activities we are able to accrue surplus funds, which enables us to support many educational sponsorships and Thai charities. These have expanded, as BWG fundraising has broadened in scope to meet the changing demands placed upon it.

Today the British Women's Group is a continuing success story – thanks to the support, commitment and effort of its members both past and present.

It was wonderful to be able to share our Golden 50th Anniversary with the Combined Women's Group's of



## The Combined Women's Lunch Hosted by the British Women's Group



Bangkok, at the Siam Kempinski Hotel. As you can see from the photos a great time was had by everyone, whether it was shopping, dancing, watching the table magician, enjoying the delicious meal or winning a raffle prize.

A huge thank you to all our sponsors, to the ladies who turned grey organising the event and a special thank you to all who joined in with the fun of the day, adding golden sparkles to complete the event.









# Khao Luang trek – Thailand holiday a bit different

*by Marc Deschamps*

**W**e all heard it before: “My holiday in Thailand was great!”. Many tourists and other travellers refer to islands, beaches, palaces, temples, street food, tuk tuks, parties and friendly local people. But there is much more to explore in Thailand. Let me share with the more adventurous amongst you a very different way to explore this wonderful country. An exciting visit I will describe with words like jungle trekking, sleeping in hammocks, exhausting ascents and descents, blood sucking leeches, stunning nature, backpacks and hiking boots, a team experience, local culture

with local food, an unforgettable experience for sure.

My friend and I, decided to join a ‘four days three nights’ trek organised by [www.Bangkok360.de](http://www.Bangkok360.de) to climb Khao Luang in Nakhon Si Thammarat National Park in South Thailand, organised by a licensed local tour guide in May this year. A small team of nine friends, locals and foreigners, mixed gender, from young to a more experienced age.

Khao Luang is the highest mountain in South Thailand and the summit stands at 1835m above sea level. The trek is the only way to that mountain top and it starts at sea level,

so you know what to expect.

A flight or drive to Nakhon Si Thammarat is how you get to the starting location. A one night’s stay to get to know each other over a delicious local Thai dinner at Pi Bao’s guesthouse in the “Tea House in Rain Forest” follows. He offers very simple but cosy accommodation and sufficient time to prepare your gear and backpack for an early rise the next morning.

But wait! You need to consider a number of things before you embark on such a trek. Are you fit enough? Can you take your kids? I suggest







not younger than 14 years of age, or when 'are we there yet?' is not used anymore. Do you have the right equipment? You sleep in your own hammock, with or without a mosquito net is your choice. Do you have good hiking shoes or boots? You will be wet and so will your shoes. How much can you or should you carry? I suggest not more than 15kg in a 70 litre backpack. It is humid and hot when you start. It can be cold, wet and windy on the top.

You will meet leeches regularly along the way. You get used to them, no worries – and you wear leech socks and long hiking pants. You will be drinking water from natural streams. A filter bottle is a good idea. Water will be essential. There is no light switch in the jungle at night, a headlamp helps. Your toilet is the forest. You have no phone signal either. Use the phone purely for photos. Power bank? Think it through, get packed and get excited. The local tour operator can help you with advice and material if needed.

After breakfast on day one, you load up for a short pickup car ride to where you meet the local team and park ranger at the National Park entrance. The local guides show us the way, carry food for the group and will cook the most outstanding South Thailand dishes for us during the trek. The team pose for the compulsory 'tai roop', the first team photographs (we are in Thailand – remember) to document the moment for all.

Now you make that first step and cross the line into the jungle. The lush greens of a most wonderful and ancient tropical jungle, immediately embraces you and reveals its beauty, step by step. Fern trees, waterfalls and small cascades, delicate moss on tree barks, natural water streams with whitewashed stones to cross, hidden or more visible paths where you walk in line. The further you

walk, the humbler and more silent you become as the forest and nature here has their own language and your senses start to listen. You feel the sweat dripping off your forehead, you feel

the smile on your face grow and you start to see the glow in the eyes of your team members when you look at each other. You stop for necessary breaks to catch your breath, drink, assemble your strength, adjust your backpack or shoes. You are getting more experienced by the day. Four days to go, only forward, upward, then steep downward.

Lunch breaks are most welcome. Lunch is usually a small portion of rice with a smaller portion of meat or vegetable. You sit quietly or you talk with your friends, you enjoy the stunning views from the heights you have already climbed, you sometimes drop all but your swimming gear and sit in the stream just to cool down. You filter stream water and all fill their water bottles.







Then, refreshed, you choose your position in the gang again – the fastest at the front, the more relaxed back of the line. Your personal energy balance must be measured and all will reach the night camp for sure. You slide back into the jungle's green, grabbing stones, tree trunks, roots, anything when it gets very steep.

You focus on your breath, you stop to take the most incredible pictures of landscapes, your friends in front or behind you, plant leaves, caterpillars, spiders, flowers of wild jungle orchids, the light beams entering the jungle, also of yourself sweating but still smiling, feeling free and happy. In these four days, nature will change from hot humid deep tropical jungle to fresh mountainous brush land with steep drops towards the top of your trek. You will have 360 degree views with early wake up hilltop sunrise opportunities, you will have steep declines in the forest, partly sliding on your bottom or crawling on your knees. You gear up when it rains, you remove layers while moving down the mountain. You respect nature and the local cultural ways of living in the jungle, appeasing ghosts who allow you to visit their jungle and you do not name danger by its name to not jinx it. You learn to live the moment and to judge danger and act together, all depending on each other.

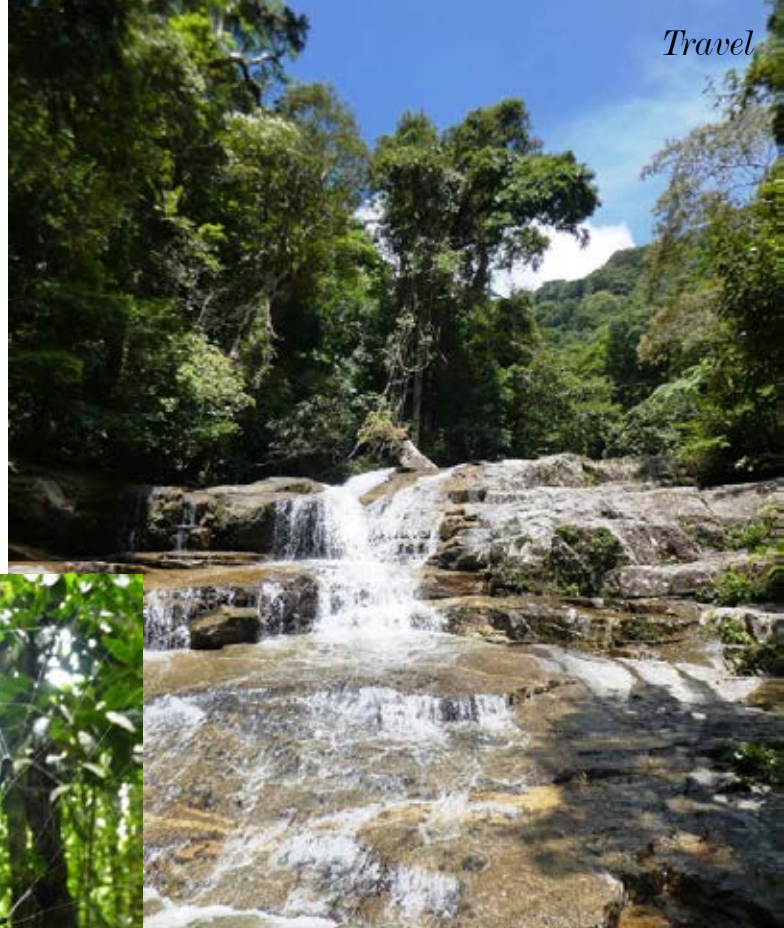
Every day, you will reach a night camp location. It is called so just because we stay here, though it is in the jungle still.

Welcome to another great experience. Your legs are tired; your senses are wide awake. A first action is called for – you need two trees now. Which two trees are yours? The distance between them is relevant, the ground surface as well since your hammock will hang above it. What if it rains at night? Where do you put your backpack? Can you hang it up? It is day one and if you are not a usual hammock trekker, expect some learning curve. It is great fun and satisfaction once your flysheet (your roof) is fixed, your hammock solidly mounted and tested. You are now ready for a wash at the stream flowing through your camp, while dinner is being prepared in a makeshift kitchen by your experienced local guides.

Dinner time! You can eat a whole bear, your body tells you that your batteries are depleted for today. New energy is needed. The team huddles under a large flysheet roof, sitting on a plastic sheet on the floor, enjoying the most incredible Thai food dishes, prepared with skill and containing added fruits, vegetables and local plants collected during the trek in the jungle. Incredibly delicious and in a quality and variety which deserves Michelin stars. You lean on backpacks and watch the sudden sunset in the jungle, the change of lights, from sunlight to red to grey to pitch dark.







You enjoy these views, you talk, share and hang around with the gang until you feel it is time to slide into your prepared sleeping bag inside your hammock. You view the pictures of these unforgettable memories each day pass through your mind. Your eyelids get heavy and you glide into sleep, satisfied, tired but happy.

The new day starts with the first light. It is a relaxed getting up, sometimes showering, brushing teeth or bathing in the stream, filling water bottles, packing up your 'bed' and your backpack, having another exquisite and fully cooked Thai breakfast with multiple courses, coffee or tea. You will need the energy. Then you lace up and when your backpack goes onto your shoulders and you hear the click of the straps, your eyes start to shine, the smile slides back into your face, your eyes scan the environment and the beauty around you and there it is again – the first step of the new day. All in our team feel it! Remember: Leave nothing but footprints – take nothing but memories.

#### Useful Links:

#### FB Posts Marc Deschamps:

<https://www.facebook.com/marc.deschamps.18/posts/10219304568305658>  
<https://www.facebook.com/marc.deschamps.18/posts/10219304682708518>  
<https://www.facebook.com/marc.deschamps.18/posts/10219304776830871>  
<https://www.facebook.com/marc.deschamps.18/posts/10219304849232681>

Khao Luang National Park:

<https://www.thainationalparks.com/khao-luang-national-park>



#### TeaHouse in Rain Forest: (Host is Pi Bao)

<https://www.facebook.com/%E0%B8%9A%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B9%83%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%9B%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%9D%E0%B8%99-Tea-House-in-Rain-Forest-%E0%B8%9A%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B8%E0%B8%A9%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%81%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%82%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%87-2022466791307251/>

#### Bangkok360:

<https://www.bangkok360tour.com/main/>  
<http://www.bangkok360.de/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/Bangkok360>  
<https://www.facebook.com/Bangkok360/videos/886570105022440/>







# Cruising the Mergui Archipelago

by Scott and Nori Brixen

*Sailing out of Kawthaung on the Sea Gipsy, a wave of contentment washed over me. The tendrils of stress that had gripped my heart were already withering. In a few weeks, I would quit my job and probably leave finance for good. Two months later, our family would say zaijian to Asia and embark on a six month global odyssey before returning to the USA.*

During our twenty years in Asia, we had travelled manically. Still, there remained many 'trip of a lifetime' experiences that had eluded us: trekking in Tibet, cruising the backwaters of Kerala, diving in Rajah Ampat, etc. However, our last 'big splash' in Asia could only be one destination.

I had dreamed of exploring the Mergui Archipelago for decades. It was the stuff of travel legends: eight hundred mostly uninhabited islands strewn across thousands of square miles of the Andaman Sea. For much of our time in Asia, however, the islands were off limits to foreigners. Burma had become Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest and the junta leaders were persona non grata in international

circles. I checked in from time to time, but only a handful of Thailand based boats were allowed to take scuba divers into the southern reaches of the archipelago, and the costs of such journeys were stratospheric.

How the region had changed since my first visit to Myanmar in 1998! At that time, getting a visa had been difficult and foreigners were forced to exchange US dollars for FECs (Foreign Exchange Certificates) at the airport. Now visas were available on arrival and everybody used the Kyat. Today, former prisoner and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi was the democratically-elected leader of the country, while Thailand was back under military rule. Myanmar was one of the hottest destinations in global travel, while Thailand was struggling to cope with too many tourists in places like Phuket and Koh Phi Phi.

With cheap flights from Bangkok to Ranong and new tour agencies in Kawthaung, getting to the Mergui Archipelago had never been easier. That said, it still wasn't easy and it definitely wasn't cheap. When we toured the islands in late 2017, there were only a handful of boats doing archipelago cruises between November to April, and resorts on only two islands. But we had no interest in big boat cruising. To make the kind of small, private trip we wanted affordable, we needed to find another family (or two!) to bring the costs down.

Normally I don't like travelling with other families. Of course, it's nice for the boys to have friends to play with when we arrive. It can also be wonderful for the adults to relax with





strong cocktails and light conversation when the kids go to bed. But all families travel differently, making disagreements and disappointments inevitable. The 'fit' between two families needs to be perfect, and it rarely is. Our family needs to be up early, moving, exploring and learning. Often, we try to see or do too much. Yet we're relaxed travellers too; if service at a hotel isn't perfect, we're not going to freak out and bellow for a manager.

Despite my usual misgivings, I was excited to be travelling with the McTaggarts. Paul was a Canadian entrepreneur whose latest venture connected tourists with local dentists - a sort of hotels.com for teeth whitening and crowns. His American wife, Autumn, was an accomplished chef who had won Thailand's version of The Iron Chef. Their two daughters, Bella and Sophia, were our boys' ages and attended the same school. Most importantly, Paul and Autumn were a happy, enthusiastic couple with a love of travel and adventure.

Our voyage would run counterclockwise on a compass, beginning with a long northwestern arc. Most of what little tourism infrastructure existed would be near the mainland towns of Kawthaung and Myeik, we surmised. We wanted to get well out of reach of day-trippers (if indeed there were any) and experience something increasingly difficult to find in populous and popular Asia: uninhabited islands, empty beaches and pristine reefs.

The ten of us flew into Ranong, a small city on the Andaman Sea located near Myanmar's southernmost point. I've always thought that the outlines of Thailand and Myanmar look like two ladies' faces looking in opposite



directions, their long tresses trailing down to the Malay Peninsula. Myanmar's 'braid' ends at the town of Kawthaung, located just across the wide Kra Buri channel from Ranong.

The frontier crossing was an unexpected highlight. At Ranong's hectic port, we wedged into a tiny long tail boat that zipped up a tidal channel past warehouses and fishermen's shacks. After stopping briefly at a floating Thai police station to register our journey, we motored out into the Kra Buri, so wide that it looked more like the open ocean than an inlet. The waves got bigger and choppier as motored into deeper water; we all got soaked with sea spray. There was another immigration stop at a Thai islet one third of the way into the channel. For the final leg of the journey, Kawthaung was clearly visible, it's Pyi Daw Aye pagoda rising high above the busy port.





“Welcome to Myanmar!” I shouted to the boys as they disembarked onto the metal gangway. Dozens of local kids gawked at us. Now we were on Myanmar time, a half hour and several decades behind Thailand.

“Mingalaba!” Paul greeted the locals warmly. Impressive! Their family had already learned some basic Myanmar.

After the excitement of the crossing, the three hour wait for our passports, possessions and boat to be cleared by customs was a giant buzz-kill, which Paul and I combated with our first Myanmar beers, a walk through the local market and a steep hike up roads and staircases to the temple. Kawthaung looked and felt like a smuggler’s town, which of course it had to be. Otherwise, why would there be so many checkpoints? I’ve always found the contrast between the richer and poorer border towns on either side of an imaginary line to be enthralling.

“Oh thank God!” Nori exclaimed, when our guide informed us that the boat was ready. While Paul and I were exploring Kawthaung, she and Autumn had been stuck with six bored children at a tiny coffee shop. We had been on the go since 6am. It was 2pm when we boarded the boat.

The Sea Gypsy was not a luxury vessel. Instead, it looked like a mid-sized and mid-end dive boat. We slept on simple mattresses in small berths with only thin curtains for privacy and noisy fans for cooling. The food was ample, but

basic. Nonetheless, the whole experience was a “Lifestyles of the rich and famous” - quality adventure.

For a start, the boat was ours. Gosh, the entire archipelago felt like it was ours. The only tourist boat we saw in three days was a cruise ship, far in the distance. Every beach we visited was empty until we arrived. Nobody ever dropped in on our snorkelling spots. The kids spent hours jumping off the upper deck into the sea. We had the ultimate luxuries: time, space and our families. On that first evening, moored between two islands, we clinked glasses of Aperol Spritz, watched the sunset and collectively felt like the luckiest people on earth.

“Thank you for inviting us!” Paul said.

“Thank you guys for coming,” I replied.

The next three days were a blissful blur of activity, beauty and sloth. Each day we called on two or three islands. We’d don our snorkelling gear and drift over giant heads of coral. Or we’d take the SUPs and kayak to shore and play on the beach. If we were close enough, we’d jump off the top deck and swim to the next island. One day the crew arranged a spicy seafood lunch for us on the beach. The tin of assorted biscuits was constantly refilled, so the kids rarely bothered us with hunger pangs. There was a lot of reading and dozing on the deck chairs. The extra bottles of wine that we’d manage to smuggle in all disappeared. One night, the kids slept on cushions pulled out on the bow.





When we visited, the receding tide had revealed a mudflat studded with trash, motor parts and broken plastic household items.

Everywhere man goes he screws things up, I thought.

Those four days on the Sea Gypsy will always be some of our greatest travel memories. The islands were beautiful. But strangely, it's the splendid isolation that I remember most. With no other boats in sight, we felt like explorers rather than tourists. And with no one to bother us, and no emails to unsettle us, we could just focus on the here and now, think deeply, and daydream.

"I haven't felt this relaxed in years," Autumn remarked, as she sipped a glass of Champagne.

"Oh yeah, me too," purred Paul. Similar to me, the stress of his job had damaged his health. He needed this trip as much as I did.

The white sand, green jungle and blue waters made for stunning pictures. But sadly the islands were not as pristine as we had hoped. PET bottles, chip packages and plastic bags drifted with the currents and there were reefs of rubbish that had built up in bays where wind and waves had concentrated them. The village we toured on the second day was shamefully filthy, with residents casually tossing refuse into the bay.

**About the author:**  
**Two Twins Twavel**  
Scott & Nori are avid travellers and knowledge seekers who have travelled to 110 plus countries across all 7 continents. Now they're sharing their wanderlust with their two sets of twinboys, Tai, Logan, Drake and Kiva. Follow their travels at: [www.twotwinstwavel.com](http://www.twotwinstwavel.com)





# Havana by bicycle

by Neil Brook

**L**a Habana Vieja (Old Havana) is best explored on foot, so we are hiring bikes and heading to the other side of the city, out along the Malecon though central Havana returning via Revolution Plaza. Our guide speaks a little English and oozes with enthusiasm. Keeping an eye on the traffic and watching out for stray dogs we set off.

Havana is flat making riding around relatively easy. Four hours will allow enough time to chart an interesting course stopping at museums and squares whilst zig zagging through a city past spectacular facades exploring street art, Cathedrals and boulevards. Some streets are relatively smooth whilst others are not, to say the least.

It's 10am which, given my late

lunch appointment, is a perfect time to start. However this was also an excellent way to shed 10kgs in the 32 °C degree heat. In hindsight an earlier start may have been better although my appetite and thirst were certainly primed and ready afterwards.

The Capitolio Nacional or El Capitolio, who's dome stands covered in scaffolding, evidence that Havana is undergoing a transformation, is the perfect starting point. It was built during the late 1920s and was the seat of government after the Cuban Revolution in 1959. It's an easily recognisable landmark and a focus point of the city which is now home to the Cuban Academy of Sciences.

It sits adjacent to the recently renovated Gran Teatro de La Habana. Both buildings are stunning and are helping to bring back life to the Havana of old.

In less than five minutes we arrive at the Museo de la Revolution. Ensuring bikes are tied and locked we head in to meet Fidel and Che Guevara. Set in the former Presidential Palace it's a fairly small place where history jumps

off the walls and stories of betrayal, assassination and revolution unfold as you wander the halls. A huge Cuban flag billows in the breeze hanging over the courtyard. Allowing half an hour to take it all in is ample time unless a guide is available, with exhibits explained in Spanish and sometimes English. Unfortunately there is no guide available today. However it will be well worth a return visit. It's relatively easy now to secure the services of an English







restaurants you need to book before you arrive now although you may grab a lunch spot at short notice. Given the Americans change their minds with each Presidential upheaval or whim, American based cruises which started to pop by under the Obama era concessions, are to stop delivering cashed up sightseers. Well that was this week anyway... Europeans and the rest of the world have been visiting for years and will continue to do so.

Art galleries are littered throughout the city, holes in the walls where local artists display their talent with pride. While stock standard oils of old cars and ladies with cigars are abundant, taking the time to duck into doorways can be rewarded with displays of exquisite photographs, sculptures and paintings. As there's always a story to tell.

Churches seem to pop up everywhere. In back alleys, on boulevards and next to green parks. Away from Havana Cathedral (La Catedral de la Virgen María de la Concepción Inmaculada de La Habana) which is a must visit especially to climb the bell towers, small places of worship are littered throughout neighbourhoods and house stunning artefacts and glistening stained glass windows.



speaking guide who will include the museum as part of a walking tour of the old town. I know friends who have been a couple of times with different guides and the stories whilst sticking to a narrative can vary with fascinating local insight.

We cut through streets passing blue umbrellas set up around tables and chairs adjacent to a church where three streets converge. We'll return for lunch another day. Heading north along Paseo de Martí we hit the Malecón and take a left heading along the oceanfront. We

stop to look back on the view of the old fort protecting Havana harbour. During the day fishermen are scattered along the ocean walls casting their lines and trying their luck. At night the Malecón transforms into a hive of activity. The perfect place to take in the sunset and people watch with a cold Cerveza in hand.

Central Havana is filled with wonderful neighbourhoods. Glorious mansions in varying states of repair grace city blocks and it's easy to imagine how Havana was once the Caribbean

host to movie stars and glitterati. Some of the city's best restaurants are here. It may be off the beaten track for the day trippers being dumped onto the city by cruise liners thousands at a time and I'm thinking that may be a good thing. For many of the more well known







We have to push our guide to stop so we can venture inside some of the quainter ones.

Round the corner and we're rolling into a soccer (football) match on the street. The ball stops at my front wheel and for a moment everyone's still. I manage to kick it back. There are six of us and six of them. It's time for a break. We form a team and take on the local kids. It's easy to tell who is on which side. We tower over them! A couple of goals each and were dripping in sweat.

There's a fruit market on the footpath offer refreshing orange drink at around CUC1 (USD1) for 2 huge bottles. Time to stop and refresh. The drinks are on us.

We stumble across an area where every building seems to be covered in art and cafes spill out onto the streets. This was scripted by our guide however it's one of the joys of exploring Havana. There are surprises around every corner.

We weave in and out of streets running parallel to Avenida 23 heading in the direction of Plaza de la Revolución. Havana's beautiful buildings are in a state of decay and whilst some are privileged to be under renovation and restoration others provide canvas for street art,

adding colour and character. Heading onto Avenida Paseo towering 109 metres in the centre of the plaza the memorial to Jose Marti greets us. Pieced together by huge slabs of Cuban grey marble standing tall as a monument to one of Cuba's heroes and in defiance to those who resisted Cuban independence. Che Guevara looks on from the facade of the Ministry of Interior.



Skirting Arroyo Street we head down towards the water's edge encircling La Coubre Train Station to visit Almacenes San Jose Artisan's Market along Avenue del Puerto. Here every conceivable souvenir can be purchased. Although as we navigate the city we have more fun negotiating with vendors set up in doorways and on staircases along the city's streets. It's a precept stop for those with little time. However we have the time so we linger here for a moment before moving on.

We cut back through old Havana completing a full circle, noting cafes that have opened up to greet the midday lunch crowd, so that we may return later to enjoy their hospitality.

*This has been the perfect way to explore another side of the city. Next time I'll hire the bike and trust myself to be the guide.*

[www.rentbikehavana.com](http://www.rentbikehavana.com)

CUC15 for 24 hours hire/guided tour  
CUC25 per person







# PROFESSIONAL HEALTHCARE COMMUNITY

## @Praram 9 Hospital

Praram 9 Hospital has provided best-in-class for more than 26 years, with a wide range of reliable medical services of the highest quality standards and more than 300 full time professional physicians offering comprehensive range of specialized medical practices. The hospital has installed the most modern, state-of-the-art medical equipment to provide patients with the very best medical services at all times with accredited by Joint Commission International (JCI).

### Medical Services :

#### Medical Institute

- Cardiovascular Institute
- Kidney Transplant Institute

#### Medical Centers & Clinics

- Mind Center
- Breast Clinic
- Hair Center
- Eye Center
- Obstetric Gynecology Center
- Orthopedic Center
- Medical Center
- Surgery Center
- Pediatrics Center
- Ear Nose and Throat Center
- Dental Center
- Check-Up Center
- Skin Rejuvenation Cosmetic Laser Surgery & Dermatology Center
- Rehabilitation Center
- Imaging Center (X-Ray)
- Emergency Center
- Gastroenterology (GI) and Hepatobiliary (Liver)
- Neurology Center
- Diabetes Metabolic Center
- Cancer Center



Hospital map

 [www.praram9.com](http://www.praram9.com)

 +66 2 202 9999

 [info@praram9.com](mailto:info@praram9.com)







## Citibank Global Wallet is your passport to savings

*A cutting-edge digital application, Citibank Global Wallet gives travellers the freedom to pay for goods and services and manage their money in 9 different currencies – conveniently.*

**T**ravel. Its part and parcel of the expatriate life. Whether it's a trip home, exploring Thailand's neighbours, or doing business around the region, expats in the Kingdom are frequently on the move. These days, Thais are also travelling in record numbers. While the journey may be enlightening, dealing with foreign currencies and exchange rates can be confusing. It's the kind of baggage no one needs. With Citibank Mobile Wallet, however, buying goods and services abroad is now a breeze.

Citibank Global Wallet is the perfect solution: an app that can be accessed conveniently from a mobile phone, tablet,

or device. Linked to your Citibank Debit MasterCard and current or savings account, it allows travellers the freedom to conduct transactions in 9 different currencies at any time. Pay for a hotel in Thai Baht, a flight in British Pounds, and meals in Japanese Yen if that is what works best. The choice is yours. So are the savings: there are no processing, admin, or extra fees on top of the standard currency conversion charge.

Simply install the Citi Mobile App on any personal phone or device, download Global Wallet, and register. You are good to go.

Global Wallet is designed to work for you: a powerful application that is intuitive and easy enough for anyone to navigate. The app can be turned on or off as needed. One-time pin access makes multiple transactions quick and efficient. Menus and options are clear and concise. The goal of Global Wallet is to simplify your payments and put you in charge of your global spending. The power is yours.

In developing Global Wallet, Citibank has demonstrated its commitment to its customers and innovation. Determined to stay on the cutting edge of new financial technologies, the bank has invested in a digital ecosystem and partnered with startups to maximise the potential of blockchain, the digital distributed ledger system that underpins e-currencies. Analysts say these new technologies have the potential to radically change the financial services sector. As a leader in global banking, Citibank is embracing innovation and



exploring new realms of technology to better serve its customers.

Citibank customers can explore the benefits of Global Wallet even before their journey begins. Global Wallet holders enjoy fee-free cash withdrawals with their Citibank Debit MasterCard at Citi ATMs in over 42 countries – take money out often at no charge to avoid the risk of carrying large amounts of cash. The app will also locate the nearest ATMs in any area in any country and provide directions on how to get to them.

One brilliant feature is the ability to take advantage of exchange rates when they are most favourable. This is especially attractive to anyone who is even slightly savvy about managing his or her money. And nearly every traveller checks exchange rates before and during their trip. Set up an account in one or more of the nine currencies, and when the rates are at their most advantageous in a particular currency transfer funds into that account. Exchange rates are available in real time. You don't need to be as knowledgeable as a forex trader to come out ahead.

Citibank Global Wallet enables you to electronically exchange Thai Baht for Singapore Dollars, Australian Dollars, Euro, Hong Kong Dollars, Japanese Yen, British Sterling Pounds, Swiss Francs and U.S. Dollars.

Planning and monitoring budgets and expenditures are effortless with Global Wallet's menu of easy-to-understand functions. Using Citi Mobile App Snapshot, it is possible to check the balances in your foreign currencies accounts without signing in. If the balance is running low in a particular account, transferring funds can be done at lightning speed through seamless menu options.

Also, if a friend or relative locally or in another country is a Citibank customer, Global Wallet users can transfer money to their account without incurring a fee by using the Citibank Global Transfer (CGT) platform. Sending money back home to parents, or to children studying overseas has never been easier.

Global Wallet can be a useful tool even if you never leave home. The Citibank Debit card linked with Global Wallet can be used while shopping online, making purchases from websites or e-commerce channels in other countries using the local currency if you wish. Shop online like a local even when you're not in that country.

Last but not least, Citibank World MasterCard holders enjoy perks that are the envy of other travellers. Gain access to over 1,000 comfortably appointed lounges in over 500 airports around the world. There is never a shortage of exclusive offers for cardholders from airport retailers, spas, fine dining establishments, hotels, and others.



The world is becoming more connected. Today, we are all global citizens. Global Wallet is your passport to savings and convenience. Put the world in your wallet with Citibank Global Wallet.

02 081 0999 [www.citibank.co.th](http://www.citibank.co.th)





# Solar Impulse: round the world without a single drop of fuel

by *Raphaëlle Nicolet*

**F**lying... humans have always been obsessed with flying. Icarus, Leonardo Da Vinci, the Mongolfier Brothers, the Wright Brothers and many others have paved the path to aviation as we know it today. It is now an integral part of our every day lives.

However, human kind is now facing a huge challenge: starting to respect its mother, the one who is providing it with everything it needs to survive: water, food, air. The earth is under serious threat and it is time to save it.

This ambitious goal is attainable, but adaptation and innovation are highly needed. Amongst the changes that will have to be done, one is fundamental: the switch to clean technologies.

The good news is that it is not impossible! This was Solar Impulse's goal to show it to the world. Our motto was: Future is clean and we were determined to prove it.



## But what is exactly Solar Impulse ?

It is an ambitious project, developed in Switzerland by two pioneers and their team, Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg.

Bertrand Piccard a Swiss psychiatrist and balloonist who comes from a famous family of adventurers. Flashback to March 1999, together with Brian Jones he completed a non-stop tour of the globe in a balloon called Breitling Orbiter 3. Encouraged by his success and concerned about the need to raise environmental awareness the journey of Solar Impulse began.

Bertrand Piccard was joined 4 years later by André Borschberg, an aviation lover. Former pilot in the Swiss Air Army, helicopter pilot, engineer in mechanics and thermodynamics.

Enthusiastic about the project he began to develop it alongside Bertrand Piccard.

Fast forward to 2009, the year that saw the first plane driven by solar energy born and named Solar Impulse 1, HB-SIA. This plane flew to various countries, namely Belgium, France, Spain, Morocco and the United States. The duration of the flights performed by HB-SIA was between 14 and 22 hours. If you want to see this plane, it has been bought by Solvay, one of the main and faithful sponsors and is on show at La Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie in Paris.

Five years after its first success, in 2014, the second plane arrived, Solar Impulse 2, HB-SIB. Unlike its





predecessor this one had been built for nothing less than performing the first round the world without using a single drop of fuel.

This crazy and exclusive experience would start in Abu Dhabi at the beginning of 2015.

### A few impressive technical facts

Before going any further, I would like to give you a few impressive technical facts regarding Solar Impulse.

First of all, its wingspan is 72 metres (236 feet) and only the pilot fits in the cockpit, with no space for a passenger. By contrast, think about a big Boeing 747. This plane is impressively big and can carry up to 660 passengers. But, its wingspan is still 'only'... 68 metres (224 feet). If you compare the two planes, you realise how impressive Solar Impulse's wingspan is. Its shape looks pretty much like a glider.

Beside its size, HB-SIB was also incredibly light. Think a minute about the pickups we see everywhere here in Thailand. Their weight is around 2080kg (4576lbs). Now, guess the weight of the solar plane... you won't believe it, but it was only 2300kg (5060lbs)! The carbon fibre used to build it is incredibly light and yet very strong. The cruising speed is quite slow – it doesn't fly faster than 50-100km/h (30mph to 60mph, 25 KIAS-35 KIAS). Solar Impulse may not be fast but, it is important to remember that it represents a major technological advancement, that has yet to be improved.



Like every invention, it starts with the emergence of technology that will evolve and become more efficient with time.

In order to generate enough power to fly, Solar Impulse uses no less than 17,248 solar cells spread on the wings and fuselage.

### Operating mode

So how does this revolutionary plane work in simple terms? Solar energy works non-stop through the following process. As the solar energy feeds through the cells it is then distributed to the batteries via an inverter thus producing power to charge the engines. All of this, without even using a single drop of fuel!

Solar Impulse 2 was flying up to the maximum altitude of 8,500-9,000 metres (27,887-29,527 feet). As the plane gained altitude, it used the energy driven directly from the

solar cells while at the same time storing energy in the batteries. The motors were then turned off and the plane would glide, going down to 1,500 metres (4,921 feet). During this 4 hour stage, no energy was used. Finally, the motors were turned on again using the energy stored during the day. At the first sign of daylight the process would start all over again.

The first time I saw this beautiful bird flying, I was surprised at its silence. We are not used to seeing silent planes.







This was something completely foreign to me yet it amazed me at the same time.

### The round the world

Now that you know a little more about the technical characteristics of the plane, allow me to move on to round the world trip itself.

The journey started in Abu Dhabi. The entire team was about to face a huge challenge of never, before seen events and we had to be ready. Flight tests, training on the mobile hangar, used to store the plane daily, solar charges, everything had to be executed to ensure the odds were on our side.

As you can imagine, the logistics on the project were immense and nothing was left to chance. For example, as HB-SIB was so huge, we didn't have hangars big enough all around the world to store the plane. Therefore, we had a special mobile hangar, developed by an Italian company in the balloon field, to protect the plane. Erecting it took us around 8 hours, dismantling it, around 12 hours. We would monitor it 24/7 to ensure it did not deflate and was well secured, in the event of strong winds.

We were aware of the highly unpredictable nature of our crazy project. But it didn't deter us and the team was highly determined to make it happen.

March 9, 2015, the adventure began. Everybody was excited. It was a mixed bag of emotions, happiness, excitement, apprehension, haziness, but above all, the feeling of being part of a historical moment was overpowering any fears we had.

The first leg led us to Muscat (Oman) before taking us to Ahmedabad (India), Varanasi (India), Mandalay (Myanmar), Chongqing (China), Nanjing (China), Nagoya (Japan) and Oahu, Hawaii (USA).

Unfortunately, the batteries had been damaged during the very long flight between Japan and Hawaii.

Can you imagine André Borschberg flew for 5 days and 5 nights, exactly 117 hours 52 minutes to cross the Pacific and reach Hawaii? This is actually a solo flight world record. As the batteries couldn't be used in its state, the

adventure had to be put on a hold after this epic flight. It wasn't easy to replace the batteries of an exclusive prototype like Solar Impulse, therefore some time was needed to replace them. As the days got shorter, the sunshine was not sufficient to circumnavigate round the world. For this reason the plane stayed grounded in Hawaii and the second part of the journey round the world started again on April 21, 2016. The plane then flew to San Francisco, Phoenix, Tulsa, Dayton, Lehigh Valley, New York, Seville, Cairo and finally made it back to Abu Dhabi on July 24, 2016.

This adventure was amazing in so many ways. Being a pioneer, having the chance to inspire people all around the world was a privilege. We faced challenges because of the weather, the regulations, the distrust of the unknown, but it was all worth it. Seeing this shy teenager in Abu Dhabi asking the pilots if they were thinking about recruiting female pilots for solar planes, seeing more than 15,000 people in one day queueing to have the chance to see this incredible plane, seeing a future pilot in China with sparkles in his eyes, asking questions, seeing with an indescribable emotion Solar Impulse 2 appearing in the sky of Hawaii after leaving it five days earlier in Japan, all of these moments – amongst others – were worth all the doubts and challenges we had to face.







### And now?

Even if today we are far from a solar aviation, the goal of Solar Impulse was to show the world that incredible things can be achieved with clean technology that it is definitely the future. This plane was built not to carry people, but to carry an important message and raise awareness about the resources available to live an eco friendly lifestyle. Global warming is not a fatality.

Solar Impulse legacy led to great new concepts, like the company H55\* which just released on June 21, 2019 a two-seater 'zero emission' electric airplane. The Solar Impulse Foundation\*\* also keeps on spreading the message by selecting 1,000 solutions with the goal of protecting the environment in a profitable way. These projects are awarded the Solar Impulse Efficient Solution Label. Beside this label, the World Alliance for Efficient Solutions was set up. But what is the goal pursued by this Alliance? It brings together actors who are protecting the environment in a profitable way. They can act through developing, financing or promoting clean products, processes, services and technologies. For now, there are 1,849 members of the World Alliance all around the World and 177 projects have been already awarded.

### What about you?

Saving our planet is our duty, all of us. Together, we can make a difference. Don't minimise your impact. If you bring your own cup and straw to coffeeshops, don't see it as a drop in the ocean. If you have one coffee a day, at the end of the week, you will have saved at least 5 cups and 5 straws. If 20 people do it, this is aa 100 units a week. Besides cups and straws, plastic bags are a real cancer to the environment. Can you imagine that the ASEAN countries represent just 9% of the world population, but are responsible for half of the 8 millions tons of plastic discharged into the ocean every year (Ocean Conservancy's report, 2017)! Therefore, if you stop using plastic bags, it will have a huge impact on the planet. After all, all it takes to help the earth is carrying a really light reusable

bag with you: insignificant effort for a big result.

You can make a difference by making small changes in your daily life. Unsubscribe from newsletters you never read, empty your junk mail. You may ask me why? To store all this data, we need gigantic servers, cooled down by enormous AC installations. You get my point I guess: less data, less energy spent.

June 23, 2019, in Bangkok, the ASEAN member countries signed an advancing partnership for sustainability. Although no concrete

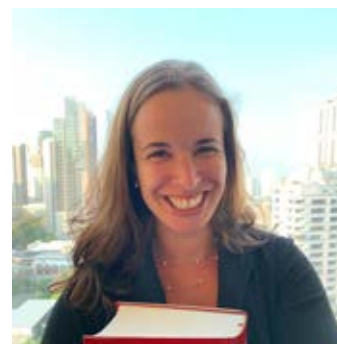
measures have been put in place it is a first step towards the right direction but more still needs to be done. But it is not nearly enough. If the population doesn't raise awareness about global warming now and doesn't show willingness to change its habits, political agreements will struggle to reach their goal.

For the sake of the planet, please consider following the path of Solar Impulse and all the people actively working on saving mother earth. There are many opportunities to keep our comfort, wealth and money, even improve them by changing paradigm, believing and investing in clean technology! If we have been able to complete a round the world tour with a solar energy driven plane, you too can have a big impact. We have only one earth, let's work together to take care of it and not leave only a carbon footprint for future generations!

\*<https://www.h55.ch/>

\*\*<https://solarimpulse.com/>

*About the author: Raphaëlle Nicolet is a Swiss Attorney-at-law who has been living in Thailand for 3 years. Driven by passion, she loves gathering various experiences in order to acquire a wide vision of life. After practising as a criminal Attorney-at-law, she was part of the ground crew during the first step of the round the world with Solar Impulse. She now advises Swiss clients in Thailand, Switzerland and international clients in Thailand who have any interest in Switzerland. She also does everything she can to keep raising awareness about this subject dear to her heart: the environment compliance.*



**LinkedIn:** Raphaëlle Nicolet

**Email:** [rn@nflegal.ch](mailto:rn@nflegal.ch)



# Andrea Howton, COO, VitalLife Scientific Wellness Center at Bumrungrad International Hospital



**W**ith more than 20 years of marketing and senior management experience in the health, wellness, and aesthetic industries, Andrea brings unique insight and expertise to her position as Chief Operating Officer of VitalLife Scientific Wellness Center and Esperance

Integrative Cancer Center. In her varied and successful career as a business development expert, she has created visionary strategies and practical, effective solutions to either launch or re-energise aesthetic and medical facilities all over the world. She understands the needs of aesthetic and wellness businesses, their clients, and the best ways to grow the bottom-line while enhancing patient satisfaction.

At VitalLife Scientific Wellness Center, Andrea has been responsible for market development in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, direct and indirect sales channel management, product and service development and strategic marketing. She joined VitalLife as a consultant in 2018 and assumed responsibilities as Chief Operating Officer in 2019.

Her practical knowledge and engaging communication style make her a sought-after speaker and educator at industry conferences.

*She says “Self-determined people want to be in charge of their own health and enjoy the life enhancing benefits that modern medicine has to offer. It is our mission to provide you with the knowledge and the instruments to prevent nature from being the determining factor on how long, how active and how enjoyable your life will be.*

*Everything we offer is based on scientific substance, full personalisation and a trustworthy partnership”.*

## **Can you give us a bit of background on VitalLife?**

VitalLife Scientific Wellness Center was founded 18 years ago and over the years, has evolved into Thailand's premier integrative wellness, cancer and aesthetic centre. It is a subsidiary of the award-winning Bumrungrad International Hospital, one of the leading private hospitals in the world. Bumrungrad's world-class facility and technologies focus on medical emergencies, acute infections and trauma. VitalLife emphasises prevention and the integrative treatment of chronic diseases such as gut problems, diabetes, or stress-related disorders. Our physicians dig right down to the molecular level to figure out what is the cause of your 'dis-ease'.

It's not unusual for our physicians to spend an hour or more with patients, listening to their histories, doing the detective work, asking questions, and examining the genetic, environmental, and lifestyle patterns that effect health. They then design unique, personalised healing plans to correct imbalances early so they don't develop into more serious conditions.

## **Explain to our readers why it's worthwhile for people from all over the world to travel to Thailand for treatment?**

I think there are four main reasons: cost, technology, customer service and integrated medical services.

For many people overseas it is fear of the unknown that holds them back from seeking medical care overseas. But they are really missing out on world-class healthcare services and medications that are only a fraction of the their home country cost.

When I first arrived on the Bumrungrad campus, I was in awe of the cutting-edge technologies and range of services and treatments available here. In many instances we are the





**Can you describe the typical patient? Are they middle aged, young, old? What are they looking for?**

We see patients of all nationalities between 30 and 90 years of age. What do they have in common? They want quality of life, increased energy and clarity of mind, optimal weight and a strong immune system. Many have seen their parents decline under the burden of multiple chronic diseases

first and only facility in Asia offering these technologies. That is why our facility attracts people from all over the world and we have become experts in medical tourism.

We understand that distance and language are a concern, which is why we have created a kind of 'buddy system'. A Medical Concierge who speaks your language will be at your side throughout your whole journey. Before your arrival, he or she will assist with travel arrangements, organise accommodation, gather your medical records, and schedule your appointments. During your stay in Bangkok, your 'buddy' is always available to assist, whether you want to do some sightseeing, shopping or need an interpreter. Our executive lounge allows you to relax between appointments or to check e-mails.

VitalLife Scientific Wellness Center and Bumrungrad Hospital are located on the same campus. This allows for a seamless integration between acute care and VitalLife's preventive, functional medicine approach. This means our patients really get the best of both worlds.

#### **Describe this integrative care model in greater detail.**

Let's take knee or hip replacements, for instance. Our integrative approach is really a complete care model from pre-to post-surgery. Typically, the pre-surgical work-up includes a dental check to identify any hidden infection, a heart and general medical check-up. Our complete care model takes this a step further and looks at additional markers that impact surgery outcome and recovery. We analyse your hormone levels because optimal balance will ensure bone health and faster healing. We look at levels of heavy metal accumulation in your body. Metals like cadmium, for instance, can cause brittle bones. To promote faster healing we check and, if needed, bolster a patient's micronutrient levels.

Of course, we also discuss pre-and post-surgery diet and stress reduction techniques and, also very important, the need to stop smoking. Nicotine constricts blood vessels, which results in slower bone and tissue healing.

and they don't want to follow the same path. They don't want to worry about bladder leakage. They don't want to end up with dementia or a shoe box full of medications. They understand that prevention means they must be proactive.

Other patients already have symptoms of 'dis-ease' like achy joints, gas and bloating, skin rashes or trouble keeping the weight off. There may be no clear disease label, but they know that something is 'off' and they refuse to accept these symptoms as part of 'getting older'.

We also see more and more young professionals in their 30s. They operate in a high stress world, don't get enough sleep, don't eat properly, and are realising that they won't be able to keep this up without help. We tell them: "We cannot take your stressors away, but we can help fortify your body to better deal with them."

#### **Are there more men than women – or equal?**

Women are often the forerunners. I think it's because we are typically more open to talk about health issues with each other. Without too much generalisation, men are much more hesitant to talk about their medical concerns and avoid going to the doctor. This means, sometimes the women drag in the men and sometimes the men come in and bring their wives. Having said that, our patient mix is about 60% women and 40% men.

#### **Do people come more than once a year?**

The number of visits depends upon a patient's health concerns, age, health history and if they are local or from overseas. If you are in your 30s, a health check-up once every 1-2 years may be enough. If you are in your forties or older, you should get a health check-up at least every year. If you smoke, have hereditary health conditions, or possess other risk factors, our physicians may recommend for you to come more often.





**Can you talk a little more about the staff and quality of the physicians?**

Most of our Thai doctors are trained in Europe or the USA. Many started in conventional medicine and have completed additional training with prestigious organisations such as the American Academy of Anti-Ageing Medicine. Our International Medical Director, Dr. Terry Grossman, is a world-renowned authority in

Our long-distance patients from the US, Europe, the Middle East or Africa may only come once a year and combine their medical visits with other travel and leisure activities. Alternatively, they can always communicate with their physician via video conferencing.

**Is there anything else that you want to share with this audience. Anything on pricing?**

Thailand's hospitals are visited by about 25 million medical tourists from around the world. Though prices for treatments and medications have begun to rise, they are still 50-80% less than in the US or in their home countries. Price is certainly an important aspect, but there are other factors to consider such as convenience, service, and medical certifications. At VitalLife, all medical emergency and integrative medicine services are available on one campus, waiting time is comparably short and most tests are completed in a few hours.

Our facility offers concierge service, multilingual staff and we can even book sightseeing tours for you. We are also the first facility in Asia to receive the prestigious JCI certification (Joint Commission International), which is considered the gold standard in global healthcare.

the field of anti-ageing and preventive medicine. He has developed many of our cutting-edge protocols for measuring and modifying biological age and promoting not just a long lifespan but also healthspan.

**You mentioned aesthetic services. What do you offer?**

VitalLife offers comprehensive, non-surgical face and body services from dermal fillers, Botox, and body sculpting treatments to laser and light therapies. We really can tackle every common skin and beauty concern. However, we have taken aesthetics to a whole new level by combining external beauty treatments with internal diagnostics and wellness therapies. Why? Because we know that outside appearance is often a reflection of inner health.

Our doctors understand, for instance, that poor gut health and food sensitivities may be the cause of acne. That hormonal imbalances can make it difficult to lose weight and can cause skin discolourations. By addressing the root causes of skin and body concerns while simultaneously treating external blemishes, we see improved treatment outcomes, as well as faster and longer-lasting results – not to mention happier patients.

*Enjoy an exclusive VitalLife energising IV Drip!*



**50%  
OFF**

**Gift Voucher**



VITALLIFE

**MYER'S COCKTAIL IV DRIP**

(REGULAR PRICE 6,500 THB)

**Terms and Conditions:**

1. Offer available at VitalLife Scientific Wellness Center, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Bumrungrad Tower Building
2. Valid today through Aug 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019
3. Please present this voucher (original or image) upon arrival
4. This voucher is fully transferrable
5. 1 coupon per person
6. Please make an appointment in advance by calling 02 066 8899 or email: [info@vitallifeintegratedhealth.com](mailto:info@vitallifeintegratedhealth.com)



Send off for Valerie  
Rugene, spouse of  
the Ambassador of  
Kenya, at Ruen Urai







**I**t is a great privilege for me to talk about what I hope will be a beautiful and transformational addition to this great city's educational landscape. King's College International School Bangkok, due to open next year, is born of a noble parentage.

When we met the Founding Team, we knew that we had found a very special group of partners. Special because we so quickly became friends, and so quickly knew we could trust each other. But special because we knew we cared about one thing more than anything else.

We cared about the values by which good people live their lives, and how we can help children, wherever we have influence, develop good character.

King's College School is in many ways a very traditional school. We believe in good manners, courtesy and kindness. We are, it is true, the number one boys' or co-ed school in the UK, according to The Sunday Times. This is proof of the total commitment our teachers have to bringing the best out of every child. It is the reason that at King's, we achieve the best results in the world for the International Baccalaureate for the size of cohort we teach every year, and it is why over 300 boys and girls have won places to Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the last six years. In fact, over 90% of our pupils go to their first choice university, and this is invariably one of the leading universities of the world – whether Oxbridge, Harvard, or top UK universities such as Imperial or the London School of Economics.

But these academic successes are not what makes me







most proud as the person who has been a headmaster for over twenty years.

*I am proud that we help our children to believe that although their aspirations and successes matter – the feelings and hopes of everyone around them... these matter even more!*

This is why we led a national drive in the UK to place empathy in the front and centre of all we do.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of other people – not just to care about yourself.

In many ways, it links with the great Thai virtue of Hen Jai.

That reminds me to say, all of us at King's are especially excited about setting up this great new school in Bangkok because we feel we have so much to learn from Thai culture, Thai people – and Thai children.

We hope that by setting up King's College International School Bangkok, we can fuse two great cultures – British and Thai – and demonstrate to other nations in the 21st century that – yes – academic skill, knowledge, scholarship, technical understanding, outstanding achievement – these are all part of what we must provide – but there is another set of values without which no success is worthwhile. The ability to respect other people, to want the best for them, not just for yourself, and to help others fulfil their qualities through the courtesy and respect you show them yourself.

That is what I want King's Bangkok to achieve.



I want it to reflect the impeccable manners and sweetness of character I have seen in our Thai partners and at the same time to reproduce the friendly, full-hearted, serious-minded aspirations I am proud of my school achieving in London.

We will share the skills we have – the academic success that has made us the top boys' or co-ed school in the UK, the advice and support that gets our pupils to top universities. But we also want to make sure King's Bangkok has the same pastoral care for which King's is renowned. We have a house system which makes every child feel part of a family within the larger community of the school. And of course we also place great emphasis on the world beyond the classroom – sport, music, drama, clubs and charity work. All of these things help a King's child to become a fully formed, creative, curious and flexible future member of society.

Just like our partners, we have extremely high ambitions for this new school.





We want to provide the best possible education to Thai children – world-beating and strong, but based on the virtues of kindness, respect, hard work, aspiration and courtesy.

But there is something I don't want King's Bangkok to be. I don't want it to be just another franchise school. I don't want it to have our name over the door, but not share our values. I don't want it to have our name over the door, and yet its staff and children feel King's in London is far away and disconnected.

Everyone at King's Bangkok will feel our presence. The headmaster is one of the most talented men I have ever worked with – and it has been my joy as a headmaster to appoint Mr. Banyard to King's in the UK six years ago as head of Physics and then a member of the senior management team, before seeing him take on senior responsibilities at King's Hangzhou in China – and now headmaster of King's Bangkok. He is a fantastic choice for this school, not least because from working with him I know his first concern will be the children, and he will allow no detail to go unchecked in ensuring their success and well-being.

We will be part of the governing body. King's will play an active part in key staff appointments and training, and we will also conduct quality audits to help ensure the highest standards but also to ensure King's in London is working side by side with its new twin in Bangkok. We will ensure the curriculum brings the best across from King's UK, whilst also ensuring every child receives a worthy Thai education, respectful of the great culture that underpins this country – like my own, a monarchy proud of its independence over the years.

Thank you once again to our partners for their faith both in King's and in me, as a headmaster who wants to see this school become a leader among all the schools of Asia.





**THE DOCK**  
Seafood Bar  
By Thammachart Seafood



# Catch of the Season

## GREENLAND HALIBUT, WHY SO DELICIOUS?

Recognised for its delicate flavour and extremely rich omega-3 content, its snowy white flesh of subtle and soft texture makes it a much sought-after delicacy.

## HIGH IN NUTRIENTS

Not only a great taste, Halibut is also very good for your health, too. It's an excellent source of many different minerals, such as selenium (a powerful antioxidant that helps repair damaged cells and decrease inflammation), phosphorus, omega-3, and vitamins B6 and B12, which help to keep the nervous system sharp.

## DIVINE VERSATILITY

Greenland Halibut has been a delicacy in Greenland for centuries, and with good reason, has also won popularity around the world. It has tasty, healthy flesh with a firm and juicy texture that works brilliantly in a variety of dishes. This fish is generally sold smoked since it can then be fried, baked or boiled and served with a light sauce; be it sweet chilli, spicy tomato or white wine.

## CAUGHT WILD IN THE DEEP SEA

Greenland Halibut is caught nearly year-round, especially during May to November, except for the annual spawning period between Dec 20 to Mar 31. Fishermen cast deep to the ocean floor where the strongest, healthiest and very best tasting Halibut reside.

## GREENLAND WILD-CAUGHT HALIBUT, TASTY, RICH AND HEALTHY, NOW AVAILABLE AT THE DOCK

One of Bangkok's best seafood restaurants, The Dock, unveils three special seasonal dishes as their 'Catch of the Season,' all which accentuate delicious Greenland Halibut. Known for its firm yet juicy texture, superior flavour and high nutritional content, Greenland Halibut is one of the most popular fish with chefs and diners alike.

## NOW STARRING AT THE DOCK, WE HAVE...

### STARTER CRISPY FRIED HALIBUT

Start with a crispy fried Halibut fillet served with flavourful Thai-style green mango salad, sprinkled with shallots, cashew nuts, dried shrimps, chilli, lime, fish sauce and coriander.

### MAIN HARISSA SPICED HALIBUT

Marinated in Harissa, a North African aromatic curry paste, this Halibut dish gets its powerful flavour from roasted peppers, red chilis, sherry vinegar, cumin and caraway seeds. The fish is grilled and served on top of tabbouleh, a Levantine salad made of quinoa, fresh tomato, mint, lemon juice and olive oil, along with lemon and mint yoghurt, and pickled cucumber.

### TO SHARE BAKED HALIBUT WITH CHORIZO

This dish is made for sharing among parties and friends. Halibut is slow-baked with a wonderful aroma from a healthy mix of thyme and butter. It's served on top of a French-inspired cassoulet stew, consisting of tomatoes, white beans and smoked chorizo sausage, along with herb-crusted bread crumbs and a side of parmesan cheese.

FOLLOW US AT



TheDockSeafood



thedockseafood



www.thammachartseafood.com



www.thedockseafoodbar.com





# 5 self-empowering messages exploit the back to school mindset

by Fabienne Hansoul

**W**hy should we care about back to school unless you believe that the time has come to take steps to renew yourself!

Well, we've all been to school and September is forever branded in our minds – it's a fresh start and a kind of chance to "refresh yourself" with a clear slate. Even expat communities and adult-learning centres use September as the start of the year – it's indelibly etched into our brains that September is a beginning – and a time to get off to new ventures, while stopping what wasn't working for us.

Unlike many children and teenagers, I always felt empowered by accessing one level up, and energised by the back-to-school frenzy. For me, new notebooks, wrapping paper and the change of classroom were forever associated with possibilities. Excitement to explore new avenues, adrenaline of unveiling an unknown grade came with it. A new school day begins, and with it comes the opportunity to be better than I was yesterday. I looked at myself with different eyes, weighing the grown-up human being I had become with pride and hope. I felt lighter knowing that the trials of yesterday were behind me. And then the better is yet to come.

As I immersed myself in the whirlwind of associated feeling to the "back to school", I saw the benefits of capitalising on this exciting mentality! While you might not get that same clean break in your adult life, it's still a fitting time to let go the things that are no longer benefiting you, refocus and knuckle down to work on projects that wait you since too long!

Here are empowering questions to get a much-welcomed school-year boost! And get you started with your full "committed-self" to step into action and renew you.

## 1. Today is a new day. What do I want this school year to be?

Set your own intention will help you to tackle this new day with confidence, clarity and a sense of fulfilment. For me, an intention is an aspiration. It is something I look to be when I am at my best, and when I feel my actions converged to a harmonious and meaningful place of continuous progress. I picture myself with a feeling of righteousness and commit to a couple of significant steps towards a better version of myself. It is an energising endeavour to visualise, regardless of our different role in life, our larger purpose for this exciting school year ahead. Ask yourself: how do I intend to live this school year?

## 2. Life is abundant. What is there for me?

Inspiration is everywhere you look. Opportunities for success and development are plentiful. That you feel your empty head without any impulse about what to do, or overfilled with too many choices, you actually have a lot more ideas on the turning point that your life abroad should take that you think! Take benefit of the two past months, often stress free and abundant in times when your mind wandered and created new avenues for your future realisation. Replay your summer movie and reconnect with your discoveries.

Resonant feedback, recognition of your trusted network, a glimpse of your readings, or an "out of the box" inspiration are all "aha moments" that you may have overlooked. Let speak your intuition as well and give them the place they





deserve. “The only journey is the one within” says Rainer Maria Rilke. Those “aha!” moments are a real blessing wherever they come. Take a pen and paper and let your discoveries flow without a filter. Only after look closely and sort the ideas that help you to move closer to your bigger purpose.

### **3. I am my problem and also my solution. How can I lighten my burden?**

Only you know what is cluttering your life without benefits and move you away to your projects. Look at what overwhelmed your life and prevent you from evolving. List, sort step by step, reorganise and settle your record. We must let go to make room for new projects, hope, life and energy. Think about the 3 situations you want to solve and what you decide. That can be everything from wobbly arrangements, unhealthy relationships, inefficient time management to wrongheaded career direction.

### **4. Challenges are what make life interesting. Where can I get out of my comfort zone?**

Challenges are what make life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful said J. Marine. I believe so and I encourage you to push yourself in unfamiliar places, to do something you do not know what the outcome will be, whether you are up to the challenge or not. Embrace the risks and make changes in your life that can lead to real personal growth. I often surprised myself when I gave up the results, the perfection and the concrete expectations concerning my performances. I learn every day to take better advantage of the journey towards improvement than reaching the final goal whatever that means.

### **5. We don't have to do all of it alone. We were never meant to. (B.Brown). How can I build a supportive system?**

The mountain may seem difficult to climb at first sight and you heard often that wise advice: break it down and set motivating milestone. While it is undeniable that the first step will encourage you to move on to the next one, it is also proven that you are more likely to be happy and successful when you surround yourself with supportive people who will motivate you, inspire you and push you towards a better version of yourself. You can find a mentor, be accompanied by a coach or search for inspiring role model to lead you to who you want to be. Remember that we are together in this journey to new heights and we don't have to do it all alone.

Happy back-to-school!

*About the author: Fabienne is a professional ICF Coach, the Founder of ActiveTransitionCoaching and an executive member of the Bangkok Coaching Circle. She holds a Master in Psychology and in Business management. With more than 20 years' experience in talent management, professional coaching, and self-development, she helps numerous leaders, expatriates and entrepreneurs to find their purpose abroad, lead themselves from within and thrive as international leader. Fabienne specialises today in developing purposeful career and wise leadership through coaching and the traditional yoga psychology. More available on:*

[www.activetransitioncoaching.com](http://www.activetransitioncoaching.com)







# Chris Seal Principal Shrewsbury International School Bangkok

**W**here are you from? What is your educational background?

My family are from London and although we moved around a little, I was fortunate enough to attend a state grammar school in Kent for most of my secondary education. I graduated from Loughborough University in 1994 with Joint Honours in English and Physical Education and Sports Science. I then returned the following year to complete a PGCE in Physical Education and History.

**How has your background influenced you as an educator?**

I think back to being at school in the 1980s, and remember the teacher strikes, the advent of the National Curriculum and progressive developments in removing corporal punishment as well as beginning to tackle racism and other inequalities. It was an interesting time, but more than anything what stood out for me were the staff who were prepared to go the extra mile for us. The Physical Education department always tried to give us as many opportunities as possible, and some of the teaching in History, Languages and other departments was superb. In the context of the time, and knowing what I know



now, I understand how special these people were. Eddie Lane for example genuinely inspired me with a love of all things related to History. His wide eyed enthusiasm allied with a firm sense of high standards stayed with me.

**What attracted you to teaching?**

One of my best friends at Loughborough was a few years ahead of me and he was doing his PGCE while I was an undergraduate. The tales he told on his return from a day at school were mesmerising. His face lit up whenever he spoke of his successes and I suppose I felt then that this would be a





job with huge personal satisfaction. This is exactly how things have turned out, I have loved being part of shaping lives over the past twenty years or more.

**When did you become a headmaster, how long have you been there, why did you join and where were you before?**

I came to Shrewsbury International School Bangkok, Riverside in August 2017 as Principal, after nine years in Deputy Headmaster positions; three years at LVS Ascot, and then latterly at Millfield, a large boarding school in the South West of England. My involvement in boarding education began even earlier in 2004, when I successfully revitalised a failing boarding house at Trent College in Nottinghamshire. This led me into further leadership roles which allowed me to take on some particularly rewarding challenges. I enjoyed changing the shape of the school day at Ascot to benefit the students, delivering a '1 to 1' iPad programme at Millfield, and helping to introduce '@Millfield'; an innovative way of

managing the transition from prep schools to senior schools in a boarding context. None of this was possible without the support and love of my wife Sam (now a teacher) and our girls (now with us at Shrewsbury). My work in boarding led me to be offered consultancies in China, Malaysia and South Korea and these opened my eyes to the possibilities to working internationally. Once I met my predecessor (Stephen Holroyd – Principal 2005-2017) and the Governors and saw the Riverside campus there was no turning back. What a school!

More generally, I have also been lucky enough to follow some great leaders in education. Stephen Cole (Woodbridge) taught me the importance of people and how to connect with them. Tony Rolt and Jonathan Lee at Trent College taught me the true meaning of excellence and how to attain it – it was the only thing they agreed on! Thirdly, Graeme Best at LVS Ascot and Craig Considine (Millfield) showed me that quiet courage and persistence really do work.

**What are the benefits of an International School education?**

What struck me when I became involved in Shrewsbury was the sheer quality of all that is happening. Excellence is something I have aspired to, and looked to inspire in others for all of my career. Initially this was on the sports field and in the classroom, but I genuinely believe that excellence is achievable in all domains if well planned for. Currently we are engaged in our Strategic Plan – Towards 2021 in which we are focussing on attracting and developing 'exceptional people'. A key strand of this is provide outstanding care of teaching staff and ensure that the quality of their work is exceptional. This takes time, planning and commitment, but we have these things at Shrewsbury.







## What have been your biggest challenges/success as a headmaster?

I've spent much of my career in leadership positions, but as someone relatively new to experiencing the demands of Headship firsthand, one of my early reflections is that an extraordinary range of issues that require your attention over relatively brief periods. This of course is what makes the job so exciting and rewarding, and perhaps my time as a Deputy Head in a large boarding school showed me the importance of being able to deal with surprises?

Delivering on our current Strategic Plan – Towards 2021 will keep us all engaged for some time yet. In order to do this we'll be spending nearly 18 million (Pounds Sterling) and rebuilding a good section of our school. In this I'm sure there will be some complex challenges and surprises.

The backing of our owner and Governors has been a real highlight in the role so far, and the project we are immersed in is a real thrill. The successful build of a three storey underground school carpark is something I couldn't have predicted a while ago, and over the course of the last two years we have also achieved re-accreditation with the Council of International Schools.

I'm also delighted to have received the support of our Governors to add two new posts to the Senior management Team in 2019. Vicki Rotheram our former Head of English becomes Assistant Principal (Staff) and will lead the Shrewsbury Institute of Teaching, Learning and Leadership. This institute will work with all colleagues in

developing their skills to further benefit the students. She is joined by Nick Loudon, our Director of Safeguarding and Wellbeing. He becomes Assistant Principal (Students) and will advocate for our students at every level in our school.

This appointment is further evidence that you should never lose sight of what education is all about – the students.

## Tell us more about Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury Riverside is one of the most successful schools in Bangkok. Now with over 1,700 students, we have grown swiftly over the past fifteen years. The academic achievements of the students have been quite remarkable and last year our A Level grades were extraordinary with 44% of all grades being A\*. Interestingly those students who started with us at the founding of the school achieved an average of 50% A\*. The stability of the school over this period has made a huge difference, staff retention is excellent in comparison with the sector as a whole and Stephen Holroyd's legacy is one

Secondly, the Shrewsbury motto of 'if the heart is right, all will be well' is so closely aligned to my own philosophy that I felt compelled to explore this further. The safety and happiness of each child makes a huge difference to learning, and creating the right environment for this is now my role as Principal. I have said on numerous occasions that the strength of the community at Shrewsbury is one of the reasons why we experience so much success.

Students draw on the support of each other, their parents and staff. Students and staff enjoy each other's successes, and celebrate together. Students and staff also do an amazing job of supporting each other through tougher times.

Thirdly, I am even more convinced now than ever before, of the need for breadth. More and more employers and universities speak of what is learned outside the classroom making a significant impact on recruitment – it is the distinguishing factor. At Shrewsbury we seek to offer opportunity across a broad range of subjects and activities that offer students the chance to find and fulfil their potential with the guiding hand of superb professionals.



of sustained growth going hand in hand with sustained success.

*The parents have been a key part of this journey and their aspiration and high standards have helped to drive the school forward. The Shrewsbury Parents Group provide me with excellent, well intentioned and well directed feedback. Their passion for the school is huge and the events they run are awesome.*

This sustained success has allowed students to access the very best universities in the world, but this doesn't happen by accident. Our award winning Higher Education Department provides sage and bespoke advice away from the encumbrance of a teaching timetable. We are currently refurbishing our library to meet the needs of more modern working methods supporting collaboration and research, as well as continuing to provide the opportunity to access inspirational reading. Alumni also had an impact on our new 'Computing in Action' curriculum at Year 7 and 8 where students will apply computing skills to physical challenges – exactly what alumni are now doing in Silicon Valley.



Shrewsbury is also providing breadth. Huge numbers of our students play music to a high level, ever growing numbers are playing sport, exercising regularly, painting, acting, exploring, leading, and learning in new environments. Our “You-time!” after school activities programme offers unparalleled opportunities to explore passions, try new things, to fail and succeed.

The Arts are a highly successful part of what we do at Shrewsbury. The Art Department regularly achieve extraordinary results with examined pieces and also have

done a great job of preparing and delivering exhibitions on a range of themes. Our Last Night of the Proms concert is known countrywide as a superb musical event, very close to professional level, and our school productions of recent years, including High School Musical and Grimm Tales, have been quite wonderful. Culture and the Arts are alive and kicking at Shrewsbury!

Further reasons for thoroughly enjoying being Principal at a school like Shrewsbury in a thriving city.







# Cancer treatment in Northern Thailand

by Paul Surtees

Sad to say, but it is these days thought that with generally longer human lifespans, a higher proportion of the population will undergo some form of the dreaded disease of cancer at some point. For example, I have heard it said that of men living to age 80 and beyond, about 80% of them are likely to contract prostate cancer, though that will not necessarily be the cause of their demise (they may die naturally of old age, or something else, before that cancer does its worst). This article reminds readers of what they can do to reduce the chances of contracting cancer, and outlines some of the main treatment options for those many who are unlucky enough to get it.

Prevention is better than cure, so runs the old adage. So what steps can be taken, in the hopes of avoiding having a cancer appearing in your body?

Here are some pointers on that:

- Give up smoking tobacco products
- Never use a sun bed
- Avoid exposure to strong sunlight (especially important to light-skinned people and children), or at least wear covering clothing and a hat, plus sunscreen, when out in the hot sunshine
- Have an annual medical check-up, to look out for any early signs of skin cancer or other cancers
- Avoid junk food
- Avoid alcohol products
- Have a well-balanced diet, with plenty of fruit and vegetables
- Take regular exercise

The probability of getting cancer increases when several of these risk factors are present at the same time. Such as a

youngster smoking, drinking alcohol and eating junk food while sunbathing at the beach or by a swimming pool on a hot day.

In case you do contract cancer, early treatment is the most effective in combating the disease; that's why early detection is so vitally important.

For example, if you have a blemish or mark on your skin, which appears to enlarge, then you'd better have it checked out by a doctor early on. It could be a warning sign that, if left untreated, a skin cancer is on the way.

The most common types of cancer are:

- Breast cancer
- Cancers of the liver and bile duct
- Lung cancer
- Cervix cancer
- Cancers of the head and neck
- Colorectal cancer.

So, if you are diagnosed with a cancer, what are your treatment options?

The biggest cluster of hospitals in Northern Thailand are Chiang Mai University's teaching hospitals at their Faculty of Medicine. It has 24 operating theatres. The Chaing Mai University Medical Centre, sometimes called Suandok Hospital ([see www.med.cmu.ac.th](http://www.med.cmu.ac.th)), is an important part of this massive set-up. Taken all together, these hospitals offer 1,400 in-patient beds; and help some 680,000 out-patients per year. Patients are often referred to these hospitals, as a centre of medical excellence – the largest here in the North – from other, smaller hospitals in Northern Thailand.

In all cases where cancer is diagnosed the patients are referred to the Division of Radiation Therapy, Radiology Department of the Maharaj Nakorn Chiang Mai Hospital, which is housed in the basement of their Sujinno Building on Suthep Road in downtown Chiang Mai. This centre treats about 2,000 cancer patients every year.

In addition, the Faculty of Medicine has a special ward, where children who are unfortunate enough to contract cancer can be helped. That's located at the 6th floor of their Sujinno building.

The most appropriate treatment for each case, of course,





some eventually manage to fully recover, as their cancer goes into remission. However, careful watchfulness is necessary for the rest of the lives of these lucky ones, against the possibility of their cancer recurring, or spreading to other parts of their body.

This brings us to the stark realisation that, once a cancer has spread to other parts of the body, from the place where it started, then the prognosis is unfortunately far less sanguine. It seems that the incidence of cancer in the general population is increasing, possibly because people are, thankfully, these

depends largely on how far developed the newly-detected cancer is in the patient's body, as well as the patient's age and pre-existing general health condition.

But generally speaking, the treatment options include:

- Chemotherapy to destroy the cancer cells
- Surgery, to cut out the cancer
- Using radiation to destroy the cancer, with two techniques:
  1. External Beam Radiation
  2. Brachytherapy
    - Administration of radiation therapy by placing radioactive sources adjacent to or into tumours or body cavities.
    - A high radiation dose can be delivered locally to the tumour with rapid dose fall off in the surrounding normal tissues.

The major functions of radiation therapy are to cure cancer by destroying tumours that have not spread and/or by killing residual microscopic disease left after surgery or chemotherapy, and to reduce or palliate symptoms.

Additional objectives aim in shrinking tumours is to positively affect the quality of life (e.g. reducing in size a lung tumour causing shortness of breath) and/or to alleviate pain or neurologic symptoms by reducing the size of a tumour

- a combination of the above
- and/or palliative care, when the end becomes closer.

Of the 2,000 patients treated for cancer at this centre each year,

days living for longer. Cancer can, and regrettably does, strike at any age: even young children can be diagnosed with a cancer. But a large proportion of newly-diagnosed cancer cases occur in those aged over 50.

So, if you are worried about contracting cancer (and who isn't?) then you can follow the tips listed above on steps that you can take to minimise your risk, and be ever watchful for any bodily abnormalities – which should be investigated at an early stage.

Special equipment used there includes: Image Guided Radiation Therapy ( IGRT) Now we use the image to check the position of patient before starting radiation treatment. This procedure will get more accurate and doctor will check every day.

New treatments available there include: Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT). We can avoid the normal organ receiving a high dose of radiation, and the patient has reduced complications from radiation.

This article has been prepared with help from Chiang Mai University's Faculty of Medicine. Their provision of photographs to accompany this article is acknowledged.





# Interview with Mr. Mike Walton, incoming Head Master at Brighton College Bangkok

*As Brighton College Bangkok starts its fourth year in the capital, we spoke to the incoming Head Master Mr. Mike Walton about his return to Thailand and the things that excite him most about joining the school.*



## **Tell us a little about your history as a Head Master in Thailand and the UK?**

My first experience of working in Thailand was in 2005, when I joined a British International School as Principal. I stayed for nine happy years, and during this time I was elected as Chairman of The Federation of British International Schools in Asia (FOBISIA), and a Board Member of both Round Square International and The International Schools Association in Thailand (ISAT). These positions gave me a unique window into education in the region, and I took back many fond memories when my family and I returned to the UK in 2014. For the past five years I have been the Head Master of an independent co-educational school in the North of England, but I'm relishing the chance to be back working in Thailand again.

## **What attracted you to Brighton College Bangkok?**

I was already aware of the excellent reputation of Brighton College in UK, where the school received lots of publicity for being voted Independent School of the Year 2019 by



The Sunday Times. When I heard about the opportunity to join the Brighton College family of international schools in Bangkok, I was very interested! I visited the school for a couple of days and was quickly taken with the strong ethos and values of the College, especially in terms of academic achievement, the extra-curricular opportunities for pupils and the culture of kindness. I was hugely impressed with the staff and pupils that I met, and I sensed that this is an ambitious educational environment that will get better and better as it grows.

## **What do you hope to achieve here?**

Naturally, I want the best for the pupils in my care. In terms of teaching, I expect to see the passion and innovation from our teachers that make learning a joy. Alongside that, I look forward to seeing these young people develop in terms of sport, music, drama, creativity, community engagement and all the other learning opportunities that make up a compelling modern education.







Brighton College has some outstanding facilities and dozens of expert, specialist teachers, so I'm excited to see how everyone here can realise their potential.

#### **Why is this school so special?**

From the first moment that I walked in the door, I received a very warm welcome from the staff, and I can already feel that this is a school that is both supportive and challenging for pupils. There are high expectations of the teaching staff, and an ambitious spirit to broaden the horizons of the children. I have already seen many innovative ideas used to develop teaching and learning, with a high value placed on the traditional concepts of courtesy and kindness.

#### **Tell us about your exciting new Sixth Form?**

Of course! Our new Sixth Form opens this year, with a choice of 21 different A Level subjects to choose from. My own daughter will join our first Year 12 cohort, and she's excited to get started. Alongside the best academic provision, there will be many opportunities to learn beyond the classroom, to benefit from expert career guidance, and the chance to visit and study alongside A Level students at Brighton College in the UK. We look forward to seeing our own graduates, in 2021, sharing in the incredible Brighton College success story, and reaching the world's best universities.

---

For more information on Brighton College Bangkok, visit [www.brightoncollege.ac.th](http://www.brightoncollege.ac.th), call 02 136 7898, or on LINE [@brightoncollegebkk](https://www.facebook.com/brightoncollegebkk)





# Filling in gaps in sexuality education and preventing sexual assault

by Monisha Bajaj

Beyond the mechanics, we need to explore the interpersonal and emotional dynamics within intimate relationships in sexuality education



## Breaking the silence

Sitting at the dining table one summer night in 2013, I blurted out to my mom: “Mama, you and Papa never gave me the talk!” I was referring to the conversation about safer sex famously known in pop culture as “the talk.” Not exactly your typical parent-child dinner table discussion topic. Especially in Thailand.

But it was on my mind because, just before returning home from my fourth semester at the University of Southern California, I had done some training on the issue of sexual violence. A hot button topic on college campuses in the United States that year (this still remains true today – all over the world).

Growing up in Thailand, one of the more interesting things I had to adapt to when going to college abroad was open conversations about sex. Both about sexual health, and sexual assault. It was a little bit of culture shock that I didn’t expect to have.

Turns out, at the same time I was getting my education on the subject, my mom had been researching it too. She had just been appointed to lead the End Gender-Based Violence Committee at a philanthropist organisation, Soroptimist International Bangkok. She oversaw initiatives designed to eliminate sexual violence.

Fast forward 5 years later – armed with more training, tools to share, and a handful of successful pilot workshops under our belt – together we launched Ruam Chuay, a non-profit organisation. Our purpose? To equip our community with the vocabulary and tools to have healthy interpersonal relationships, with a specific focus on addressing interpersonal violence. We do this by hosting facilitated workshops, talks, and discussions at schools and organisations.



## Confronting difficult truths

That summer night, my mom and I opened up a long overdue conversation. We reflected on how I learned about sex, what was covered in sex education, and what we felt could have been done differently. We also chatted about my training in emergency response and paraprofessional counselling for young adults. And how, unfortunately, due to this work, I know many people who have experienced some form of sexual assault – in Thailand and abroad.

Many of these people were my peers. This, sadly, isn't unusual given what we know about sexual violence. That is, that people between the ages of 12 to 34 are most likely to experience some form of sexual assault.<sup>1</sup> And, that 9 out of 10 times the person who experiences some form of assault is harmed by someone they know.<sup>2</sup> Which often meant, while I was in high school and university, I knew both the person who was assaulted and the person who committed the wrongdoing. Navigating these relationship dynamics are tricky. Given the prevalence of this type of violence, I knew I wasn't alone in this position.

By definition, interpersonal violence is violence that occurs between people within the same community (for example, a school, workplace, or family). When this takes place, it not only affects the individuals directly involved but also disrupts the wellbeing of, and sense of safety within the wider community.

So, how do we begin to address such a complex, multi-layered issue? By having safer conversations about it.

## Designing spaces for safer conversations on interpersonal violence

Culturally, the stigma attached to discussing sex-related topics, whether that be sexual health or sexual violence, holds us back from being able to prevent harmful situations from taking place. It also hinders our ability to respond effectively when something does happen.

Fortunately, over the past two years, we've started to see a shift in this area. Sexual assault has caught the attention of news media both locally and internationally. In part due to viral social media movements along with heavily publicised harassment cases and scandals – we're starting to talk more openly about this problem as a society.

This has been such a welcome change from the silence. Having said that, watching some of this public conversation unfold with a trained eye has been concerning. Why? Among a mix of empowering conversations, there has also been a fair share of blame, shame, fear, frustration, and confusion to go around. Talking about sexual violence often becomes polarising (at times it is even politicised). This makes it hard to address the issue productively.

Ultimately, these conversations don't just need to happen. They need to happen safely. With the recognition of the social and cultural norms at play. And especially, with consideration of the traumatic nature of sexual violence.\*





While developing Ruam Chuay, we learned that of the six areas required in sexuality education, the two areas with inconsistent and little to no coverage across schools in Thailand are sexual rights and violence.<sup>3</sup> Our workshops are designed to fill this gap and address the interpersonal and emotional aspects of intimate relationships.

In our workshops, we facilitate safe and solution-oriented conversations. We create clarity around sexual assault and explore specific ways each of us play a part in preventing it.

Equipping students with skills they can use in their daily lives to have safer relationships (in all contexts, not just sexual).

Since we launched in August 2018, we've had over 300 students go through our programme. It's been such a joy to see high school and university students engage in nuanced discussions on this challenging subject. The most encouraging part? In our programme data, we've found that 98.7% of students leave our workshops agreeing that these topics are important for their community to learn about.

Even in a culture that traditionally hasn't talked openly about sexual rights and violence; these experiences have shown me that open conversations, when done right, can bring about positive change and help create safer communities. Just like how one dining table conversation between mother and daughter planted the seed that eventually grew into a non-profit organisation.

---

If you'd like to spark a conversation on healthy relationships by bringing a workshop or talk to your school contact us directly at [hello@ruamchuay.org](mailto:hello@ruamchuay.org).

To learn more or join our community of advocates, sign up for our newsletter at: [www.ruamchuay.org/community](http://www.ruamchuay.org/community)

<sup>1</sup> RAINN. *Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics*.

<sup>2</sup> Adams, Lucy. (March 2018). *Sex attack victims usually know attacker, says new study*. BBC News.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education and UNICEF. (2016). *Review of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Thailand*.

**\*Ruam Chuay uses a trauma-informed approach within our organisation and programmes. A trauma-informed approach is one helps us promote safety, healing, and wellbeing for the participants.**







## KIS International School congratulates the class of 2019!

The graduating class, consisting of 39 students received 96 offers from 63 universities in 12 countries.

We wish our graduates the best of luck studying in their chosen fields which include: Business, Communication, Dentistry, Design, Education, Engineering, Fashion, Finance, Hospitality, Journalism, Languages, Law, Liberal Arts, Medicine, Music, Sciences and Technology.

Some of the universities they have been accepted to include: University of Melbourne, Monash University (Australia); Modul University of Vienna (Austria); University of British Columbia (Canada); Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong); University College Cork School of Medicine (Ireland); Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands); Les Roches Global Hospitality Education, Glion Institute of Higher Education, École hôtelière

de Lausanne (Switzerland); University of Warwick, University of Leeds, University of Exeter, University of Brighton Medicine School, University of Bath, King's College London, University of Nottingham, University of Edinburgh Medicine, Newcastle University, Cardiff University, Brighton and Sussex Medical School (United Kingdom); University of Michigan Ann Arbor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Penn State University, University of Michigan, Worcester Polytechnic University (United States).

We are extremely proud of them and wish them all the best for their bright futures!

If you would like to be a part of KIS' success stories, please contact [admissions@kis.ac.th](mailto:admissions@kis.ac.th)



Tel: +66 (0) 2274 3444 | [www.kis.ac.th](http://www.kis.ac.th)

**kis**  
International School  
Knowledge Inspiration Spirit



# Supporting Academic Excellence at DENLA BRITISH SCHOOL (DBS)

*by the Vice Principal: Mr. James Lyng*

**D**enla British School, or 'DBS', is dedicated to the development of an inspiring and nurturing environment in which students fulfil their unique potential as global leaders. As schools turn their attention to the new academic year, Vice-Principal, Mr. James Lyng answers questions on one of the main principles at DBS.

## **How important is Academic Excellence at DBS?**

Academic Excellence for All is one of the key pillars of the DBS vision. Everyone in the DBS community enables the students to achieve their best possible results in all their endeavours.

## **What steps does DBS take to promote Academic Excellence?**

Our enhanced British curriculum is the perfect platform to allow our students to achieve their potential. The curriculum design encourages rapid progress to give excellent foundations as they begin more rigorous studies in preparation for IGCSE and A level examinations. Our team of inspirational and well-trained teachers prepare very engaging and challenging lessons which allow each individual to thrive. We do not believe that 'one size fits all': children have different and unique talents and abilities. Personalised learning, based on a deep understanding of the child, allows us to support students as individuals as they aim for Academic Excellence. We carefully support students who need guidance to achieve these goals, and we offer extended learning opportunities for more confident and higher ability students. In this way, students and parents recognise that we are marking out challenging new pathways for Academic Excellence.



## **What do DBS teachers do, above and beyond subject knowledge, to encourage Academic Excellence?**

All of our teachers have an excellent understanding of our enhanced British curriculum. In addition, their experience, and deep subject knowledge, allows them to go beyond this curriculum to ignite students' passions and interests. The teachers at DBS focus on developing creative and higher order thinking skills. They also embed crucial independent learning skills from a very early age which allows students to seek out new learning and understanding for themselves. This is vital as the students get older and take IGCSE and A levels, which are well known globally for their academic rigour. DBS teachers are excellent at building children's confidence to enable them to succeed. The DBS focus on developing the skills necessary for entrepreneurship and creative thinking, means that our lessons develop subject knowledge and all the tools that children need to achieve Academic Excellence.







### **How do you measure student progress towards Academic Excellence?**

On a daily basis the teachers monitor and evaluate each individual's progress towards short term goals within the lessons. Longer term progress is monitored against challenging Learning Objectives set for each half term. We determine whether our students are secure or exceeding these Learning Objectives in a number of ways: ongoing teacher assessment, in-class tests and quizzes and, in Year 5 to Year 8, more formal examinations in November and June. The teachers use this information to set challenging targets and to make sure that their students are receiving the right support if they need either more guidance or greater extension in the subject. In English, Maths and Science we use annual GL Assessments to allow us to compare ourselves against other schools around the world and in the UK.

### **What is done beyond the classroom to support Academic Excellence?**

The extended day at DBS means that beyond normal curriculum time we can offer activities that also support Academic Excellence. This includes extra subject support for students, developing their English, working on projects, and clubs such as Chess, Young Enterprise and Model United Nations. We also have a very successful Accelerated Reader programme for all students in Y3-9 that extends the foundations built in Pre-Prep. This is mirrored by a Thai reading programme which encourages strength and depth of Thai culture beyond Thai lessons. The DBS Beacon programme for scholars and aspiring scholars will provide challenge and extension to our most able and engaged students who desire additional stimulation beyond the curriculum. Equally, our students successfully enter national and international competitions in all manner of subjects.



The co-curricular programme is central to our belief in Academic Excellence for All – by nurturing students' personal interests, and wellbeing, we give them the confidence to achieve their very best at DBS.

### **What about the parents?**

Parental support is crucial and we have many different ways of engaging them in the academic life of the school. This may take the form of Parent Time in Pre-Prep or subject-based seminars and academic showcases. We regularly report on students' attainment and progress, and encourage parents to have a supportive and open dialogue with our teachers and the Senior Management Team – our door is always open! Parents can also become involved in other ways, for example offering to become involved in the DBS Beacon programme, and this strengthens our DBS community.

### **Do you think Academic Excellence has been embedded in the school?**

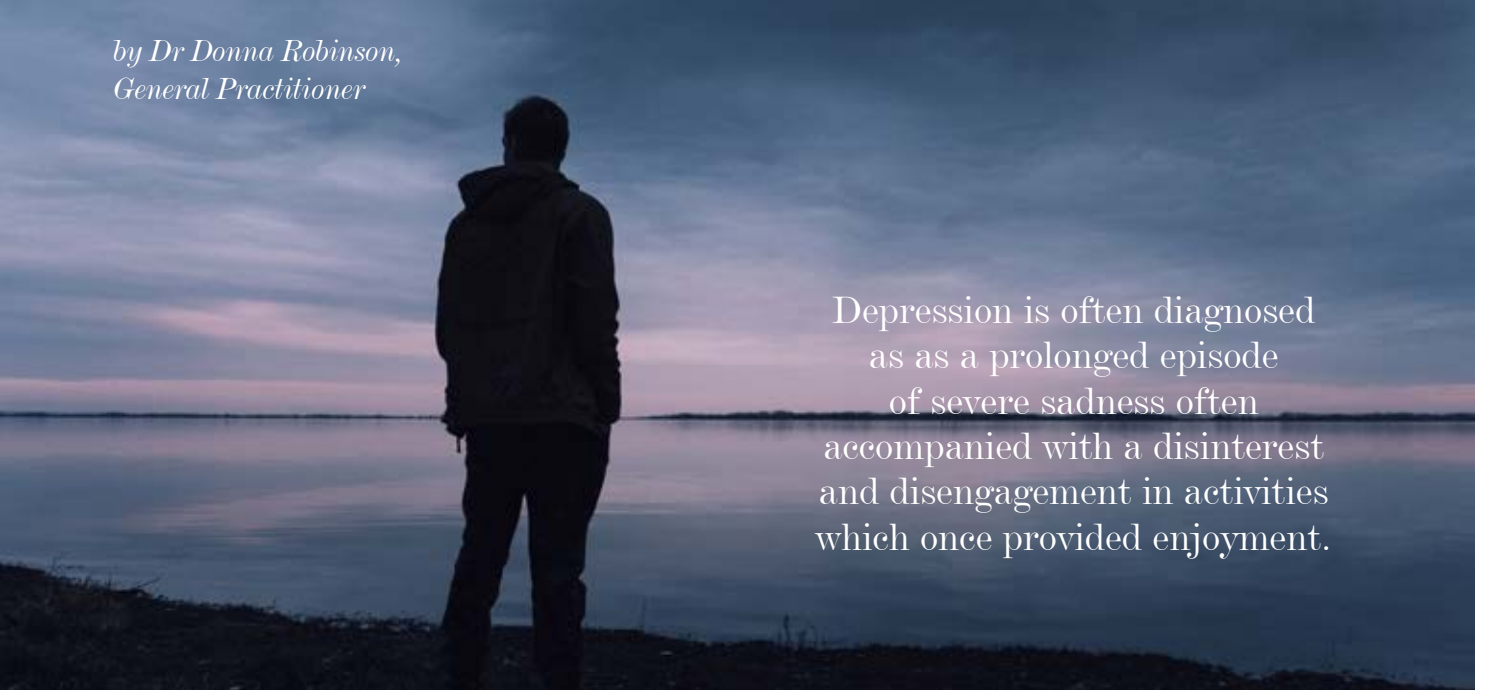
Absolutely. The whole community is collectively working towards this on a daily basis. One important aspect of excellence is reflection, and we are always mindful that we can continually strive to be better – as our motto states: 'Always to Greater Things – Semper Ad Maiora'!





# Understanding and handling depression

*by Dr Donna Robinson,  
General Practitioner*



Depression is often diagnosed as a prolonged episode of severe sadness often accompanied with a disinterest and disengagement in activities which once provided enjoyment.

Sadness itself is a common and healthy human emotion, most often experienced after disappointment, loss or personal stress. Negative emotions may return in bouts, but in most cases they diffuse overtime. Sometimes however, this sadness can manifest into something deeper and more entrenched. This can begin to affect your overall outlook, lifestyle and relationships, indicating the onset of depression.

It is important to realise that depression is not uncommon and comes in many forms, each of which can be treated through introducing positive changes into your lifestyle as well as clinical means, if needed. Remember that these negative feelings will pass and there is a wide network of support and advice which you can tap into.

One common cause of depression is hormone imbalances: Changes in the balance of hormones may trigger major depression in certain people, especially during menopause or during and after pregnancy. As a doctor, I can't help but listen to my patients, learn from them and at times in my life feel the lows.

## **Why should you treat depression?**

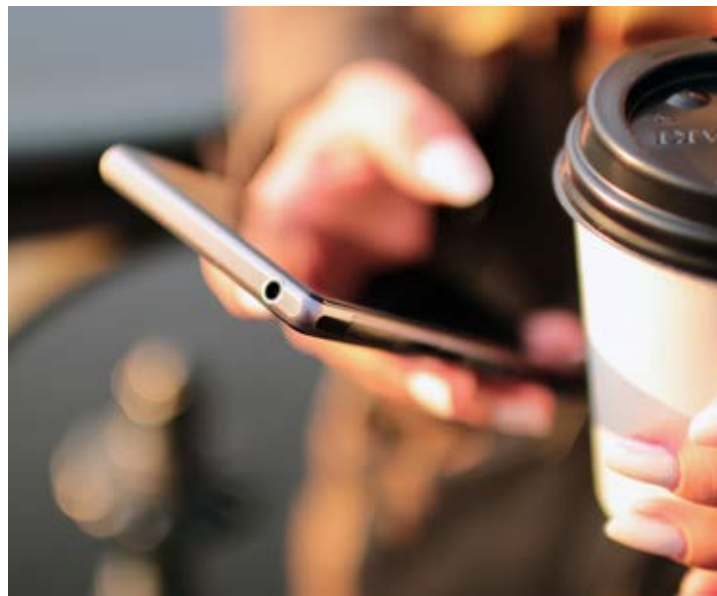
Depression can last months, and the reality is we have to get on with life

and work, live and interact with others even when our moods are low, so treatment is important. Not only that, depression affects brain function. There are three parts of the brain that appear to play a role in major depression: the hippocampus, amygdala, and prefrontal cortex.

The hippocampus is located near the centre of the brain. It stores memories and regulates the production of a hormone called cortisol. The body releases cortisol during times of physical and mental stress, including during times of depression. Problems can occur when excessive amounts of cortisol are sent to the brain due to a stressful event or a chemical imbalance in the body. In a healthy brain, brain cells (neurons) are produced throughout a person's adult life in a part of the hippocampus called the dentate gyrus. In people with major depression, however, the long-term exposure to increased cortisol levels can slow the production of new neurons and cause the neurons in the hippocampus to shrink. This can lead to memory problems.

The prefrontal cortex is located in the very front of the brain. It is responsible for regulating emotions, making decisions, and forming memories. When the body produces an excess amount of cortisol, the prefrontal cortex also appears to shrink.

The amygdala is the part of the brain that facilitates emotional responses, such as pleasure and fear. In people with major depression, the amygdala becomes enlarged and more active as a result of constant exposure to high levels of cortisol. An enlarged and hyperactive amygdala, along with abnormal activity in other parts of the brain, can result in disturbed sleep and activity patterns. It can also cause the body to release irregular amounts of





hormones and other chemicals in the body, leading to further complications.

Many researchers believe high cortisol levels play the biggest role in changing the physical structure and chemical activities of the brain, triggering the onset of major depression. Normally, cortisol levels are highest in the morning and decrease at night. In people with major depression, however, cortisol levels are always elevated, even at night.

### Ways to cope with depression in your daily life

Reaching out and staying connected is an important first step in the healing process to overcome depression. Dwelling on negative thoughts by yourself can make it difficult to maintain a healthy perspective, and you can often benefit from opening up to those close to you. However, the very nature of depression makes this especially difficult, as it's common to want to withdraw and isolate yourself from others. If you feel as though you have nobody to turn to, remember that there are always opportunities to meet new people and make new connections.

Continual engagement in activities which make you happy is another way of introducing positivity into your life. Getting outside of the house and involving yourself in societies or events which you used to enjoy can greatly uplift your mood, even if you don't feel up to it beforehand.

Daily exercise and maintaining a balanced diet are beneficial to your physical and mental health. 'When you exercise, your body releases chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins interact with the receptors in your brain that reduce your perception of pain.' Endorphins also trigger a positive feeling in the body, helping to alleviate depression. Exercising in a group or with a friend can help motivate you as well as encourage you to meet new people and step outside of your comfort zone.

Diet plays an essential role in emotion and mood, thus if you do not consider yours carefully, your symptoms could be exacerbated. During depressive episodes, it is not



uncommon to crave sugary snacks or comfort food rich in refined sugar and carbohydrates. Consequently, excess consumption of these foods often lead to a crash in mood and energy. Instead, try to increase your intake of citrus fruits and leafy greens, which have a high vitamin B content, as a deficiency may be linked with depression.

### When to seek professional help

After taking steps towards leading a more positive lifestyle, if you notice your depression worsening it may be time to seek professional help. It is always important to remember that depression can be treated and that there are several avenues of treatment which can be recommended to you. Most treatment plans involve several different methods and adopt a holistic approach to alleviating depression.

Many types of antidepressants are available to you to treat depression. The most common are Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs). These are often the first drugs given to patients as they generally have fewer unwanted side effects. 'An imbalance of serotonin may play a role in depression. These drugs fight depression symptoms by decreasing serotonin reuptake in your brain.' However there is now a range of other medicines, so I tell patients if they

experience any side effects, switch to another medicine.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) aims to help you deal with overwhelming problems or emotions through speech therapy and changing the way you think and behave. Sessions are usually arranged weekly and they aim to look for practical ways to improve your state of mind on a daily basis. During the sessions you learn how to work with your therapist to understand what changes need to be made in your lifestyle in order to counter unhelpful thoughts and behaviours. There are some online CBT courses that some of my patients have found to be really useful and they can be free.





# Ethical consumerism – the way to influence big business

by Judith Coulson-Geissmann

*I believe in change and the power of consumers when it comes to changing corporate production and manufacturing behaviour.*

**T**he UK 2018 Ethical Consumer Market Report shows that consumers have increased their spending on ethical products and services, which is remarkable since retail sales overall fell in 2017.

In many sectors, consumers are turning towards more sustainable options as their concern for the environment grows. <https://go.shr.lc/2DkIPTo>

Green energy grew an impressive 56.3% in 2017. Ethical clothing increased by 19.9% and buying secondhand clothing for environmental reasons increased 22.5%, in a year which saw much media about the environmental impacts of fast fashion. Ethical food and drink was also up 16.3% (£ 2.5 billion), the largest increase since 2012, fuelled by growing sales of organic plant-based foods.

Interesting also is the increase of boycotted products and services from any of the following industries for ethical reasons; Food & drink, transport and personal products (cosmetics and toiletries). It is resulting in an increase of 25% in 2017 and indicating that people are becoming more conscious consumers and are paying more attention to ethical corporate behaviour.

I could not find EU numbers for 2018, but the 2017 report showed that the sales of ethical goods and services valued at £81.3 billion. Ethical food & drink saw a 9.7% growth as conventional foods struggled. The value of consumer boycotts bounced back to over £3.5 billion.

The World Fair Trade Organisation states that: “A product being sold by a company known for its commitment




to social value had a heavy or very heavy influence on 43% of consumer's purchasing decisions in a survey encompassing 30,000 consumers in 60 countries. The same survey found that 56% of consumers are willing to pay more for products from these companies. The regional outlook is similarly positive for Asia, with consumers in developing markets (Latin America, Asia, Middle East, and Africa) 23-29% more willing than consumers in developed nations to pay a higher price for sustainable products. Globally, 66% are willing to pay a higher price, up from 50% in 2013.

Even if you think that your choices won't make a difference, they do, and they can encourage others to do the same.

---

*About the author: Judith Coulson-Geissmann is a Positive Psychologist and Coach, Certified Corporate Wellness Specialist and Nutrition and Lifestyle Consultant experienced in change management leading to optimal people development and organisational flourishing.*





We think beyond  
traditional education to  
*transform learning.*

We inspire our students to achieve academic excellence together with a sense of adventure and the compassion to make the world a better place.

*Be Ambitious Be Regents*

Admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th  
www.regents-pattaya.co.th



**REGENTS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
PATTAYA**

A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

*Be Ambitious Be Regents*





Life  
is good

## Learned happiness

by Judith Coulson-Geissmann

*There are very few people who would say they wouldn't like to be happier, and it's easy to see why. The feeling of happiness is a wonderful experience, emotionally and mentally, and it makes sense that we'd want to create more of that in our lives.*

**R**esearch is showing that bringing more happiness into your life has far more benefits than merely feeling good. Read on to find out more about what they are.

### What are the benefits of happiness?

It was Aristotle who once said “Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and the end of human existence” – a sentiment that is still true today. While Aristotle had a philosophical notion of the importance of happiness for human wellbeing, today we have a range of science and research to back it up.

Scientific studies have begun to reveal a host of physical health benefits surrounding happiness including a stronger immune system, stronger resilience in the face of stress, a stronger heart and less risk of cardiovascular disease, alongside quicker recovery times when overcoming illness or surgery.

There is even a body of research that indicates being happy may help us to live longer lives.

### Most interesting scientific findings

Perhaps some of the most interesting scientific findings looking at the impact of happiness is around the connection to life longevity.

A number of studies have looked at the connection between positive emotions – including happiness – and life expectancy. A longitudinal study spanning 13 years conducted by Carstensen et al (2011) found that emotional experience (positive or negative) predicted mortality.

Participants in the study who reported more positive over negative emotions in everyday life were more likely to have survived the length of the study.

Further research seeking to explore the connection found similar results:

Lawrence, Rogers & Wadsworth (2015) explored the impact of happiness on 32,000 participants and their survival rate over a 30 year period. Participants who were rated the least happy had a 14% higher chance of death than their happiest counterparts.

A quantitative review of 70 observational studies explored the link between positive affect (wellbeing) and life expectancy, in both healthy participants and participants who had already been diagnosed with a health condition. Healthy participants who were rated as having a higher positive affect



reduced their risk of death by 18%, and by 2% for those with a pre-existing condition (Chida & Steptoe, 2008).

A further study exploring this connection also indicates that it is the consistency of life satisfaction (or happiness) that has an impact on life longevity. Boehm et al (2015) found that participants who reported a low sense of life satisfaction with a high level of variability (meaning they went through high and low phases) were more likely to die early than participants who reported a consistently low sense of satisfaction.

Researchers have speculated over why this link seems to exist, and why it is so prominent for participants who rate the highest for happiness and positive emotions. Many believe it is because individuals who are happiest, are also more inclined to engage in activities and behaviours that are positive for their overall health, including physical exercise, eating healthy, not smoking, sleeping well, and even meditation (Strine et al, 2008)

## 6 proven health benefits of happiness

With so much research showing the multiple positive benefits for our health when we're happy, here are the top six proven health benefits:

### 1. Improved heart health

Several studies have linked happiness with improved heart health and lower risk of heart disease by 13-26%

### 2. Ability to combat stress more effectively

Excess stress causes higher levels of cortisol – the stress hormone – which can lead to a number of health conditions. Multiple studies have found that individuals who are happier have consistently lower cortisol levels in their blood.

### 3. A stronger immune system

Some research has indicated that being happier can support a strong immune system, leading to greater health all round, and the ability to fight infections or disease more effectively.

### 4. Overall healthier lifestyle

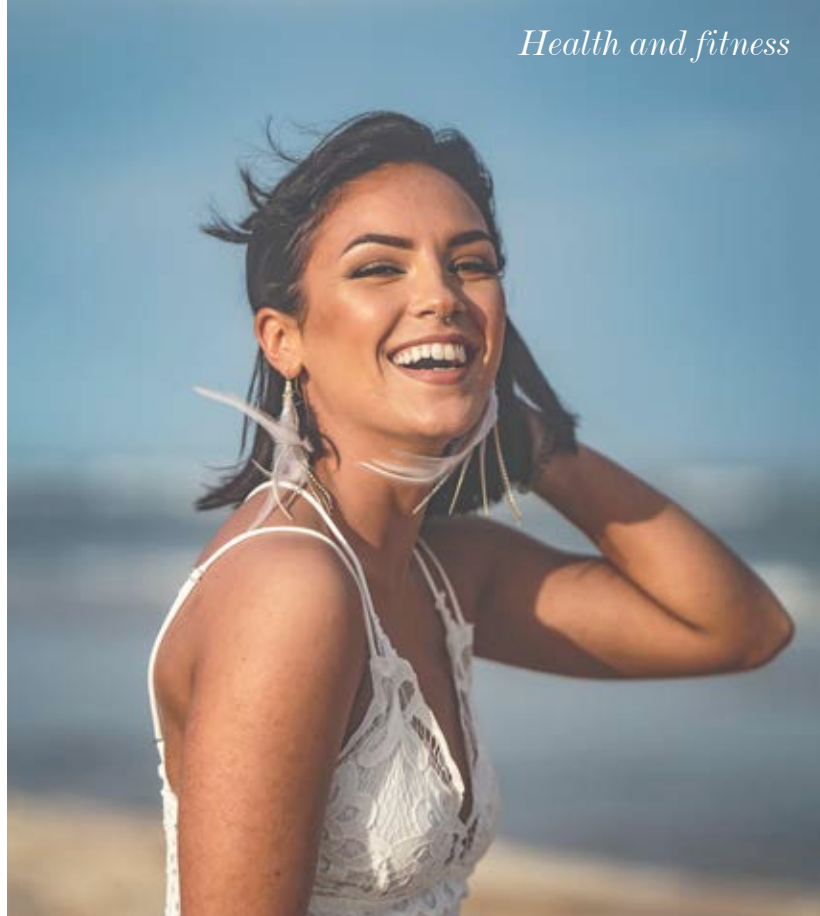
Happiness has also been linked to several positive and highly beneficial health habits, that promote a greater sense of wellbeing. This includes eating a healthier diet, engaging in more physical activity, and overcome poor sleeping habits.

### 5. Can help reduce pain

Researchers believe that individuals who are happier, have a better perspective and are able to accept new thoughts easily, which can lead to a lower experience of pain especially connected to chronic conditions such as arthritis.

### 6. Increased life longevity

One of the most interesting finds from the research for health benefits of happiness is its connection with life longevity.







Researchers believe that because of the impact happiness has on all of the above health benefits, it can ultimately help you live a longer life.

The research examining the connection between happiness and positive health benefits is still relatively new, and more research is continuing to emerge. That being said, it certainly seems from the current data that working on being happier will have plenty of health benefits.

### **5 things you can do to realise these benefits in your life**

Trying to feel happier in life might seem like a mammoth task to take on, but it doesn't have to be. A few simple practices each day have been proven to help you realise and begin to reap the benefits of happiness:

#### **1. Practice gratitude**

It's easy to complain when things go wrong or you get stuck in the rut of thinking 'why has this happened to me' when you have a bad day but practicing gratitude can help tackle that and improve feelings of happiness. Simply writing down three things you feel grateful for before bed can work wonders on your mindset.

#### **2. Incorporate some movement**

Exercise releases endorphins, which have a direct impact on our mood – in a good way! Adding in some aerobic exercise is proven to be effective in increasing feelings of happiness. This doesn't have to be hitting the gym, it could be as simple as putting on your favourite music and dancing in the living room.

#### **3. Get back in touch with nature**

Combine your aerobic exercise with nature and you'll be onto something good. Spending time outdoors has been proven to aid our moods. A good walk or run in a local park or woods or some gardening can spark some wonderful benefits.

#### **4. Practice mindfulness**

Incorporating mindfulness can help you create better awareness for your everyday feelings, and let go of negative experiences, allowing for more room to appreciate positive experiences and emotions.

#### **5. Spend time with loved ones**

Socialising with friends and loved ones have many health benefits, including feelings of wellbeing and happiness. Making time for coffee with friends, or quality time with family members is a great way to realise the benefits of happiness.

---

*About the author: Judith Coulson-Geissmann is a Positive Psychologist and Coach, Certified Corporate Wellness Specialist and Nutrition and Lifestyle Consultant. If you would like to learn how to increase your happiness contact:*

*[judith@positive-psychology-coach.com](mailto:judith@positive-psychology-coach.com)*

*or join:*

*<https://www.facebook.com/groups/positivepsychologycoach/>*



# Five Fertility Facts (or Fiction?) Part 2

*Dr. Patsama Vichinsartvichai M.D.,  
MClinEmbryol. Fertility Specialist,  
Medical Director, INSPIRE IVF*

**I**n the first part of this article in the last edition of Expat Life in Thailand, we explored some facts (or fiction) regarding fertility treatments and all of them were just myths. This part will explore more regarding the urban legend and see if there is any fact.

## **Absolute bed rest after embryo transfer – FICTION**

Many well-designed studies have found that the pregnancy outcomes amongst the women who have bedrest after embryo transfer and the women who just get up and go are similar. However, I have seen many patients who were chained to their bed in front of the restroom in their house for a week or more after embryo transfer.

Imagine yourself as an active woman or career lady who has to lay still like that. Not only can mental stress occur, but also other unpleasant medical conditions such as cystitis, or even venous thromboembolism can follow. Live your normal life. Get out and walk the dog. You can do most of your daily life activities. You are fertility challenged, not sick.

## **Infertility is the woman's fault – FICTION**

'Female trouble' sounds more complicated than 'Deadlier than the male'. However, 25-35% of the primary infertility roots from sperm issues such as low sperm count or high abnormal sperm and male infertility is on the rise worldwide.

Even in couples with female-related infertility, mild sperm defects contribute to make it difficult to conceive without help. It's crucial for men be involved in the infertility evaluations from the outset, starting with a semen analysis. If a serious abnormality is identified, consultation with a urologist will be necessary.



## **Male age makes no difference – FICTION**

The advancing paternal age may impair semen parameters, increase sperm DNA damage, and epigenetic alterations that affect fertilisation, embryo development, and implantation. Studies have found that if the female was younger than 40, the success rate declined as the man grew older. On the other hand, the age of the male partner had no impact when the female partner was older than 40 years.

## **Freezing embryos is risky, fresh is the best – FICTION**

Over 95% of embryos survive the frozen-thaw process, hence freezing embryos is no longer considered risky. Most studies reported higher pregnancy rates from frozen rather than fresh embryos. The other benefits of frozen embryos are that they do not age, and it allows the time to run genetic tests.

## **Being on birth control for too long leads to infertility – FICTION**

Some women believe that oral contraceptive pills lead to long-term infertility. Most birth control methods involve hormone regulation, and consequently change the reproductive system. In fact, most women are able to ovulate within weeks of going off birth control (only one day missed might lead to pregnancy as well) and over 80% of women get pregnant within a year of stopping birth control. Further benefits of birth control are its protective effect against ovarian and endometrial cancer.

*"On your most important journey, our inspiration will guide your way"*

## **Special offer for Expat Life in Thailand readers:**

We are offering a free medical consultation with one of our Fertility Specialist Clinicians for Expat Life in Thailand readers. Please mention this article when you make an appointment with our clinic.

[www.inspireivf.com](http://www.inspireivf.com)  
[info@inspireivf.com](mailto:info@inspireivf.com)  
+66 2251 8666





# Expatriate Life – how it happens

by Jess Thakkar

**L**iving as, and being an expat, has been on my mind of late. How did we all get here. Was it planned? Or did it just happen?

Usually it's the male half of the couple that brings about the move, the female has to follow and adapt. It's a challenge and we all want something exciting and new for our lives.

And so it begins... A series of events, decisions and even luck brings us to attain this status. I don't think anyone really sets out to be one. It's not like saying to ones teachers at a school careers meeting or to your parents that, "when I grow up I want to be a doctor, oh an expat one!"

We all set out along the usual route, higher education, that converted first job, perhaps a super second one with a pay increase then maybe you get headhunted, or meet a friend or ex colleague that has this fantastic job in say, Singapore !

And that's it!! Bang!

You start to think, "Perhaps I could do that! Why not, think of the money and oh the sunshine, the big bonus at the end of the year". The thoughts begin to move into action, you instigate and contact a recruitment consultant that is a specialist in overseas positions, or a friend of a friend that knows of a vacancy overseas, that's just right for you!

That's how it may start and it ends with you and your partner upping sticks, with or without children in tow, going to work halfway around the world. Some people just fall into it ... by mistake even. Transferred by their company to sort things out for them, only for six months, to set up the manufacturing arm or delivery point... that was two years ago and you have no idea when you will be going "home" because you have now made this new place your "home".

This new life doesn't come easy, you are expected to work, and work hard! Long days, hours spent in traffic, hot, sweaty and exhausted by the heat and that's before 9am. There is the abysmal driving conditions, the potholes in the road and the motorbikes/bicycles or even cows depending on where you land this fantastic overseas job!

It's not just you that have to change your life, your partner and your family, siblings, and children all have to.

You are ok. You have your special job, with the bonus and the cachet of working overseas. Your partner had to leave their job, family and friends. They worked hard to get that

job! They were happy and content and didn't really mind the wind and rain, seasons are wonderful things.

Family feel upset and even angry, why do you need to leave they say? That job was perfect for you, and it is so far away, but when will we ever see you? Children will have tantrums, once they realise what they are leaving, friends are so important and so is routine to a young person. Babies and toddlers come with their own issues, food, clothes and sickness, how will they cope in a strange land.

It happens and the move takes place. The packers pack your life away on a container for a six week (if you are lucky) journey to the next stop. The excitement of finding a beautiful house with a garden, a swimming pool, maid and gardener kicks in. You love it! It's warm all the time and the food is exotic. It's OK that you can't speak the language. You get by with "Google Translate" and the promise to your self, that you will learn.

Until that moment when you are all alone, it's 1pm, you are sad that you have no one to talk to and won't have until 7pm. When they come home. The house is quiet. Loneliness kicks in. You cry. And try to sleep. You miss the butter for your toast and the milk tastes yuck and you can't find that







You really don't want to go back. It's cold and dull!  
No one understands you any more. You've changed.  
We adapt to the new and leave the old behind.

Humans are always evolving and moving and becoming apart of our new surroundings. We make it all work. We have to. An expat is a weird creature. Not belonging here or there anymore but we survive and live and enjoy and just get on with it.

We enjoy the fruits of our labour, we have a disposable income, we have home help and even a driver to take us where ever we need to go.

Yet I can't help but wonder, how does the uncertainty effect us all? One day it will all be over and you will have to start again.

By which time you have made this "new" place your home. You have roots now and people who care for you and you them. You can't imagine being without you new best friend.

Uncertainty.... an awful emotion. Not knowing when the plug will be pulled on your special life is tough. Maybe it won't happen for a while yet but there is always an end date, you just don't think about it.

You did once, in the lonely days, when you counted the days and months, when you were alone at home. But not anymore.

I have lost many friends, I say lost because I too looked for someone to fill the gap of who I left behind. I made friends who understood me and experienced all the same emotions. They have left and I have found new friends. But it never gets easy.

You have to expose your self time and time again and it can get quite hard to continue to do so. But continue we must. For being lonely isn't a good place to be.

So my friends. Enjoy it. Embrace it and love it. Live the expat life you are lucky enough to find yourself in. It will eventually end. There is an alarm waiting to go off after so many years. And then you go back to being someone you once were. Normal life resumes. Expat life isn't normal. It's special. Enjoy it! xx

sausage roll that you loved so much for lunch, whilst reading that glossy mag with your mates, giggling at the latest fashion faux par made by that actress.

You miss home. And everything that goes with it. And your partner doesn't understand, This house is fantastic, what more could one want? This is supposed to be a dream come true, is it not?

Finally you make friends and join a club. You meet others that are in the same position as you. You start to feel normal for feeling as you do. You begin to fit in. You are OK. Things are looking up. You all go out in couples for weekends away and dinner at the newest restaurant in town.

You actually start to enjoy your new life. Your family get used to you not being around and you make new friends. They are the same as you and you are happy in their company. In some ways they are better than the ones you left behind. They understand your new life. And they are experiencing it at the same pace as you.

Things are good and then you change. You don't want to go "home" for winter.... Oh God! It's freezing! Oh how your feelings have changed.







## DESIGN FUTURES

*elc* international schools are places where children are active protagonists in their own learning. They comprise a family of unique schools where students base their research, discovery, and experimentation within the context of contemporary culture and learning. Those within strive to resolve dilemmas of individual and shared importance in their quest for knowledge and understanding but most importantly, imagine possibilities for a better future.

In the daily life of *elc* schools, we can perceive a pronounced increase in children's creativity, the quality of their research, and their ability to access information. This facilitates the development of complex digital projects and products of knowledge, which are elaborated between children and between children and adults.



*digital bicycles for enjoyment in the park using arduino technology designed by Pop and Anna (ages 8 to 9 years)*



*automated solar and wind-powered street cleaner using arduino technology designed by Caden, Fabian and India (ages 10 to 11 years)*

# *elc* international schools

### THE CITY SCHOOL

#18 Soi Arkphat,  
Sukhumvit Road 49/4,  
Bangkok 10110  
Tel: (662) 381-2919,  
391-5901, 712-5338

### THE COUNTRY SCHOOL

#44 Samakee Road, T. Tasai,  
Muang Nonthaburi 11000  
Tel: (662) 588-1063,  
952-4147

### THE PURPLE ELEPHANT @39

#61 Soi Prommitr,  
Sukhumvit Road 39,  
Bangkok 10110  
Tel: (662) 662-4570,  
662-4571, 662-4572

### THE PURPLE ELEPHANT @55

#79 Soi Thonglor,  
Sukhumvit Road 55/8,  
Bangkok 10110  
Tel: (662) 116-2394, 116-2395

### THE PURPLE ELEPHANT @49

#99 Soi 49/13 Sukhumvit Road  
Bangkok 10110  
Tel: (662) 392-3190, 392-3191







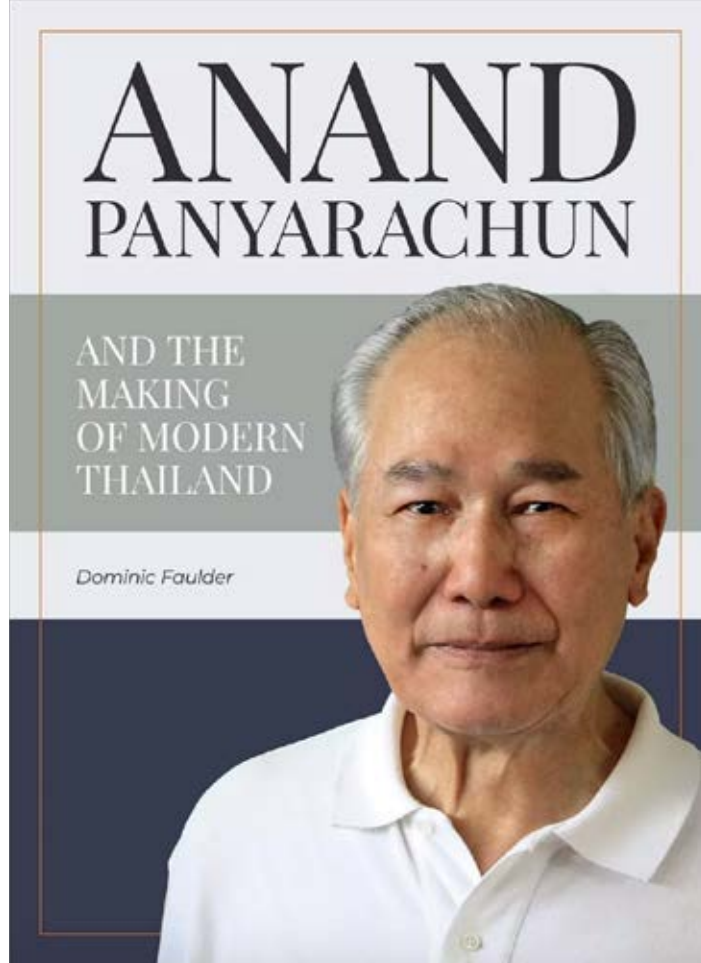
# Anand Panyarachun and the making of modern Thailand

by Paul Wedel

With Thailand still struggling to return to electoral democracy after a military coup, it is worth looking at the nation's unfortunate wealth of experience in such endeavours. Of particular note is the role played by Anand Panyarachun, the leader of what many count as the most successful post-coup government in Thai history. Anand not only led honest and effective governments, but twice returned the country to elections.

From the point of the generals who originally chose him, however, Anand turned out to be a disaster for military political power. *Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand* by long-time Bangkok journalist Dominic Faulder not only sheds new light on Anand's post-coup role, but provides much else of interest.

This biography of Anand, the first in English, is the outcome of six years of work by Faulder. It covers Anand's life and work as diplomat, Prime Minister, company chairman, philanthropist and contributor to national and international reform. As the subtitle of the book indicates, Anand's career also provides a useful lens through which to view a half century of Thai history. The book includes interviews with many of the key actors in the events that have made modern Thailand. As Faulder notes, "The benefit of writing a book about Anand is that many people are willing to open their doors to talk about him; this kind of access is rare in



Thailand." Sadly, at least eight of those interviewed have since passed away – highlighting the timeliness of Faulder's work.

Before going further, I should acknowledge that I do not come to this subject without my own experiences and biases. I covered Anand's surprising nomination as Prime Minister in 1991 as Bangkok bureau chief for United Press International. A few years later I was part of the group that persuaded Anand to chair the non-profit Kenan Institute Asia. I served for a decade as executive director and later president of the Institute under Anand's leadership. I later worked as part of a team of writers supervised by Anand that produced a book on King Bhumibol Adulyadej. I have been friends with Dominic Faulder for many years and more recently became friends with editor Nick Grossman.

Although I covered parts of Anand's career and worked closely with him, Faulder's book gave me new information

and greater insight into Anand's life and character. Faulder has given an accurate picture of a man of decisive rationality and integrity. He set high standards he set for himself and those working with him. As the book shows, Anand is a man of great self-confidence and quick decisions. More often than not, even in confusing circumstances, his judgment has been sound. Anand worked in a wide variety of roles in his career. He brought value and concern for the public good to each of them.

Elite has become a term of disparagement, but in many positive ways, Anand was legitimately elite. He did not suffer fools easily and was







often straightforward in exposing their foolishness. This is not the easy way to popularity. Although he certainly had enemies, Anand gained public support because most people could see his blunt assessments were intended to serve the public good. They also saw that he recognised the advantages his privileged upbringing had given him and sought to understand and empathise with the lives of ordinary Thais. He was elite without being elitist.

Faulder gives a good account of Anand's early life as a student in England and shows how his personal bonds with fellow overseas Thai students proved valuable in later years as Anand and his friends rose to positions of greater power. The background on Anand's family and the particular importance of his father Sern is useful in understanding Anand. Sern, the son of a high-ranking official of Mon ancestry, won a King's scholarship to study in England before being called back to Thailand to serve in the Ministry of Education, rising to take charge of all the royal schools, to serve as a professor at the Civil Service College and to become the top civil servant in the ministry. After the coup that overthrew the traditional monarchy in 1932, Sern became a businessman

and publisher – precursors of his son's later occupations.

It is hard to find fault with most of what Faulder has written. It is well-organised, carefully documented and, as far as I can tell, accurate. The faults I find lie in what is omitted, perhaps due to circumstances beyond the author's control.

Faulder gives a brief account of Anand's courtship and marriage to Mom Ratchawong Sodsee Chakrabandh, a fellow student in England and a descendant of King Mongkut. The book, however, says little about Anand's long marriage, despite Faulder's extensive access to Anand and his two daughters. Similarly, the book fails to shed much light on Anand's relationship with King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Faulder notes that Anand had numerous meetings with the King, especially during Anand's two terms as Prime Minister. He quotes others about the relationship. One friend described Anand as a Bhumibolist rather than a royalist. However, there is little on this topic directly from Anand. As Faulder states in his author's note, Anand made it clear that matters discussed privately with the King were off limits for the book. This is understandable, but unfortunate, as Anand's views of

the King could have contributed to a better understanding of a monarch whose long reign has been obscured by unfounded rumours, excessive adulation and excessive blame. Both the King and Anand had minds shaped by extensive early education in Europe that had to deal with the complexities of traditional Thai society. Their discussions of Thailand's problems must have been interesting.

There is also little account of Anand's religious thinking. Faulder notes his opposition to making Buddhism the state religion during the development of the 1997 constitution and quotes him as saying "normally I don't give money to temples." Since Buddhism is so important in the thinking of many Thais, it would have been useful to learn more.

Many of Anand's views in the book were familiar from my chats with him at board meetings, dinners or social events, but some were new to me. For someone often described as part of the traditional elite, Anand's views are rather untraditional. Faulder quotes him as rejecting the idea of "Thainess" and lamenting that so many Thais misunderstand their own history – taking pride in the glory of a unitary state that never existed.





The book shows he rejected the common prejudice of many in Bangkok against the Lao ethnic minority, saying he saw them as intelligent and hardworking. He is quoted as saying he appreciated the writings of Thai “radical thinkers,” including Jit Phumisak, Seni Sawaphong, Khamsing Srinawak and Seksan Prasertkul. He decries the abuses of Thailand’s Lese Majeste law and recommends its reform. As head of a commission on the troubles in Thailand’s far south, he opposed the views of most military and government leaders, recommending more local autonomy, greater respect for Islam and a bigger role for the Malay language as measures to reduce the violence there. At the same time he rejects the idea of a “network monarchy” popular among foreign academics. Faulder says Anand sees this network monarchy as “a convoluted, somewhat obsessive conspiracy theory.”

At 608 pages, Anand Panyarachun and the making of modern Thailand is comprehensive and detailed. It is

an important step in filling the marked lack of serious English language biographies of leading Thais, but it does more.

Using the life of a significant Thai leader, the book gives us insider accounts of many of the critical developments in recent Thai history. Anand’s career extended to diplomacy, government leadership, private enterprise, reform commissions and charitable work making him an important player in that history. But because the account is tied to Anand, it says little about the impact of change on the people of the countryside, the recurring radical movements, the rise and fall of the Thai communist party and much else. However, it does give us a better understanding of whatever events Anand touched and they were many. Anand and many others contributed hundreds of hours of interviews to the book. This wealth of

material provides an understanding of Thai diplomacy during the cold war and Thai efforts to adjust to the new reality after the wars in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In particular there is an inside account of the fiasco of the Mayaguez incident and the contentious departure of US troops from the Thai perspective. The book describes Anand’s role in the Thai effort to readjust its relations with the communist governments in Vietnam and China. As a result, he suffered the wrath of the conservative Thai military in the process, seemingly bringing his government career to a sudden end.

The highlight of the book, however, is a detailed account of Anand’s two terms as Prime Minister. It describes his surprising appointment as Prime Minister after a military coup in 1991 and the confusing process that led to a second term after a public uprising against an unelected military leader the following year. Faulder sheds light on

the relationship between Anand and army commander General Suchinda who appointed him only to see him move against military interests and sideline key generals.

He details the Anand government’s considerable achievements during those two brief terms. Quite correctly, a share of the credit is given to the ministers that Anand brought into his cabinet. With Anand’s support, those ministers advanced the rights of women, espoused much needed educational reform, improved the telecommunications infrastructure and made Thailand a model for enlightened action against AIDS, saving many thousands of lives.

There is a good discussion of Anand’s work to help write Thailand’s 1997 constitution – one that many feel was the best of the many constitutions Thailand has had. His well-timed actions against the leaders of the 1991 coup kept Thai military leaders in their barracks and out of politics for nearly a decade.

Somewhat apart from Anand’s story, Faulder also provides inside accounts of publications about King Bhumibol and a long overdue dissection of a travesty of a royal biography, *The Revolutionary King* by William Stevenson.

Whether read for its insights into the life and work of an important Thai leader or for its account of recent Thai history, *Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand* is good value. Hopefully it will set the standard for biographies of many other significant Thais that are long overdue.







# America's Top School is coming to Bangkok

Opening in August 2019 Now enrolling for PreK- 5th Grade

Residing on 22 rai of land, BISB's brand new campus is built with cutting-edge facilities such as:

- Design Kitchen with 3D facilities
- Woodshop
- Engineering/robotics rooms
- Biology, Chemistry, and Physics labs
- Art studio
- Theater
- Dance studio
- Multiple sports fields
- Indoor convertible gym
- 25m salt-water swimming pool
- And much more

BASIS International School Bangkok is a part of America's most successful school network

*U.S. News & World Report's* National Ranking of America's Best High Schools in 2018

#### **BASIS Scottsdale**

#1 High School in the nation

#### **BASIS Chandler**

#2 High School in the nation

#### **BASIS Oro Valley**

#3 High School in the nation

#### **BASIS Tucson North**

#4 High School in the nation

#### **BASIS Flagstaff**

#5 High School in the nation



**BASIS**  
International<sup>™</sup>  
School  
Bangkok

To find out more, please  
contact our Admissions Team:



+662 415 0099  
admissions@BISB.co.th  
www.bisb.co.th  
@bisb  
@basisintbkk

Visit us at

BASIS International School Bangkok Experience Center

1/1 Park Village Rama II, Soi Rama II Soi 56 Samaedam Bangkhunthian, Bangkok Thailand 10150

Facebook.com/expatlifethailand.com

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 135



# A glittering look at Bangkok global hotspot of bling

## My time as a Gemologist-in-Training

by Tina Haskins Chadha

*Jewellery. What is it and why do we wear it? Across cultures and spanning the history of humanity, the act of adorning our body for women and men is both personal and universal. It can be art or seduction; it can be a form of protest, or of rebellion. Jewellery, what it says about us and its transformative effect, makes it much more than superficial.*

I can link my interest in gemmology back to the boy king and his visit to New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was a long, long time ago when the Treasures of Tutankhamen exhibit rolled into town, but when it happened it was the hottest ticket in town. I was only a child dragged along for the outing by my enthusiastic mother and her equally exuberant sisters'. Yet, even at that age, it was an electrifying experience.

While the historic significance of the artefacts was lost on me, I was astonished by the crowds and the sheer number and array of objects – animal themed relics depicting lions, ostriches and falcons, myriad of gold and gem inlaid pieces some meant to be worn amulets, bracelets, collars and rings, others to embellish from ornate boxes to model boats to a coffin made entirely of gold. I'd never heard of lapis lazuli, quartz or turquoise before, nor did I grasp the rarity and craftsmanship of these discoveries. But I was hooked. Who created such amazing pieces? And why? The sensational discovery of Tutankhamen, a short-lived Egyptian pharaoh of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, revealed nearly 5,400 fabulous treasures so many it took ten years to document them all. The treasures in the tomb were found literally stacked in cases and boxes –



necklaces, pectorals, amulets, pendants, bracelets, earrings, and rings of such superb quality they could rival any of our modern techniques.

But the ancient Egyptians weren't alone in adorning themselves. Evidence shows even prehistoric humans decorated the body with shells, fish teeth and coloured pebbles. Over the years, jewellery forms continued to grow and expand to include ornamentation for every part of the body: Crowns, tiaras and combs for the top of the head; earrings and nose rings for the face; necklaces, brooches, breastplates and belts for the neck and torso and on and on. Jewellery in Ancient Rome was used to such an extent that gold rings were worn by noblemen, eventually jewellery became so democratised it spread even among those in lower social ranks as documented by archeologists.

Here in Thailand, jewellery making and gemstone sourcing go back centuries. Gold travelled through Thailand some 2,000 years ago through Hindu settlers from India's eastern and southern regions. About seven centuries ago, silver tooling emerged as a prominent craft. Today, Hill Tribe Silver is legendary worldwide for beautiful tribal and nature motifs. Chiang Mai is also famous for its distinctive silver jewellery.

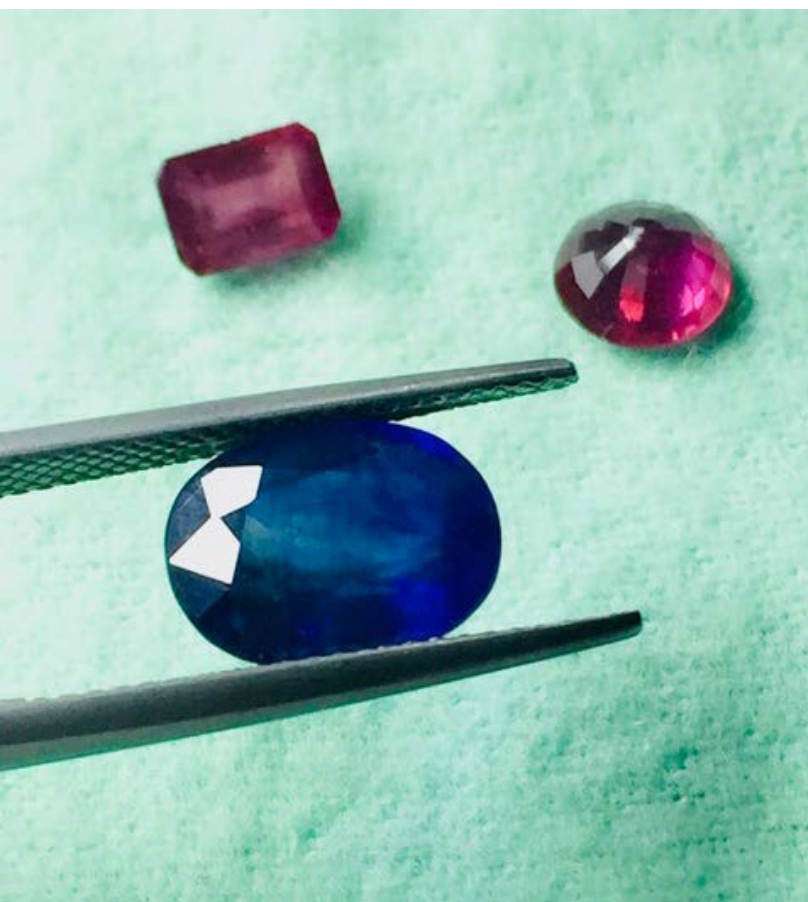
The tradition of gold and gem-based jewellery reached a peak in circles of power during the Ayutthaya era. Historically, rubies and sapphires were in abundant supply through the country. In its heyday, Thailand's most coveted gems were the deep-red rubies mined in the Chanthaburi region since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and blue sapphires from around Kanchanaburi. Now the local mines are largely depleted, yet the Thai industry evolved and gave rise today to a dynamic



cutting and polishing epicentre that turns rough stones into glittering gems using the most advanced methods possible – some above board and others not so much. More than \$650 million worth of gemstones are exported from Thailand annually, about half of that sapphire according to the Gem and Jewellery Institute of Thailand.

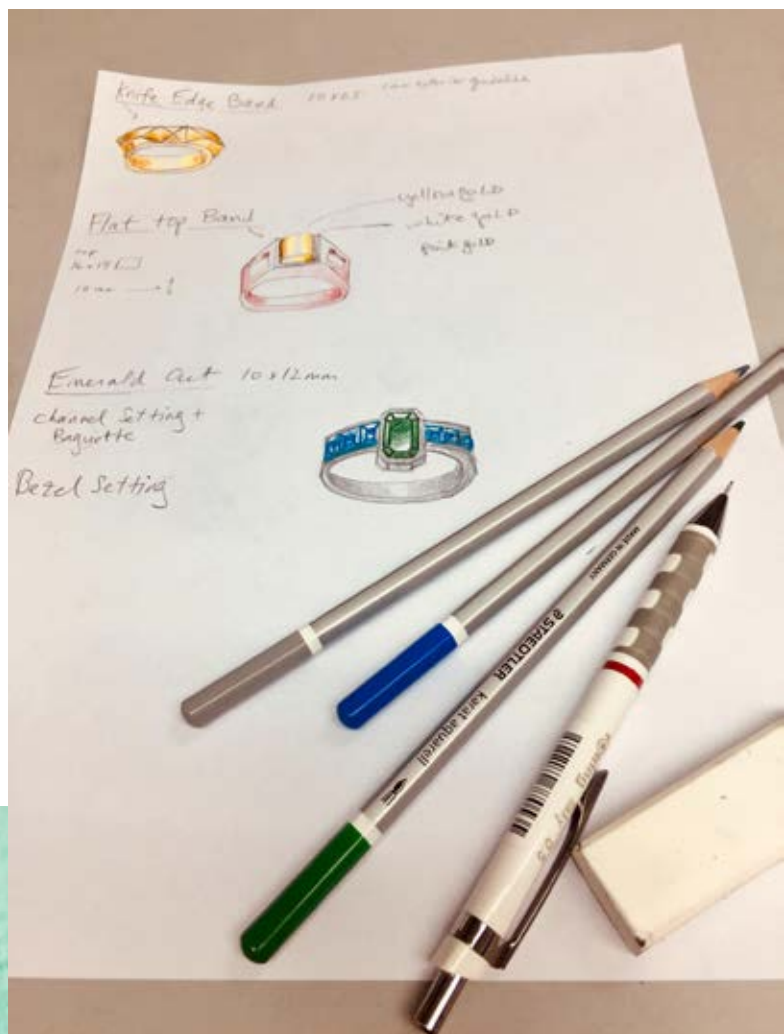
Today, Thailand is one of the world's most prominent modern centres for gems and jewellery serving as a major hub of production, gem treatment and trading. Raw stones are imported to Thailand from around the world for cutting and treatment, much of it still happening in Chanthaburi, a town southeast of Bangkok. Nearby many of the world's rubies have been mined from Myanmar's Mogok mine dubbed "Valley of Rubies" and known for the world's finest "pigeon's blood" coloured rubies, the majority of these stones make their way into Thailand for cutting, treatment and polishing. Other gemstones coming into Thailand today come from much, much further away: Rubies from Sri Lanka, Mozambique and Madagascar, sapphires from Australia, India, Tanzania and Montana, USA, jade from China, New Zealand and Myanmar, opals from Australia, and on and on.

Twice a year, each February and September, the global gem industry descends upon Bangkok's massive Impact Challenger Hall at the Bangkok Gems and Jewellery Fair (BGJF). This event is ranked among the world's most important and widely attended events of the industry. It's here that all the key players in the global gems and jewellery business come to source, trade and network. It's also an incredibly eye-opening and overwhelming experience for any novice jeweller. Row after row of vendors showcasing cases of loose cut precious and semi-precious stones – sapphire, ruby, aquamarine, tourmaline, spinel, garnet, peridot and more. Walking these aisles is a dizzying experience, especially when one considers the various ways sub-standard real stones are treated to yield a higher retail value.



Layer onto this, the abundance of lab-grown stones that have gained more and more acceptance in mainstream markets. The next BGJF event will be held September 10-14, 2019 with the last two days open to public attendance. For anyone curious about the jewellery industry, it's a must-see exhibition.

So, years after having my eyes opened by the boy king and long after professional stints working with luxury brands like Yves Saint Laurent and Shiseido, I decided it was serendipity to land in Bangkok and have the opportunity to reignite my interest in gemmology here in "The gemstone capital of the world".

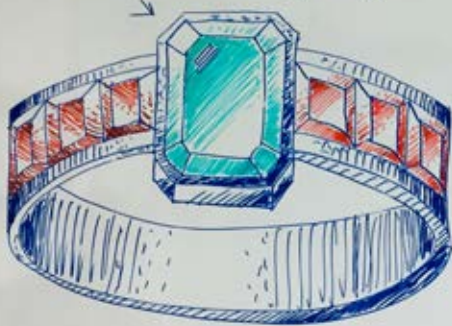


And, thus began my brief tenure as an "apprentice" gemologist and jewellery designer as a student of the Asian Institute of Gemological Sciences (AIGS) located in Silom. Founded in 1978, AIGS was the first international gemological education centre in SE Asia. Today students come from all of the world to attend courses. In 2018, I joined their ranks for a series of short courses. Gem treatment and identification. Ruby and sapphire grading and pricing. Countertop sketching and design.

For weeks, I trekked through Bangkok's notoriously unpredictable, snarling traffic, crowded sidewalks and rainy season road flooding tormenting those within earshot with my poor Thai, "Wanee rottit maak maak," "Ow gawfee mai wan" and "AC thangan yangrai".



Emerald cut 10 x 12 mm /  
Channel setting + Bg. Bezel Setting



My classmates varied widely in age, background and experience. There was the dapper, 20 something Iranian jeweller in town for courses to sharpen his skills before returning to a family business; the hip Australian certified gemologist already with her own private clientele looking to polish skills and make new sourcing contacts, the Japanese Mom of two in Bangkok from London with a background in high-end jewellery sales and design aspirations. The scruffy American jeweller with a West Coast boutique keen on learning how to spot great finds and bargain well at the Chantaburi and Mogok markets. Then there was me. Communications professional in the midst of a long career sabbatical. Mother of 3 (still shorter than me) humans and 2 canines. Soccer Mom and yoga enthusiast. Part-time writer, passionate clean air advocate. And a curious, gemologist in training, perhaps? I didn't fit the typical AIGS mould.

So, you might wonder, what on earth is a gemologist? Simply put, it is a specialist in gems. It's the science of natural and artificial gemstones and gemstone materials. Typically, it takes years of academic study to become a trained and qualified gemologist. These experts spend most of their time identifying, grading and appraising gemstones. They're also trained to conduct a series of scientific tests to confirm the identity, chemical composition and various other technical details of a specific gem. Many spend hours in labs analysing and grading gemstones of all types, while others work with auction houses to appraise gems, with jewellery designers to source materials and advise on designs, as buyers or sales people in retail.

For the average consumer, we think of gemstones in terms of an emotional response. Do we love the way it looks, the way it makes us feel? And diamonds are by far the most understood. Thanks to being well-anchored with the global engagement and wedding industry, diamonds are synonymous with the 4 C's guidelines. But what of coloured gemstones? How are they rated and classified? And what is done to stones to make them look better and sell at higher price points? Quickly, I realised there is more to this story than one could imagine. Here's what I learned about coloured gemstones and jewellery shopping.

## A gemmology crash course:

*Gemstones – know the 6 categories: Gemstones can be classified in one of six categories, understanding the technical differences will help when shopping the market.*

**Natural gem:** They are made entirely by nature. The only human-altering to natural gems is through ordinary cutting and polishing. Much of what we see in the gem market place features stones augmented and treated with manmade techniques that go beyond skilled cutting and polishing, to improve colour and

clarity. Natural gems are minerals with a special chemical composition and crystal structure that repeats itself. This unique combination of atoms has to be a perfect recipe to grow a gemstone.

**Treated gems:** Any natural gemstones that have been altered by people beyond ordinary cutting and polishing. This includes heat-treated, oiled and stabilised methods used on stones like ruby, sapphire, emerald, turquoise. Synthetic gems: This is a gem that has the same composition, structure, properties and appearance as a natural gem, except synthetic gems are lab-grown.

**Manmade gems:** The same as synthetic gems, but they have no natural counterpart. They are entirely lab-created. Assembled gems: Gemstones produced by assembling two or more pieces together. The pieces can be natural or not. They are referred to as "doublet" or "triplets". For example, there is usually a natural stone on top and a synthetic base stone.





**Imitation gems:** A gem material, either natural or otherwise, that has the same appearance as the gem it imitates. Classic examples are cubic zirconia, famous as imitation diamond or red spinel, famous as imitation ruby.

**Stone enhancement: They do what to make the stone look better?**

**Heat treatment:** Virtually every coloured gemstone on the market has been heat treated, a technique rarely disclosed to the consumer. Proper heat treatment can turn a useless rough stone into one that is commercially viable and gorgeous. We can see a stone has been heat treated through clues detected under a microscope like crystals, “fingerprints” and blue spots.

**Dyes and oils:** Stone cracks are filled to improve the stones clarity and/or colour. Upon microscopic examination, colour concentrations revealed in the cracks will give it away. Dyes and oils can also be prone to “sweat” or drip from cracks.

**Lead glass filling:** This technique is used to dramatically improve very poor-quality stones that have many cracks and cavities. Evidence of this treatment can be detected easily with a jeweller’s loupe revealing gas bubbles along fractures. The process itself can cause further stone fracturing. This enhancement practice is considered taboo; it makes the stone unstable.

**Bleaching:** Porous gems like jade, pearl and tiger’s eye quartz are often bleached to with acid to lighten and improve colour. It tends to make the stones more brittle and even more porous.

**Rating stones: Hardness, colour saturation and clarity**

Stones are rated for durability and resistance to scratching with the Mohs Scale of Hardness a one to ten ranking of minerals in order of their hardness. Diamond, ruby and sapphire ranking hardest, while emerald and jade fall in the middle making them among the most brittle, scratch-prone stones.

The beauty of a stone is rated by saturation, how vivid and rich is the hue, and tone, which evaluates the lightness or darkness of the colour.

In the case of coloured gemstones, we view stone clarity as an evaluation of external surface blemishes such as stone scratches and pits, and internal inclusions that can be seen by the eye, loupe or microscope. These can be a fingerprint, growth pattern of the mineral or fracture. The more easily visible the lower the grade. No two gems have the exact same set of inclusions. The chances for truly inclusion-free gemstones are extremely rare.



**Tools of the trade:**

The dark field loupe and tweezers are the essential handheld instruments. The loupe lights a stone from the sides providing 10x magnification. It’s great for a quick look to reveal stone fractures and clarity-enhancements such as lead glass filling.

For a 100% accurate gemstone identification and assessment on treatment history, a lab report from a certified lab such as AIGS or GIA using a microscope would be necessary.

**Go off the beaten path, try unique and often more affordable stones:**

There is a whole world of natural semi-precious gemstones that look very much like their higher priced cousins. But the bottom line is when considering gemstone jewellery, go with what you love. Find pieces that can be “everyday wearable” and often looking at a less travelled path will yield more affordable options.

Consider tourmaline, citrine and peridot for their vibrant hues in yellow, green and orange. Despite its low hardness and tendency to chip, moonstone in the right protective setting such as cabochon makes a stunning choice. Tsavorite is a type of green garnet that evokes the look of emerald, without the high price point or brittleness. Or opt for natural red spinel or natural garnet in lovely vibrant hues of red instead of ruby.



# Cacao: an exotic elixir of life

by Margaret Elizabeth Johnson

Cacao, *Theobroma cacao*, is a tropical tree of the Sterculiaceae family but we all know it as yes folks, you guessed it, chocolate! This wonder of a plant has given us generations of delight from the Aztecs to the early enamoured Europeans to us now, in this world, where we have created many indulgences. We must thank rats for the enlightening realisation that the cacao pods have something to offer! The Olmecs (1500–400 BC) were the first to discover that there was something of value in these cacao pods as they observed rats eating these pods with ravenous desire. The Olmecs soon learned to crush the cacao beans, mix with water and add their spices to the concoction. This occurred in equatorial Mexico. Soon, the Mayans (600) and Aztecs (400) got in on the party. The cacao bean was so valuable and loved it also became a form of monetary value using beans to purchase items with, yes, even back then, to pay taxes.

Abundance, strength and godlike qualities, this is what the cacao bean represented to these civilisations. Using the bean in religious rituals, the God responsible for bringing the cacao bean to man was honoured, Quetzalcoatl, as was the Mayan Patron Saint of cacao, Chak ek Chuah. As the cacao bean made its way through Meso-America, the much desired cacao drink was normally reserved for soldiers in battle, the nobility and wealthier classes. It wasn't until the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Hernando Cortez brought it back to the Spanish court after drinking it with the Aztec Emperor Montezuma. Christopher Columbus had seen the pod on a canoe in Nicaragua but didn't realise the importance of the bean at that time. It was really Cortez we have to thank after the rats for after the fall of the Aztec Empire he cultivated the plant in Spain and the Spanish court became crazed over this wondrous new world drink. In 1585 chocolate shops opened in Spain and the wealthier public was able to get its hands on this elixir no longer reserved for just the nobility.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, King Louis XIII married the Spanish Princess Anne, this brought the cacao elixir to the French courts. When in 1650 there was an inundation of drinking possibilities in England due to the arrival of tea from China



and coffee from the Middle East, the cacao drink entered the English palate also. The 1<sup>st</sup> chocolate confection maker opened in Paris in 1659 and the Italians won prizes for their skills at chocolate creations in 1720. It wasn't until 1765 North America learned about the cacao drink and over the next 100 years the cacao bean also became cacao powder, dark chocolate bars, milk chocolate and chocolate imbued with nuts. Pharmaceutical qualities were also explored which is not surprising knowing that in the beginning it was known for its restorative, strengthening and aphrodisiac effects.

To obtain the cacao, the harvested pods are fermented by naturally occurring bacteria and yeasts to eliminate the bitter and astringent quality. The seeds are then cured, roasted and the skin is taken off leaving, what is called, the nibs. It is the nibs that create the various products, the fat being extracted with pressure creating the cacao butter and the residual is ground to a fine powder, cacao. The cacao butter is what is in soaps, cosmetics and medicines like emollients and suppositories and the cacao powder is used for beverages and flavouring. Chocolate is when some of the cacao butter is retained. As of now there is just over 70,000 square kilometres worldwide of the cacao plant with 40% coming from Africa in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana and next is Indonesia where I am today (Bali). Smaller amounts come from Nigeria, Brazil and Cameroon. About 20 pods come from one plant in one year and it takes 10 pods to make 1kg of cacao paste! There are 3 types of cacao pods, one being very precious, Criollo (the Mayan cacao) 10%, and Forastero which accounts for 80% of the chocolate and cacao we see today. The 3<sup>rd</sup> cacao pod is a hybrid of the two called Trinitario, the remaining 10%.

There are many health benefits that can come from the





consumption of pure raw cacao, this is why if you're after the positive effects of chocolate rather than just indulgences, you are best to choose dark chocolate with a minimum of 70% cacao plus making sure by reading the label, usually on health food store chocolate bars labels only, the production of the bar you are eating comes from cacao that hasn't been overheated while processing. In good quality chocolate there are polyphenols which are naturally occurring antioxidants and are also present in some fruits and vegetables, tea and wine. The result of polyphenols can be reduced inflammation, improved circulation and lowered blood pressure. Flavanol-rich cacao can improve the level of nitric oxide in one's blood which relaxes and dilates arteries and blood vessels. Cacao has also been found to have a blood thinning effect similar to aspirin. We are all familiar with the mood elevation chocolate can bring, this is due to the flavanols, one of which is tryptophan and this is changed to a mood stabiliser in the body called serotonin. There is also a small amount of caffeine in cacao.

I am still circling the SE Asian areas around our wondrous Thailand settling in Bali for a bit as I have found a lovely villa in which to paint my watercolours. In this article is my version of the Cacao flower, they are normally quite small but I blew them up large so one can see what they look like and I feel mine have taken on some of the effects of the raw cacao ceremonies I have been going to as of late! I call it Cacao Flower Fantasy! Ceremonial raw cacao circles take

place here in my little town of Ubud almost daily although the new or full moon is the best time to take part in these circles.

The idea is to hold up a small cup of cacao elixir to the sky and say what you want to release in your life and take a sip, then say what you want in your life and take a sip. Then everyone finishes what they have and dance to some nice tunes. Whether these ideas are fact or fantasy, the cacao plant has given us magic in one form or another through many decades. Most everyone has their favourite way to have chocolate; dark, milk, hot cacao or plain raw cacao powder blended up in a nice smoothie. I love to mix cacao powder with coconut cream in a small blender with chai spices! *Theobroma cacao* can be found in Thailand, it was imported from Malaysia just over 100 years ago. Just last year during the 2018 Academy of Chocolate Awards, Thai cacao was among the awardees. Lemuel Dark Chocolate Bars are made from Thai cacao and the bars received a bronze star. The beans used in its award-winning chocolate come from Kad Kakao farm in Chiang Mai, which plans to launch its own chocolate brand and cafe in Bangkok later this year. We can look forward to our own Thai chocolate delights, from bean to bar, experiences soon!

Margaret is enjoying travelling around SE Asia lugging around a suitcase full of watercolour supplies and a laptop, learning about the various medicinal plants surrounding our country of Thailand and then portraying them onto paper for others to appreciate in a unique way. Writing for Expat Life allows her to learn more about the plant than she might normally feel compelled to do! One can follow her health and travel blogs on her website [www.mejcreations.com](http://www.mejcreations.com) and appreciate other works of art she has created on this long journey of discovery.







# Once upon a time, there was a utopia called Thailand...

by Rie Atagi

**T**his is a fairytale known to many Japanese, like Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood. I am not sure if the story has lessons to teach, and if so, what the lessons are. Be good to the weak and you will get rewarded? Or you have to keep your promise otherwise you get punished? Or if you spend too long having too good a time, you lose important things like your parents or home? Actually, these lessons don't make much sense to me, but my point here is not to talk about ethical precept of the story, but my theory of *Ryugujyo* being Thailand. *Ryugujyo*, a utopia in the sea where Taro had an euphorically happy time, entertained with feasts and music by a beautiful princess, and lost track of time, could have been in Thailand.

*Let me tell you an old story that I often think of these days.*

Once upon a time, there was a young fisherman called Taro Urashima. One day he found some kids toying with a turtle on the beach. He went to rescue and release the turtle to the sea. The following day, the turtle came back to invite Taro to his castle, Ryugujyo, in the sea. Taro went along with the turtle and met a beautiful princess, Otohime, who thanked Taro for rescuing the turtle and welcomed him with a feast, drinks, dance and music.

Taro had a dreamingly good time. He didn't know how long he had stayed there but he began to worry how his parents were doing. Taro asked the princess to take him home despite his desire to stay. She was sad but agreed since he was concerned about his parents. Upon his leaving, she gave him a gift box for his safekeeping, forbidding him to open the box. Taro went home, but he couldn't find his parents, nor his home.

He wandered around his village and found out his parents had passed away a long, long time ago. He was in despair. Out of loneliness, he opened the gift box the princess had forbidden to open. The smoke came out of the box and instantly Taro became a very old man.

**Let me explain my theory as follows:**

**Evidence one:** *Ryugujyo* is a utopia in the sea. Thailand has many beautiful beaches, like those in Krabi, Samui, Phuket, etc. You name it. When you lie down on a white-sand beach looking over emerald-green sea under the blue sky, you forget all your worries. You are in a tropical paradise.

**Evidence two:** Endless feast. Thailand has an abundance of food. "In the water, there are fish. In the fields, there is rice." I understand that this well-known stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng is a metaphor of prosperity of his reign, but I have seen this literally: There was a vacant land in front of my apartment, left wild for a while waiting for a new construction. One day I saw a man fishing in this lot, standing outside of the fence with a blue plastic bucket next to him. There was not a pond or pool there, but only puddles of rain water in the uneven soil. I had no idea what he was fishing and where the fish came from. There was a *klong* (small river) nearby but still a few hundred metres away. I tried to think hard how they were connected. Underwater? Flooding? But then, the phrase "In the water, there are fish" came to my mind and I was totally convinced that what I was seeing was not a metaphor.





**Evidence three:** Hospitality. Taro was entertained by a beautiful *Otohime* and her companions' singing and dancing. Well, this could indicate something more like an intimate relationship, but that is not my area of expertise and I would like to discuss it in a more general aspect. Thailand is the "land of smiles" and its major industry, tourism, is armour-plated by their smiles. Hospitality is Thai's natural strength.

When the BTS (skytrain) was introduced over ten years ago, what struck me was the passengers' expression. They had a smile. They might have been simply excited to ride a brand new monorail in the city, yet this was a startling contrast to those in a big city I know: when you get on a commuter train in Tokyo, you find sombre faces, often with fatigue and grimness. But on the BTS, no one was frowning. They were serene and peaceful. I was amazed to find the "land of smiles" in a compartment of mass transportation. I was simply riding a train, but the tranquil ambience made me feel calm and happy. Isn't it true hospitality?



Urashima Tarō and princess of Horai, by Matsuki Heikichi (1899)

**Evidence four:** *Ryugujiyo* made Taro lose track of time.

Thailand made me lose track of time. Thailand has no seasons. I've often heard Thais joke, "yes, we do have seasons, hot, hotter and hottest!" OK, that is one way of interpreting a season, and Thailand does have the rainy season and dry season, which have distinctive characteristics of climate. But I am talking about four seasons: flower-blossoming spring, sunbathing summer, autumn with fallen leaves and snowy cold winter. Thailand doesn't have four seasons.

A cycle of four seasons is an affirmation of one year's passing for me. Without four seasons, you don't notice that a year has passed. One year is a significant unit of time in life. We have the phrase, "accumulating annual growth ring", indicating people become mature year-by-year by gaining experience. Unfortunately, I do not feel I have been "accumulating annual growth ring" to be wise. Rather I feel I am lost in perpetual summer. Yet, if I may say, I am feeling "forever young" like Taro in *Ryugujiyo*. Someone may ask me when this and that event happened. I try to recall, thinking it was recent, but my "recent" has a range of a couple of months to a few years. No matter how hard you try to trace the time, there is no quarterly indicator of time, like snow in winter or cherry blossom in spring. In Thailand, it is always hot. It is always summer. No season before or after. You cannot trace your past by seasons and your life is timeless.

Have I persuaded you of my theory?

I know this is not a scientifically proven theory, but I feel as if I have lived a life of *Ryugujiyo* in Thailand. My life here has not been necessarily full of feasts, drinks, dance and music, yet still this is a tropical paradise and the land of smiles in an everlasting summer. You feel you are having a daydream, bitter or sweet, knowing someday you will wake up and open the forbidden gift box to realise years have passed.



# Why are female chefs still under represented around the world?

by Helena Hoffmann



*In celebration of International Women's Day on March 8, Gastronauts Asia hosted for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time the culinary forum 'Women in Gastronomy' (WIG) at the Banyan Tree Bangkok and invited renowned female chefs from Thailand.*

The full-day symposium included a panel discussion about the 'Cultural Challenges for Female Chefs', followed by a unique "Thai Street Food" lunch from Bangkok's leading female chefs and restaurants. The programme continued after the mouthwatering lunch with a new feature "Women in Wine". As part of the 150 years anniversary and celebration of diplomatic relations and friendship between Thailand and Italy, WIG offered a wine talk and tasting and invited female representatives from four top Italian wineries. The event united successfully top female chefs and female representatives from the food and beverage scene.

The panel discussion was moderated by Michelin Star Italian chef Christina Bowerman, who directly addressed a thought-provoking question to the six panellists "Why

are female chefs still under-represented in the world and especially in Haute Cuisine?"

It is all about gender roles. For centuries and until now people around the world say: "The women's place is in the kitchen." Surprisingly, it seems only to count for private household kitchens. In public and professional restaurant kitchens mostly, men are representing high class cooking and "Haute Cuisine" worldwide. Cooking in private households was traditionally a women's area and their work in this environment was neither visible nor economically valued. Cooking at home was minimised to the simple act of nurturing a family. Whereas cooking in public and in restaurants from the beginning was considered as an act of expressing creativity, a culture and as well a country. The workplace kitchen was differentiated between "public and private", "amateur and professional", and "feminine and masculine" cooking. So, when men started performing cooking in public and in professional restaurant kitchens, they were raised up to the status of chefs, creators and "food ambassadors of the country". Women who want to join this level, have to face until today many challenges and obstacles in a space which still seems to be a masculine territory. Some of the obstacles have been discussed on the panel.







*"Women are not physically strong enough for this job. They cannot lift as heavy as men."*

This or similar statements many female chefs have heard in the beginning of their working career. On many occasions it is used as an argument to why women are not a good fit in professional kitchens because they are physically disadvantaged to their male colleagues. When women start their career in restaurant kitchens, they need to demonstrate their strength and ability to at least equal their male peers. **Chef Fae** from 'Front Room' experienced it by herself during her training time in Denmark under the guidance of a Michelin Chef. Her boss was convinced that due to her tiny appearance she is more a burden than a help in the kitchen. She had to demonstrate that she can handle this demanding and stressful environment and proved him that women have



great endurance and can work for many hours tirelessly. The restaurant's kitchen is a very tough and competitive surrounding, especially in Michelin-starred restaurants. All panelists agreed that to survive in this environment, it needs a lot more than big biceps. It requires many different skills and amongst others: a very good sense of flavours, technical skills, leadership skills, endurance, consistency, creativity, patience, determination and a high amount of resilience.

### Lack of respect

Another challenge female chefs have to face is lack of respect in the professional 'male dominated' kitchen environment. To manage it, some adapted an authoritarian masculine style of leadership in the kitchen. **Chef Noor** from Blue Elephant was one who admitted that to achieve respect in the kitchen it helps to show a strong personality and be bossy at times. However, there were also women chefs who succeeded while keeping the feminine style.

Another way out of this dilemma is through self-employment like **Chef Pam** from The Table. She invites her guests to fine dining at her home. Another strategy as female chef to escape male dominance in the kitchen is by surrounding yourself only with other female chefs or helpers.

### How do you balance family life and work?

Honestly, I find this question bizarre and I am still surprised that it always comes up whenever women aim for a career out of the house. A family consists of a father, mother and one or more children.

Why is this question never a concern when interviewing male chefs (father) about their work-life balance? This question alone implies the female chef (mother) a bad feeling like she is not fulfilling her duties as a mother. A woman is not only a mother. She has many other roles to satisfy as a wife, daughter, sister, friend, etc. and wants to excellence in all of her roles.







*From left to right the six panellists: Chef Naree Boonyakiat (YELO Café), Chef Noor (Blue Elephant), Chef Pam (The Table), Chef Thip (Saffron), Chef Fae (Front Room), Chef Som (Karmakamet Diner)*

Although more women are entering the professional workplace kitchen and get recognition, they still have a tough time meeting the expected gender roles from the society and workplace requirements. The workplace kitchen requires a high level of personal investment. Family-life is still and sadly a major barrier and discrimination factor. That is why many female chefs in their younger years won't make it to the top in comparison to their male colleagues. Later when the kids are grown up, female chefs finally get attention and recognition like in the case of Chef Thip from Saffron. Chef Noor from Blue Elephant integrated her daughter in her daily job and cooking business from the beginning. The passion for cooking was inherited to her daughter. Till now both are cooking together as a team at Blue Elephant Bangkok.

One of the last questions the panelists were asked was "Who inspired you the most in your life?" In unison all six panelists responded: their mothers. All these mothers nurtured and showed their love through preparing food for the family. Cooking for the family is a beautiful way to show your love and care for the loved ones. Only the mother of Chef Som from Karmakamet Diner was according to her opinion not a gifted cook. For that reason, Chef Som started her cooking career at an early age unwontedly but fortunately it turned out later to be her passion.

### Wine tasting

After an extraordinary Street Food lunch from ten famous Bangkok restaurants and their female chefs the event finished with a wine talk and wine tasting. A tasty selection of red, white and sparkling wines from famous wine areas in Italy were offered. The four female wine experts showed presentations and explained in detail about the history of the wineries, the wines itself, and their uniqueness. All in all, the 2nd culinary forum was a successful event that showcased successful women in the food and beverage sector.

*Happy Women's Day to all fabulous women around the world, who are the backbone of every family and who show their love and caring through their food they daily provide in households and professional restaurant kitchens.*



**About the author: Helena Hoffmann** is originally from Germany but has lived for more than 13 years in Bangkok. She founded and worked for her own travel agency "[www.bangkok360.de](http://www.bangkok360.de)" for German speaking tourists for the last 7 years. Looking for something new, months ago she joined "Expat Life in Thailand" as a Social Media Editor. What else? Married, having two wonderful boys 13 and 10 years old, live and practice yoga every day, have a passion for cooking and eating as well reading. ☺





# The best things in life are free

by Aurimas Juodka

*What do you think is the secret of feeling great on a daily basis? Medication? Coffee? Fulfilling relationships? Answer that question to yourself and keep it in mind when reading this article.*

**I**'m obsessed with wellness. Obsessed is a strong word, but I really am. Everything from the latest technology, to longevity hacks, to random gadgets... It's fascinating!

However, after weighing everything in, I recently realised that most things that move the needle in the field of wellness and feeling great on a daily basis are free. Technology, health hacks, supplements, etc. are nice-to-have additions, but ultimately, they only help you to go from good to great. The most profound change is achieved by the things that are free – lifestyle adjustments.

**I boiled them down into six categories. They're simple and easy to implement.**

## 1. Sleep.

Probably one of the most undervalued tools in our free biological toolbox. One night of sleep deprivation raises your blood glucose to pre-diabetic levels. That explains the cravings that you get after having a sleepless night, doesn't it?

Based on Centers for Disease Control (CDC) survey, only 20% of Americans get sufficient exercise. We can assume that 99.9% of the population sleep. So skip your morning exercise if you are sleep deprived and sleep in! (That doesn't mean that you don't have to get adequate movement, more on that later!)

So where do you start with sleep? First, aim to go to bed

and wake up at the same time. Second, get some sunshine first thing in the morning, preferably at the same time, to align your circadian rhythm. Third, avoid caffeine in the afternoon. Caffeine takes quite a bit of time to get out of your system. Lastly, avoid exercise and meals within 3 hours of your bedtime and screentime within 1 hour (or wear blue-light blocking glasses)

I can't stress the importance of sleep enough. It's a great place to start if you feel like you're underperforming.

## 2. Stress management.

Our nervous systems were designed to protect us. Constant stimulation from technology and environmental factors leave us overwhelmed, anxious and stressed. Unfortunately, very few people have a strategy in place to combat it all.

As I said, best things in life are free. Stress management can be easily overcome by breath work and meditation. As "woo-woo" as it sounds, I personally was really skeptical about the aforementioned strategies a few years ago, but they simply work. You can only gain value by trying them out and seeing what works for you.





Look into box-breathing, 4-7-8 breath, breath of fire. For meditation – transcendental meditation (TM), mindfulness (they even have apps for it), to name a few.

Being able to successfully handle stress sets you up for being more grounded and in tune with your emotions.

### 3. Nutrition.

We're bombarded with marketing campaigns on 'the next big thing', 'magic pill' and other nonsense. The promises in the field of nutrition are getting more and more ridiculous. Fortunately, it's really simple. As Michael Pollan said "Eat real food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

Let's dissect this a little. What is real food? Minimally processed, easily recognisable, familiar ingredients. Not too much? Listen to your satiety cues. You don't have to eat if you're not hungry. The clock shouldn't dictate your meal times, your hunger should. A good rule of thumb is to eat when you're hungry and to eat until 80% full. Mostly plants? Load up on greens – very few people wouldn't benefit from this advice.

Nutrition is complicated, but by eating real food you lay a good foundation and set yourself up for success. Don't deprive yourself. Restriction only leads to obsession. Add more good stuff and it'll automatically leave less room for food that doesn't serve you.



### 4. Movement.

Here we go. We got to the movement section. As mentioned above, only 1/5th of the population gets adequate movement in. Formal exercise is not something that our ancestors used to do. Can you imagine a human from the Palaeolithic era setting aside some time to run around with no purpose? Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it?

I'm not saying that we are the same nowadays as 1000s of years ago, but fundamentally our bodies haven't changed that much. We are designed to move. To move naturally and constantly.

Couple of things for movement:

- Avoid sitting for more than 30min at a time
- Stretch
- Take the stairs, park at a further parking spot
- Go on walking meetings and walk when you're taking phone calls. There are few things that can beat the productivity that is created by movement!
- Make your environment movement friendly – have a pull up bar in the doorway, resistance bands laying around, maybe even invest in a walking/standing workstation

It's all about the little things. They add up. Small distinctions make a massive difference. If you do the aforementioned things, 'formal' exercise becomes just a nice addition.







## 5. Routines.

Having routines helps you trigger actions that align with your goals. We are creatures of habit and we should use routines to our advantage.

Create a morning routine where you give time for yourself to get going. That means no screentime and any distractions – journal, read affirmations, stretch, maybe have a coffee making ritual...

Same thing at night – find some quiet time for yourself, wind down, have some tea. Our brain is constantly wired, we are making a lot of decisions every day. Automating as many of them as possible would make your life much easier.

## 6. Environment

Probably the easiest one to take care of. You only need to do it once and you're all set.

Autoimmunity and endocrine system disruptors such as industrial chemicals from cleaning products, personal care goods, pollution, poor water quality. The list is endless. The biological load that we receive from the outside is overwhelming. No wonder people are getting sick. We're fighting an uphill battle!

How to optimise your environment?

- Opt for chemical free products around the house (ewg.org is a great place to start).
- Have a good water filtration system. Reverse Osmosis (RO) systems are affordable and effective. Don't forget to add mineral salts or mineral solutions to the water since RO process strips the water of minerals.
- Protect yourself from pollution with a face mask.

Those are the easy basics that make a huge difference.

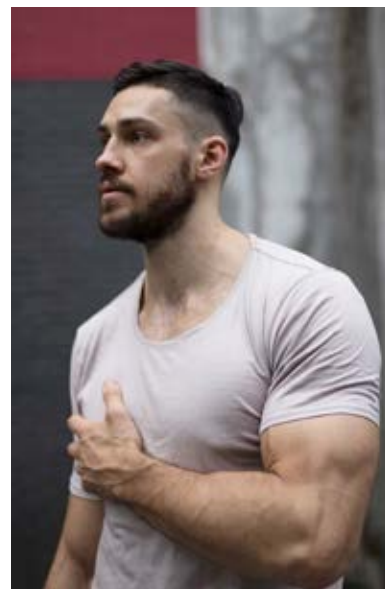
Once you have these six categories in place – you've got your bases covered and you can experiment with technologies that might improve your quality of life by a couple percent. Always go for the low-hanging fruit first. There are simply no shortcuts. I will cover more advanced wellness strategies in the next issue.

Remember the question at the beginning of the article? **The secret to feeling great is being able to show up in life at 100%.** These strategies are going to help you do just that.

You don't know how good you can feel, until you do... Feeling sub-par and normalising it is a choice. Make a smarter choice, implement these strategies and live a better quality life.

*About the author: Aurimas Juodka is a Health and Performance Consultant. He specialises in helping people excel in life physically, mentally and spiritually. Aurimas takes people who are busy, neglecting their health, not sleeping, stressed, etc. to a place where they're confident, have more energy, feel better, and as a byproduct can excel in any area of their life.*

[www.wellwithaj.com](http://www.wellwithaj.com)







# A delightful cocktail of royal and rustic

*by Aparna Sharma*

Pollachi is a destination which makes you believe in magical reality. I often wonder how some places can be magical and realistic. Having spent most of my life in a city, waking up amongst greenery to the sound of birds

singing is far stretched from my everyday reality but I am happy to find destinations which are a welcoming, surreal break for me.

Since I was born in Coimbatore which is a city in South India, Pollachi is not a novel destination for me. I have been there many times to visit my grandparents but I was pleasantly surprised to see Pollachi through The Papyrus Itineraries. I found them on Instagram and after going through their feed and website, I got in touch with them because I was very impressed with their work towards responsible tourism. They customised a two-day itinerary for me based on my requests.

My day started in Negamam, we went to visit the weavers and witnessed the colourful yarn get converted into exquisite saris. Despite the hardships faced, it was very surprising to meet this small community of weavers taking so much pride in their craft. They entertained me into their houses and everybody I met offered me something to drink, their attitude towards life and contentment towards their craft left a lasting impression on me. These are the travel stories which make me wanderlust for more – it's always the people and the culture which I enjoy the most during my travels.

After we said our goodbyes to the weavers,





we went to watch a couple demonstrate how they make beautiful decorative products using palm leaves. It was fascinating watching him make beautiful decors of different shapes and colours, using palm leaves. I wished my daughter was with me. She is very creative and would have definitely enjoyed watching the process. He made us a deer, a parrot, a fish and a flower that we carried back as souvenirs. The leaves were painted in bright pink, yellow, purple and green, which added a fun character to the finished products.

My mind was constantly thinking of all the places I could use these in my house back in Thailand, so I happily went ahead and bought some more to take back with me. Our energy was soon drained out in the summer heat but soon came my favourite part – it was time for lunch.

“I love every opportunity to connect with Mother Earth and spend some quality time listening to her birds, walking on her fields and viewing all the splendid colours she turns into during sunset. I am so happy that The Papyrus Itineraries turned my wish into a reality!”

I checked into Shenbaga Vilasam and they had prepared a simple local vegetarian meal for me. The property was timeless and stunning, and it instantly took me back to a bygone era. I have always loved culture and heritage, so seeing this regal farmhouse decorated with the Aathangudi tiles and the simple yet characteristic courtyard in the centre literally made me feel like I had entered a time machine. Aathangudi is a small town in Tamil Nadu, India which is very popular for beautiful handmade tiles.

The room was extremely spacious, I had enough space to stretch and do my yoga. My room had a separate entrance area and a dressing room.





All that space to myself made me feel like a Zamindari lady. Zamindars were land owners who collected the revenue of a district during Mughal and British rule in India. The Indian government abolished the title in 1956. I absolutely enjoyed my stay and experience at Shenbaga Vilaasam and the dedicated caretakers took much care of me.

Later, Pravin, the founder of The Papyrus Itineraries, drove me to Puravipalayam in the evening to experience a beautiful sunset. As our car came to a halt, we walked up to a humongous Banyan tree that houses an ancient temple inside. The landscape around was breathtaking and it is an ideal setting for anybody who wants to try sunset photography. The filtered light falling through the tree is lovely to try some portraits too.

Back in my room at Samathur after a sumptuous meal at Coco Lagoon, I slept like a queen in my huge bed. I was all alone in the property that night and there was no WiFi but I had a book and Netflix for company.

I got up in the morning and went for a Bullock cart ride to a lake for birdwatching. It was quite an exhilarating experience but one has to make sure to hold on tightly. Later, I ventured out to say hi to the livestock at the farm. It was truly endearing to feed the animals and cuddle them.

This was a truly a yoga journey to remember, as yoga for me, is not only my practice on my mat; it is also the life I choose to live off my mat. Pollachi is not a novel destination for me. I have been there many times to visit my grandparents but I was pleasantly surprised to see Pollachi through The Papyrus Itineraries.

You can find more stunning pictures and other details of Pollachi on: <http://www.thepapyrusitineraries.in>

#### Shenbaga Vilaasam

<http://thepapyrus.in/index.php/zamin-samathur/?fbclid=IwAR2wscvCpqljh2UL3i1HiHAFz4nF9gqP4npzZWSuc9lZigKVnrn5pIqpxq0>

#### Papyrus Itineraries

<http://www.thepapyrusitineraries.in/>





# Pu Chai – the music amidst Bangkok's traffic noise

by Nanticha Ocharoenchai (Lynn)



Being eight minutes late than I normally was to the bus stop wasn't an ideal situation for me. Eight minutes in Bangkok meant two more hours of being stuck in rush hour traffic. As I waited with a big frown forming on my face, music flowed through the air behind me and into my ears. Almost instantly, I felt a certain vibe of calmness, which had reversed my growing scowl and turned it into an internal smile. It was the music of Pu Chai na Pattalung.

As he finished a song, he picked up his harmonica to continue with another one. "Our country Thailand is a beautiful place. We have everything and also cobras in our toilets; No one else has that," he sung. By this time, those who have given him their loose change may have just stayed to enjoy his music, rather than catch a cab – which by the way, would still be stuck at a stagnant red light.

I felt like it was only right, that I spoke to him and ask about his story. Afraid that he might have been lost in

his own music, I signalled him with a wave and asked if we could talk. I told him I would be back by the next day, and he simply smiled and told me he'd be there. And there he was the next day, in the same spot, a guitar in his hands and a harmonica on his lips. The moment we made eye contact, he gave me the same smile, but continued playing his music. I approached him again, this time, hinting my need for conversation. He stopped playing his music, and greeted me keenly. Just before we started, he said, "Hold on," and took a swig from the bottle of beer beside him on the paved footpath, as if to prepare for my long set of questions.

The former freelance teacher began playing music during the Thai era of rebels, a period of anti-government protests and searching for the meaning of life. This was during the time of the civil uprising in Thailand, when the spread of communism came by and numerous university students were killed as a result of fighting for democracy. 'Songs for life', or pleng puer

cheewit in Thai, grew more common as people started questioning the reason for why they go work in offices and get paid in cheques.

"Back then, we would protest against the Japanese by refusing to conform to their culture and influence. That is unlike the present, where perhaps you would protest against the Americans, right before you enter KFC," Pu Chai said.

Pu Chai originally started as a pianist, mentions Shakopsky's classic music. But when asked if that was his artistic inspiration, he replied that it was mostly a good family background, environment, and his eagerness to learn.

"My family is actually in Illinois right now. We came out of hiding in the forest in 1989, after collecting mushrooms for a really long time," he said. He then emigrated from the United States, to return to his homeland after almost a decade to start his music career with a desire to create conceptual art.

"Music is like a journey of thoughts, but kids these days ruin it. When we make music, we have to read newspapers to know what to sing about – whether corruption, sex slavery, or freedom.





Now it's just \*strums guitar\*  
"oh you know how much I love you..."  
all the time," Phu Chai sang in a tune.

"To write about the beach, you have to sleep at the beach. To write about whores, you have to sleep with whores," he shares his wisdom. "Don't do philosophy – you'll become mad," he advised. He graduated with a PhD in Philosophy from Illinois Southern University.

He had lived in the US for almost 10 years, before circling the globe and bringing his music along to share with others. Now, he is part of a group called Gypset, which consists of over 3,000 people from countless countries that wander around without thoughts on settling down. His plan for next year is to get a motorbike and ride through the US, and "find a good place to die". He also claims to own a resort in Pai, where he is currently based, and offers art therapy to visitors. Admittedly, that is not something you would expect from a street musician.

"Once, I returned from France at around 3am in the morning, and stood at the bus stop to adjust my watch. A freshman walked by, touched me by the shoulder, handed me 20B and told

me, 'Keep fighting, pal.' Well, thank you sir," Pu Chai said. "People don't know I was in Chiang Mai yesterday, and flew in from Krabi this morning. They don't know what I do, but when they see me by the street, they look down on me. They don't listen to the lyrics when I play 'Where have all the flowers gone'. They know McDonald's and their French fries, but they don't understand my lyrics." This shows a part of Thailand that is overlooked by many, the subtle racism that is always invisible, yet always present.

"We Thais classify without realising. You will never hear an Isaan student in Chulalongkorn speak Isaan, because they are ashamed. When you go to 7/11, you belittle the employees. Our society is that way, and that's why the new generation is so weak. If I buy just a soda, they'd give me looks; but if I get a big brunch set, they'd treat me well. If a farang gets a beer, that's fine; but if I do the same, I'd be judged," Pu Chai explains. "Sometimes people walk by, and they'd say, 'Don't give him change, he'll use it to go buy beer.' Then I'd think to myself, 'I prefer Jack Daniel's.'"

Another issue that the singer addresses about Thai society is our tendency to follow trends.

*"We actually already know who we are and why we do what we do,*

*but why does it have to be determined for us what we become and how we dress?" Pu Chai puts up a question. "In the present, it is a load of fashion and a lack of self-discovery.*

When Eat Am Are was popular, everyone lined up to eat there. I once asked why it was so. Well, just because."

In the crowd of Bangkokians waiting for the bus – half, eyes glued to the traffic and the other half, eyes on their phones – the nomadic musician stood out like a black sheep. Besides the way he looked and the clothes he wore, the sound of his voice and the rhythm of his guitar rose above the constant noise of the motorcycle brakes and car horns.

As if he had been waiting his entire life to talk about it, he continued, "Why do you need to go to school? Some women just graduate, get married, have kids, and get a body repair so their husbands will still love them. That's all to life. You make money and you're scared of death. Have you ever seen snow? Have you seen the beautiful dewdrops at Phu Gradung? Have you seen all of Thailand? Have you seen the bright spirit of the market in the morning?





Is there anything you've seen at all? Their lives are just drowned – getting cheques, going to the mall, eating luxurious meals, and buying expensive cars is one kind of happiness, or having children, growing old, and having visits from your grandchildren. But there is no discovery.”

*“Everyone does things for their own happiness. I sing to make me happy. When I sing, it brings me to the days I scooped snow for six dollars, to the rice paddies in the countryside, and to my place in Bangkok. It makes me miss it.” He then adds, “We are lost in the manmade happiness that has created a society*

*with made-up traditions that make up a culture. Because of that, we forget to teach the new ones to explore the outside world.”*

Just as I was about to ask him about his thoughts on the Thai education system, it seemed as if he had read my mind, because he then began, “Standing by the street, I see these people yelling out, ‘Three route 36 buses are here.’ Don’t you think other people see that already? ‘It’s raining. Be careful, the road is slippery,’ they like to say. This is why Thai people can be dumb. There are signs, but no one reads them. This is the stupidity of our education system. Your do-good actions have bad effects. With the information desk, all these people ask how to go to the noodle shop or the photocopy machine.

They don’t find out by themselves or even think for themselves. We need to change the education system.

My goal in life is to burn down the Education Ministry, but I’m scared they’ll rebuild it. The world has much to offer, but no one learns about it. We have teachers that don’t teach, but teach you how to memorise. ”

Despite all the flaws he has listed about Thailand, Pu Chai still believes his country is a wonderful home.

*“Even when the economy is bad, I owe it to the public. If they have little, they give little and when they have more, they give more. It shows me that Thailand is actually a lovely place with lovely people.*

It’s just a shame that a bad society can make a human evil, while a good society can make the evil human,” he said.





## Northern exposure – PH2.5 and all...

*by Scott and Nori Brixen*

*Getting to the base of Wat Chalermprakiat was easy enough: a one hour drive north of Lampang on a newly paved road. From there, things got more challenging.*

First, we piled in the back of a 4WD songthaew for a perilous drive up a nearly unclimbable access road. Next, we trekked 25 minutes up an even steeper rocky trail to a small cluster of pagoda like temples. As we climbed up the wooden stairs to a viewing platform, the boys gasped with wonder.

It looked like the CGI backdrop for a martial arts movie: a cluster of white stupas perched atop a knifelike, grey karst ridge. How on earth had they had been built? Helicopters? Levitating monks? Kung fu pandas? Some of the stupas looked completely inaccessible, balanced on pinnacles well below the main ridge. Yet a new stupa was being built, its aluminium core gleaming like

a Russian Orthodox dome.

On a clear day, we probably could have seen all the way to the mountains separating Lampang province from Chiang Mai to the west and Phrae to the east. Here in Thailand's North, every valley is a province, every mountain pass a border. Even with the shroud of smoke, the views across the valley below were incredible. Instead of spoiling the views, the ghostly fingers curling around the stupas added an air of

mystery to the already magical scene.

"Let's just pretend the smoke is mist," Nori suggested, snapping photos. We had picked the wrong time to visit the North. Each year in April, before the rains come, farmers burn their fields to clear waste and fertilise the soil with ash. That's also when people illegally torch the forests to clear new land for crops. In 2018, the smoke cloud blanketing the North had been unusually thick and prolonged.







The air smelled like a campfire and the mountains were nearly obscured. Chiang Mai was ignominiously in the top 5 for most polluted cities globally.

During our seven day Northern Thailand loop, we drove 700 kilometres and passed through six provinces. But we spent most of our time exploring two of the Tourism Authority of Thailand's "Hidden Gem" provinces: Lampang and Nan. With beautiful and unique temples, exciting night

markets, delicious local food and great hiking, these two largely unvisited provinces were a blissful counterpoint to the tourist tsunami that has crashed on Chiang Mai. Both cities, I should add, can be reached by direct flights on low cost carriers from Bangkok.

Old Lampang was one of the prettiest towns in Thailand. From our hotel, we drove north over the Wang River into a neighbourhood of traditional wooden homes, temples and small shops. We took a requisite ride in a horse drawn carriage – one of Lampang's tourism icons. At Wat Phra Kaew Don Tao, I warned the boys that they needed to stay very quiet because this temple was patrolled by monks with sticks who whacked misbehaving children. Tai and Logan didn't fall for my ruse, but Drake and Kiva were silent and alert.

"Dad! A monk!" Drake whispered, zipping behind me. "But he doesn't have a stick?"

"No. The young ones are friendly," I deadpanned. "They only get sticks when they become full monks."

"Oh," he replied. That made perfect sense to him.

Lampang's "Walking Street" night market was one of Thailand's longest, with incredible street food stalls and a pleasantly random selection of clothes, toys, and bric-a-brac. Nori and I continued our research on khao soi, while the boys batted each other with balloons-on-sticks that someone had handed them. Early the next morning, we were the first customers at Khao Soi Islam, a deliciously different take on the ubiquitous dish.

The provincial capital of Phrae was 90 minutes away, in the next valley to the East. While Nori navigated the curving highway over the forested pass, I read to the boys from a Geology textbook: all about igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks. Throughout our six-month "Big Twip," we found that 'education time' was easiest to do in the car – mainly because the kids were trapped.







When we pulled over to switch drivers, the turnout was occupied by a policeman with a radar gun. He looked at us with confusion. Perhaps he thought we were turning ourselves in?

Phrae town felt very small and very slow. We drove into the centre of the old, walled city and parked next to the teal painted teak mansion of the “Prince of Phrae.”

The city boasts a number of these brightly coloured, ornately-trimmed, historic wooden homes. A woman selling snacks nearby encouraged us to visit the museum inside (“it’s free!”) but I knew that perusing the personal effects of long dead local nobility wouldn’t interest the boys. So I suggested a walk instead. A very hot walk to the Yom River, where there was absolutely nothing to see. Epic Dad fail. Even Nori was irritated with me. On to Nan.

The Nan River forms in the rugged, green mountains of Doi Phu Kha National Park and flows South in a thousand meanders through a 20 mile wide, heavily farmed valley. Nan town sat astride the river in the very heart of the province.

Given its setting, I had expected that Nan would be just like Pai: busloads of backpackers in fisherman’s pants, yoga retreats and banana pancakes. But Nan felt well off the foreign tourist trail. We kept looking for companies offering guided hikes or adventure tours and found few. Nan didn’t seem to realise that it could be the new hiking capital of the North.

At night, the area around Wat Phumin and the night market was thronged with happy people enjoying a late meal in the cool evening air. Nori ordered a cup of gatee – fresh coconut ice cream laced with swirls of the coconut’s white, gelatinous inner flesh.

I bought some marshmallow-slathered ‘Thai tacos’ for the boys and a few skewers of grilled pork (moo yang) for me. Lord will we miss Thailand’s night markets!

I couldn’t help noticing the large number of teenagers in tracksuits. It happened that the Thailand National Youth Games were being held in Nan that week. Groups of unusually tall girls giggled and snuck glances at handsome boys from other provinces. Knots of strutting boys tried their

best to get the girls’ attention without being too obvious. The flirtation was charmingly innocent – no cat calls, no bad language, no obscene gestures. If the same event were held in the USA, the coaches and minders would have gone crazy trying to keep boys and girls from getting drunk and hooking up.

It took three hours to drive from Nan to Phayao along some of the loneliest and prettiest highways we’ve experienced in Thailand. The scenery was overwhelmingly rural, with tiny, 7-11-less







villages and fields of rice and corn extending to the foot of the hazy mountains. There were new signs up everywhere exhorting farmers to “Love the forest, don’t burn it!” or to “Stop

burning!” but they weren’t working. Often we saw cones of grey smoke rising from new burns.

Phayao town sat on the Northeast shore of its namesake lake, a surprisingly large (but shallow) body of water whose Thai name, กว๊านพะเยา, suggested a certain swampiness. An attractive row of restaurants and hotels looked out to the water, where long-tail boats waited to take local tourists on short cruises. A bicycle path curved along the shoreline and various beautification projects were underway. I liked Phayao immediately, and would have liked to stay for a few nights. But we had to return to Chiang Mai that evening. Thankfully, we had enough time for several unbelievable 50B bowls of Northern curry noodles at Khao Soi Saeng Phian.

Beyond the big cities of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai and the Thai Dharamsala that is Pai, Thailand’s North had heaps of what backpackers claimed to want: authentic culture as yet undiluted by foreign tourists, high

mountain ranges, phenomenal food and disarming hospitality. Even with all the smoke, we found Lampang and Nan to be true “Hidden Gems.” I see us returning to these cities in time – perhaps as retirees!



*About the author: Two Twins Twavel Scott & Nori are avid travellers and knowledge seekers who have travelled to 110 plus countries across all 7 continents. Now they’re sharing their wanderlust with their two sets of twinboys, Tai, Logan, Drake and Kiva. Follow their travels at: [www.twotwinstwavel.com](http://www.twotwinstwavel.com)*



# Varee Chiangmai International School



**Varee Chiangmai International School**

Catering for all ages, from Pre Nursery to Year 13 students, equipping them with an international British education for university and the adult world.

**www.vcis.ac.th Tel: +66-5314-0232 Ext.751 Email: [interadmin@varee.ac.th](mailto:interadmin@varee.ac.th)**





# The pungency of ginger

*by Karla Walter*

Thailand and SE Asia has a long history of using some of the most wonderful vegetables, herbs and spices grown for medicinal purposes. One such vegetable or spice is ginger.

The discussion at times debates if ginger is a spice or vegetable. Ginger is a vegetable according to the University of California Davis, because it is the root of a ginger plant. In 100 grams (g) of fresh ginger root you will find: 79 calories, 17.86g of carbohydrates, 3.6g of dietary fibre, 3.57g of protein, 0g of sugar, 14mg of sodium, 1.15g of iron, 7.7mg of vitamin C, 33mg of potassium, other nutrients found in ginger are: vitamin B6, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, folate, riboflavin and niacin.

Fresh or dried ginger can be used to flavour foods and drinks without adding unnecessary salt or sugar. Since it is often consumed in such small amounts, ginger does not add significant quantities of calories, carbohydrate, protein, or fibre. Whichever way you look at it, ginger is something that all kitchens must have! One more thing to add, when you crystallise ginger, you now turn it into a candy. That is another category all together, in this article I am going to focus on the health benefits not the sweet/sugar product.

Indians and Chinese are believed to have produced ginger as a tonic root for over 5000 years to treat many ailments, and this plant is now cultivated throughout the humid tropics, with India being the largest producer. Ginger was used as a flavouring agent long before history was formally recorded. It was an exceedingly important item of trade and was exported from India to the Roman Empire over 2000 years ago, where it was especially valued for its medicinal properties. Ginger continued to be a highly sought-after commodity in Europe even after the fall of the Roman Empire, with Arab merchants controlling the trade in ginger and other spices for centuries. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the value of a pound of ginger was equivalent to the cost of a sheep. By medieval times, it was being imported in preserved form to be used in sweets. Queen Elizabeth I of England is credited with the invention of the gingerbread man, which became a popular Christmas treat.

Ginger was mentioned again in Asian medical books 2,000 years ago and we know that it has been incorporated in about half of all multi-item prescriptions in oriental medicine for thousands of years. Fresh ginger, among oriental physicians, is reputed to be a good remedy for vomiting, coughing, abdominal distension and fever, whereas the processed (steamed and dried) ginger is used for abdominal pain, lumbago and diarrhoea. Africans drink ginger root tea as an aphrodisiac; women in New Guinea eat the dried root as a contraceptive. In India, children are given fresh ginger tea for whooping cough.



In oriental medicine a distinction is made between fresh ginger root which is said to be better for treating colds and causing sweating and dried ginger thought to be more suitable for treating respiratory and digestive disorders. Be careful not to increase ginger when you already have strong cold/flu symptoms, the properties of ginger will prolong the cold as it locks it into the body. Use at the very first sign of a cold/flu. Ginger is frequently used in conjunction with other foods to harmonise and blend the ingredients in cooking which might otherwise be rather hard on the digestive system.

At least 115 constituents in fresh and dried ginger varieties have been identified by a variety of analytical processes. Gingerols are the major constituents of fresh ginger and are found slightly reduced in dry ginger, whereas the concentrations of shogaols, which are the major gingerol dehydration products, are more abundant (Jolad et al. 2005) in dry ginger than in fresh ginger. At least 31 gingerol-related compounds have been identified from the methanolic crude extracts of fresh ginger rhizome.

The recognised modern day uses of ginger are as a culinary root, especially in far eastern cuisine's and the stems crystallised in candy. Medicinally it has been traditionally used by many cultures for indigestion, flatulence, nausea and poor circulation. Ginger is warming and stimulating, promoting gastric secretion and aiding the absorption of food. It is excellent for easing indigestion, colic and flatulence. A piece of ginger chewed (crystallised stem ginger will do as well) is effective for travel sickness.

A little ginger may also help morning sickness. It also has a stimulating effect on the heart and circulation, so it is good for cold hands and feet. It has a warming expectorant action on the lungs, dispelling mucous and phlegm. Ginger tea is good for colds and flue; it causes eliminative sweat. It is even thought that ginger juice or tea massaged into the scalp stimulates hair growth.

Researches have proven that ginger is better than Dramamine, a common motion sickness drug, at suppressing motion induced nausea. In several tests conducted on people it has been proven to be more effective than Dramamine with an added bonus that ginger does not make you drowsy, because it works in the gut and not in the brain. It is not an uncommon sight in Hong Kong, the people whose livelihood is on a boat, to see them chewing on some preserved ginger.

It has also been proven that ginger is a more potent anticoagulant than either garlic or onion. It more efficiently inhibits blood cells' synthesis of a substance called thrombozone that signals blood platelets to stick together as a first step in forming blood clots.

The more ginger used, the greater the effects, even though extremely small amounts also worked. The anticoagulant, or blood thinning compound, in ginger is gingerol which has a chemical structure amazingly like that of aspirin, the "modern" drug containing the anti-clotting compound.

Through further investigation and research ginger may also bring down drastically high blood cholesterol levels over the long term. The spice strongly offsets the cholesterol-raising effects of a high fat diet.

*As with all herbs and spices a little goes a long way. The body requires so little of these amazing culinary delights to aid in our overall health. Used in normal day to day cooking, know that you are giving yourself a gift of health.*

As a side note: I am so pleased to advise that finally, after a long period of time, my website is now up and running, there has also been a name change, [www.5seasonsliving.com](http://www.5seasonsliving.com) is available for my global audience. Thank you for your long term patience.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Health and Happiness

Karla Walter

[www.5seasonsliving.com](http://www.5seasonsliving.com)





# Bangkok Madam

## Chapter 2

### The Baking Class

by Minami

Every second Wednesday was the luncheon of the Bangkok Madam's Club. Actually it was not a club or any formal association, just a friends' gathering. They called it "the club" half-jokingly, since it was a bit embarrassing to make a rule of getting together, let alone to refer to themselves as Bangkok Madam's. But calling it a club somehow disguised the girlish quality of a regular outing with friends. Yet Mitsuko couldn't deny – though she never said it explicitly – that she looked forward to the gathering with the eagerness of a little girl.

The usual attendees were Asako, Yurie, Mika and Mitsuko. Occasionally, a couple of other friends joined them, but those four stuck with the plan month after month. After a year of lunches, they had become the kind of friends who could say almost anything without hesitation, and then could be heard laughing like teenagers at whatever restaurant they chose.

Asako and Mitsuko had met Yurie through a Japanese baking class the previous year. Asako had mentioned the class to Mitsuko, but it was Mitsuko's idea that the two of them should sign up. She had only recently arrived in Bangkok, and she wanted to get to know more of the Japanese community here, but she was hesitant to attend the class alone. Although Asako was not so keen on the class – she didn't eat sweets – she surrendered easily to Mitsuko's suggestion. Asako was always looking for new diversions. "Okay, if you say so, Mitsuko-san. It might be fun." Asako signed them up for the next twelve-week class.

In normal circumstances – that is, if they had been in Japan – it would have been a bit odd for Mitsuko to ask Asako, the wife of Mitsuko's husband's subordinate and a woman one generation younger. Plus, it would generally be considered inappropriate for the wife of the No 2 man in the company to become friends with any particular wife among all the company wives. Mitsuko was careful not to be seen as showing favouritism to Asako or appearing overly friendly. But Mitsuko liked Asako. Asako was always upbeat, and her company cheered Mitsuko who needed a friend in this strange land. Besides, Asako's breezy maturity made nothing of their age difference, and she had been in Bangkok a year longer and seemed happy to help.

When Asako first mentioned the baking class, Mitsuko was surprised there was a baking class only for Japanese students, taught by a Japanese teacher. This is Bangkok. How



could such an exclusive class exist?

Then she thought perhaps it was a casual kind of home-based class for adults, which was becoming fashionable in Japan. She remembered reading articles in Japanese ladies' magazines at her hair salon with titles like "My self-fulfilment after mid-life" or "If I can start a small business, so can you." These articles introduced housewives who were teaching their neighbours or friends, usually just four or five women, basic classes like flower arranging or table manners or some kind of ethnic cooking (dishes they had learned during their husbands' overseas assignments). They taught these classes at home, once or twice a week. The suggestion of the articles was that these ventures were simply to make the woman feel good about herself (Mitsuko remembered one lady said she sought "self-enlightenment") as well as to make a small amount of pocket money.

On the first day of the baking class, Mitsuko discovered her guess was half right. Yes, the students were all from the neighbourhood. But of course, 90% of Japanese expats lived in the same area along Sukhumvit, which was a main road of Bangkok. And, yes, the teacher was a housewife. But Mitsuko quickly discovered that Kayoko-sensei was quite a businesswoman.

This was not a friends-get-together-to-learn class, but an organised school. Kayoko-sensei - a middle-aged, chubby lady – rented one unit in the same apartment building where she lived, and this was where she taught classes every morning,





9 to 11:30, Monday through Friday. Each class met once a week for three months, and there were courses offered for three levels: beginners, intermediate, and advanced.

To Mitsuko's surprise, there were twelve students in her beginner class. She quickly did the math. Does this mean there are sixty Japanese ladies taking classes here every week?

Since the baking class was not advertised in the Japanese community papers that were freely distributed in the city, but was only promoted through word-of-mouth, Mitsuko had presumed the class would be small. But she didn't yet realise how close-knit the Japanese community in Bangkok was. Word-of-mouth was the most effective way to advertise, because a Japanese woman was much more likely to join a class if someone she knew had already taken it. Mitsuko would later learn that many of her acquaintances, including Yukari, the most senior wife of the Mitsumaru Thailand office, had also taken the baking class.

After a few classes, Mitsuko had to admit that the teacher's "melt-in-your-mouth-but-not-too-sweet" Japanese style cake was actually delicious. Mitsuko enjoyed all kinds of international cuisine to be found in the cosmopolitan city of Bangkok, but she had never taken to sweets. Thai or European or Middle Eastern desserts were all too sweet for her. One bite literally gave her a headache. But Kayoko-sensei's cake had a delicate balance of sweetness, with rich chocolate, or tangy citrus, or creamy cheese mixed in. The teacher's sponge cake was soft and moist and decorated beautifully with whipped

cream, fruits, or natural flowers.

Still. One good cake recipe isn't enough on which to build a business, is it?

The recipes were printed on a home printer in an amateur-looking booklet. The cover said "CONFIDENTIAL" in capital letters. When she handed it out, Kayoko-sensei told the class not to show the recipes to anyone outside the class. (Asako was good at mimicking the teacher's authoritarian manner and stern face, saying, "You must not show the recipe to anyone!" while pointing a finger at Mitsuko. This later became an old joke between them.)

Kayoko-sensei not only taught the class but also sold kitchenware – Tupperware cake holders, cake knives, spatulas, and paper doilies for decorating cakes. At the end of every class, she spread the items out on the table. This was always followed by awkward silence as the students debated in their minds whether they could get away without buying anything. The items were priced 10% more than the market price. Not outrageous, but still rather profit-oriented for a housewife's hobby.

This is definitely not a hobby, but a serious business, Mitsuko decided. If it was a housewife's hobby, she would price it the same as the market price, because she would not seek to make a profit off her friends (would she?).

Mitsuko had little interest in the kitchenware as she thought about her tiny kitchen in her Tokyo apartment. They would only take up extra space, and Mitsuko rarely baked anything in her oven.

Still, she bought some small items occasionally. Something forceful in the teacher's manner compelled her to give in. Mitsuko didn't like it, but it was easier to go along than to fight against it. It was just a matter of 500B (\$15) or so, anyway.

Asako was different. She never bought anything. She simply said she did not want what she did not need.

One day after the lesson, Kayoko-sensei laid out the kitchenware as usual for sale. But on that day she stood with her back to Asako and, to Mitsuko's disbelief, she said to Asako, "I'm not showing them to you, since you never buy anything anyway." There was a hint of joke in her voice, yet there was nothing cute or funny about the chubby old lady's juvenile act.

Asako shrugged her shoulders like an American. She didn't seem to care a bit. But Mitsuko, who was standing next to her, panicked at the affront. What should I do? Is Asako okay? Is she not hurt? Isn't this a kind of public humiliation? Should I say something to protect my young friend? Or should I laugh loud to make the situation a real joke? Neither seemed appropriate.

The rest of the class ignored it, pretending they did not hear or see anything. Then Mitsuko caught another student, Yurie, rolling her eyes and giving a knowing smile. This mercifully saved Mitsuko from further panic.



That was how the three became friends. Asako, Yurie, and Mitsuko had lunch together on that day, and somehow it became a regular thing from then on. Mika joined them soon after. She did not attend the class, but was a friend of Yurie's and quickly fit right in with the group.

During one Bangkok Madam's Club lunch, long after the baking class had come to an end, they were remembering that scene with the kitchenware, and Mika asked, "How come you put up with such an arrogant and bossy lady?" Mika's husband worked for the United Nations, nothing to do with the Japanese expat community, and Mika herself had lived and worked overseas before she got married. Was it London or New York? Mitsuko couldn't remember. She had noticed that Mika (though Japanese) seemed curious and amused by much of what the Japanese expat community - especially the corporate wives - did in Bangkok.

Asako repeated that familiar shrug. "Oh, she was okay, actually. That didn't bother me. She knew how to bake a cake."

"But that was a very childish thing to do. Why didn't you say anything? It's not like you."

"Thank you very much!" Asako frowned a bit at what could have been taken as a slight, but Mika ignored it and went on.

"Why was she so popular though? I know quite a few women who took the class. Was she beautiful?"

"Hmmm, I wouldn't say she was ugly, but as for beautiful, that's not a word for her." Asako was quick to recover her normal breezy attitude. "As for her popular classes, I guess Japanese ladies like someone bossy. They want to be told what to do. They like to follow whoever tells them what to do."

Mitsuko was about to open her mouth to protest Asako's unreasonable comment when Yurie broke into laughter.

"Asako-chan, you'd really better watch your mouth. None of those ladies from the baking class will ever talk to you again."

"Well, they never talk to me anyway."

Asako sipped a fragrant espresso, no sugar, no cream, without any expression on her face. Mitsuko couldn't read her mind. She didn't know if her young friend really didn't care what others thought or was just good at pretending. She guessed that Asako's tough expression was a protection against loneliness. Mitsuko felt like embracing Asako's still-girlish shoulder. Only she didn't. That was too touchy for Japanese.

Asako was going on. "Her yummy cake was her weapon. She was ver-r-r-y confident: 'If you want to bake a yummy cake, follow me-e-e-e!'" She raised her index finger up in the air like a tour guide leading a group. "That's what they liked, I think." She took another sip of her strong black coffee.

"Hmmm," Mika nodded. "Maybe I should sign up for her class. Not for the baking, since I'm hopeless in the kitchen, but for lessons on how to do that follow me-e-e! part. That would be a very useful skill to have. When does the next class start?"

"It won't," said Yurie, though she was hesitant to bring up the topic.

"Why not?"

"She's gone."

"Gone where? What do you mean?"

"Her husband's Bangkok assignment finished. She went back to Japan."

"Oh..." Mika made a pretend disappointed face. "I missed a chance to build my charisma, then." She sipped her coffee with milk, no sugar. "She must have been sorry to give up her kingdom of baking classes."

"Actually, she lingered on for a while," said Yurie, "even after her husband's assignment had finished. But she did not have a proper visa to stay on. I heard she didn't have a work permit in the first place."

An unusual silence fell over their conversation. Always at their table, funny gossip was "in," but unpleasant gossip was "out." No one said it aloud, but it was their rule. Mitsuko could feel that Yurie was regretting saying things she shouldn't have and that Mika was feeling guilty for starting the conversation in the first place.

Asako broke the awkward silence, trying to lighten the atmosphere. "I'm sure she is continuing her lucrative baking business in Japan!"

Yurie gave Asako a sisterly smile. But then Mitsuko caught a second smile of doubt.

Mitsuko could see the difficulty of pursuing the same baking business in Japan. Her cake was delicious because it was in Bangkok. Very few shops served Japanese-style sweets, so the cake had rarity value. But in Japan, there were tons of sweet shops which could serve cakes as good as hers or better. She would be just one of many, nothing special. Her charisma, if she had any, worked only here in Bangkok.

Also, ordinary Japanese wives had no time to take a twelve-week baking class. Only those with plenty of time and money could have afforded the class, and they would rather just buy their cakes, Mitsuko thought. It would be very difficult to make the baking class successful, let alone lucrative. Yurie's smile revealed what Mitsuko had just now understood: that the baking class empire was just the teacher's short-term dream-come-true while she was here in Bangkok.

Biting into a dry cocoa-powdered cake, Mitsuko tried to remember the chubby lady's bossiness, but at that moment, only her shining smile drifted in. Crumbles of cocoa cake tasted like sand in her mouth, and she missed Kayoko-sensei's rich, moist dark chocolate cake. Short-lived or not, Kayoko-sensei's dream had come true. She had made the best use of her temporary life in Bangkok.

"What are you thinking, Mitsuko-san?" Mika broke into her thoughts. "You look to be contemplating something very serious." Mika said this with a lilt in voice, so that Mitsuko would know she was only teasing.

Mitsuko fumbled for an equally light answer. "Oh, nothing... I just miss Kayoko-sensei's chocolate cake."

A smile spread across Mika's face, as if a good idea had just occurred to her. "Mitsuko-san, why don't you take over Kayoko-sensei's baking business? How about 'Mitsuko's Japanese Cooking Class?' You are a very good cook." Mika turned to look at the others. "Yurie can help. She is great at presenting food beautifully. And Asako-chan. Hmmm. You and I can help market the class in English." All of a sudden,





Mika was very enthusiastic about her entrepreneurial idea. “We will go for international customers, not just for Japanese...”

“Oh, that’s a great idea!” Asako chimed in before Mitsuko said anything. “Japanese food is very popular in Bangkok, but I’ve never heard of a Japanese cooking school. It might actually be possible. And it will be fun! A Bangkok Madam’s Club endeavour!” As soon as those last words left her mouth, Asako dropped her shoulders gloomily. “Oh, I wish we could. But we Mitsumaru wives are not allowed to work here.”

“But why not?” Mika’s own enthusiasm appeared quickly dampened. “I don’t think the UN has that kind of rule.”

“We are just supposed to support our husbands ‘behind the curtain.’” Asako held up the two fingers of each hand like quotation marks. “Being a good wife and wise mother should be our total focus.” In contrast to her usual bravado, Asako sounded feeble. Then she exploded. “Sometimes all these Japanese company rules make me crazy!” She shook her fists up and down like a child throwing a tantrum. Her exaggerated gesture made the rest laugh, and Asako broke into laughter despite herself.

Even as she was laughing, Mitsuko was wondering if she should try to make something more out of her expat life. Her husband’s assignment could be another two or three years. What should she do with herself during that time? She had no idea what she could do. She did not even know what she would like to do. Even if there wasn’t a company rule, Mitsuko wouldn’t dream of launching her own business. She could not imagine taking that kind of initiative in this foreign country (or even in Japan).

Supporting family was her endeavour, if she could call it as such. She didn’t think Mitsumaru had brainwashed her, but being a good wife and wise mother was important to her. She wanted to provide abundant love and care for her family as they worked and studied in this alien land. And it was not as easy as she had expected it to be.

In truth, Mitsuko often felt she couldn’t even take care of herself, let alone her family. For the last year or so, she had been struggling just to live in Bangkok - learning enough of a new language just to survive, finding her way around, running her household in this unfamiliar city, bringing up children in a foreign culture, making friends, dealing with a maid and a driver. She had more than enough to deal with just tending to the daily chores. She often felt exhausted by the end of the day.

As she looked around the table at her friends, Mitsuko realised that the Bangkok Madam’s Club was one of the few things that brought her comfort in her expat life. She could breathe freely amongst these women, not as a wife, not as a mother, but as Mitsuko herself, who still had a little girl in her heart whom she had known all her life. After being Mitsuko at the Bangkok Madam’s Club, she felt refreshed and ready to resume her role in her family.

As the lunch came to an end that day, Mitsuko silently wished that none of these three women would leave Bangkok before she did. She wanted her own little group of Bangkok Madam’s to last as long as she was in Thailand.

---

To contact the author and find out more about Bangkok Madam please write to: [minamilove00@gmail.com](mailto:minamilove00@gmail.com)





# On the move again

*by Barbara Lewis*

**O**ur time in Bangkok is coming to a rapid conclusion, with a speed I feel I can't control. We will be saying goodbye shortly to our life overseas. Each of us has a story to tell and most of my story involves expat life, at least my married life.

The other day my husband and I figured out that since we have been married, 36 years, we have moved 22 times. Until we moved to Saudi Arabia I had never lived in any one house for more than two years except my family home. In Saudi we lived in one house for 5 years and I thought that was an amazing sign of stability.

I think that even as a child that I wanted to be an expat. My father had the opportunity to go to Libya in the early 70s and decided against it because there was very poor schooling for girls. Women in general were treated like chattel so my parents felt it would be an unhealthy environment so my Dad turned down the job. I remember being quite disappointed with this decision. When I was entering grade 11 I applied for a scholarship to go to Wales for my grade 11 year. I got the position but decided not to go because I didn't want to leave my boyfriend behind. My desire for an expat life began long ago even if I didn't have the courage to follow through with it until it became a shared goal of both my husband and myself.

My husband works for a big company and although

we would have loved to be here almost to his retirement, it is not to be. We are moving to the United States, which for us, being Canadian, is still a foreign assignment. Previously we lived in Bangkok for three years. I am ready to move on because once we get told we have to go I don't like to prolong the agony. We are saying goodbye to our life overseas as there is little to no chance within the company to go overseas again because of my husband's age. You could call it ageism but in fact the age restriction of 60 years exists in many countries, set by the governments of the respective countries. There are many things that I will miss about living in Asia, specifically Thailand and our life adventures overseas.

This is our last likely assignment overseas therefore and culminates 25 years of living away from North America. I will miss the opportunity to travel to all the exotic places we have been privileged to go, see and experience. Each place that we have lived has provided vivid memories to store and savour.

We started our overseas adventure and got the bug to work internationally during the two years we lived in Jakarta when my kids were just two and four. We had so much fun and made such good friends when we lived there. It wasn't all good, as every place has its challenges but the people and the culture were so wonderful that it made up for any and all of the challenges. We were struggling in our marriage at the time





and the space from well meaning family and friends gave us the opportunity to work it out how we saw fit instead of trying to please others around us. My parents came to visit us when we lived in Jakarta and they had a marvellous time getting to know little parts of the country. I learned to speak Bahasa Indonesian quite well and could converse with the people that worked for us as well as others in the community. The kids don't really remember much from that time but it was a great place to raise them for two years. We did a lot of physical activities and sports with other young couples small kids.

Indonesia is a country of over 18,000 islands. We visited as many as we possibly could. Both my husband and I became certified divers. One trip we went to Komodo Island (the land of the living dragons) and dove off its shores in an eight knot current. It had the most amazing soft coral I have ever had the privilege to witness; there has been nothing to match it since. Seeing the Komodo Dragons was another amazing experience. They may not be the mythical fire breathing

dragons but they certainly are huge measuring eight to ten feet in length and weighing 300-400 pounds. Their bite will kill you as it sets up bacteria that goes into your bloodstream and eventually kills whatever it bites. We also went to Bali – Kuta and Ubud and had very memorable relaxing holidays on white sand beaches. We were attacked by monkeys in the Monkey Forest of Ubud and bought all sorts of pop art in the surrounding towns. My husband and I got to travel with and live with a Dani tribe in the Baliem Valley of Irian Jaya or now Papua. For two weeks we lived in their huts, eating only sweet potato, learned about their culture and cultures of some of the other major tribes of Irian Jaya. This island has 832 living languages and is the most linguistically diverse place on earth. It was an amazing experience that we were so blessed to have.

Jakarta was the place of glamorous balls for expats and we went to so many

of them in one year it was considered a circuit. It was a great way to socialise with all sorts of different nationalities. Our children had almost celebrity status; our son was a beautiful Gerber baby white curly blonde hair and dark brown eyes and our daughter had sandy blonde ringlets (natural I might add) and looked like Shirley Temple. They got touched everywhere we went.

Warren, our son, liked the attention especially from the ladies and older men whom he saw as Grandpa but Alyssa, our daughter, didn't care for it and often asked me to make the people stop touching her. She and I were conscripted to model wedding and flower girl gowns for a magazine shoot. Her payment was a pink princess dress, which she loved.

Traffic, monsoons and flooding were horrible and something we had to learn to deal with but we loved living overseas so much it began our quest to have an international career once we returned to Canada. It took me five years to convince my husband and a job offer by Kuwait Santa Fe before our true adventure overseas started.

Next stop Kuwait, we learned all sorts of things about the Middle East: the food, the customs and the culture. The language was something I tried to learn but Arabic has very different sounds from English and other than learning rudimentary phrases in the 10 years we lived in the Middle East I never got past these.

We spent five years back in Calgary, Canada where my daughter finished her elementary education and my son got halfway through. They attended bilingual school. My son was keen for Kuwait because then he wouldn't have to speak French. They both attended a private international school that provided an American education. The four years they were in school there they were required to learn Arabic.







My daughter became quite skilled at it but my son never did. The curriculum for Arabic was mandated by the government. They knew nothing about teaching or learning a new language, so it was quite ineffectual. I tried hard to learn the language but Arabic is a very difficult language to learn. One always learns certain sayings like: 'enshalah' which sort of means 'maybe', another I liked was 'la' which means 'no' and it sounded like singing instead of being negative. It was great fun getting my Masters in Education and teaching at a couple of international schools there.

My children participated in activities that truly opened their worlds and their view of it. My daughter was involved with a dance company run by a retired professional British dancer. My daughter was gifted and did very well with the company. The shows they put on were so professional, they were amazing – productions like *Cats* with full costume and stage set-up. The travelling that we did from Kuwait was more conservative but it was an experience for the kids and us as parents. They learned how to behave in a country not their own which was in conflict from the time we arrived. They learned how to handle their fear when, for instance, we were in the air and saw US bombers going in to bomb Iraq on Dec. 17th 1998 during Operation Desert Fox and were forced to land in Beirut for a day before flying on to Austria. We all learned how to cope with the constant uncertainty and living with people who really did not want us there. We learned how to make friends fast and to trust that those friendships would last, which they have.

In Saudi Arabia we learned what it was like to live in fear all the time. We arrived just before 9/11 and it was amazing to participate in so many bomb scares, threats and terrorists events. My family fortunately was never directly involved other than the teaching I did at a school that was on the US consular grounds which would constantly get bomb

scares and threats.

We lived with heightened security that made our world very small. We learned what it was like to send our daughter at age 15 to boarding school and how much it tore at me to do so. We also learned what it was like to only hear about her school, challenges and triumphs instead of being physically present for her and later my son when he went to boarding school in Canada. We still dealt with some of the problems that occur in high school however we did everything from afar and sometimes were the last to know picking up the debris after the situation had exploded. My daughter had a serious accident on the ski slopes, which left her with a concussion. We only heard about it after she was admitted to hospital. My son's school failed to contact us at all when my son broke his arm mountain biking or when they decided to put him on very strong antibiotics for the presence of TB when he had been forced to have the live virus in the form of a vaccination given in Kuwait. The Canadian doctor didn't know what a BCG shot was so instead of believing my son and investigating, chose instead to simply put him on drugs that he never needed to take. Many parents complain about the teenage years but we didn't get to participate in the ups and downs of high school and all the changes they went through because they were at boarding school. For us boarding school was the choice for the best education they could get.

They both have lifelong friends and now looking back they would never give up the experience but it certainly had its ups and downs.

Both my husband and I worked for Saudi Aramco. I worked in training and development, which was new for me and put my Communication Undergraduate Degree to work as well as my teaching skills. It was definitely a more career focused time for me. We continued to travel to various



exotic places especially when our children returned from boarding school. Of course since we were both working and had to accommodate for other's schedules sometimes their vacations were spent in the camp. The vacation times for the boarding school kids usually only varied by a day or two so it meant that they could meet up with all their friends and party because none of them had jobs, they were not permitted to work so they had nothing but free time to indulge themselves. This was fun for them but not always for us. My husband and I made a conscious decision to leave Saudi Aramco so my husband could pursue a career with a more international company so that we could travel and live more places. Many people who work for Saudi Aramco spend their whole careers there and help their children and grandchildren get jobs with Aramco. We knew many people who had lived in Dhahran for more than 15 years. We were more interested in being expats that lived in different countries.

Our next foreign assignment was Bakersfield, California. This was the toughest place for me because although I had studied all about expatriation and repatriation during my undergraduate degree I never expected going to the United States would be such a hard adjustment.

Part of the reason it was difficult was because we didn't have a natural avenue into the community because both of our children were now in college so the parent/kid relationship that can quite often open doors to new friends didn't exist for the first time. I did eventually go back to do a professional certification in teaching and that did open some doors but not deep friendships that we had had in other countries. We muddled through our three years there, enjoying travelling all over California, the West coast and Western Canada. We had great vacations in the various wine counties of California, snow skiing wherever we could and camping on the beaches. Our stint in California allowed us to reconnect with North America and activities we like to do like hiking, skiing and camping.

We, next, returned to Indonesia but this time to Rumbai, Sumatra. Until we had lived and moved from Rumbai I did

not have a favourite but Rumbai was truly magical. We loved living in the jungle and all the flora and fauna that came along with it. We participated in all kinds of sporting activities and were in the best shape of our lives. It was a small group of expats that lived on the camp and we needed to be able to trust and rely on each other to get by.

Sometimes we felt like we were in each other's pockets but there was a true sense of belonging and being part of a community. As a community we did a great deal of things together; celebrating Halloween, Thanksgiving, Mardi Gras together to name a few. The whole community would show up on Friday night at the school to play a game of Ultimate.



Our kids were not with us but we were never left out; it was expected that the whole community would participate and everyone willingly did. We have lifelong friends from this location. The families assigned there were a special group of people. I worked as a substitute teacher and although the school was small; approximately 60 kids ages pre-K to eighth grade I was always very busy with work. We also had several groups that met multiple times a week or once week. Usually if you had an interest you wanted to pursue there were others willing to as well.

Once we were finished in the Middle East we said that we would never go back. I believe there is a saying "never say never" so as luck would have it we found our next assignment to be Erbil, Iraq. This was a unique assignment since things were still pretty stirred up in Iraq and although Erbil is considered Iraq it is actually part of Kurdistan.



The Kurds do not really consider themselves Iraqi but since most of the oil wealth is there Iraq wants Kurdistan to stay part of Iraq and not gain its independence.

We spent the first six months living in a hotel. We had two dogs that stayed with my parents until we moved into our villa. Erbil had a lot of security challenges. When we first got there we were followed around by security everywhere we went including grocery shopping. They carried AK47 assault rifles and looked exactly like what you would expect personal security to look like, very mysterious in black suits and dark glasses. Later, the company decided this wasn't necessary, thankfully however we did still have two security guards in each car with us. We didn't have drivers instead we had a car pool, which meant we had to book a driver, sort of like booking a taxi. It seems straightforward, but it was not, one of the quirky challenges of living in Erbil.

Erbil had four seasons which was really different for such an arid country. It got hot during the summer, reaching up to 40 degrees and as cool as -10 degrees Celsius in the winter. There wouldn't be snow in the city but there was in the mountains. Unfortunately, our stay did not last long. In 2014 we were up touring the Mar Mattai Christian Monastery (363AD) on Mount Maqlub when ISIS invaded Mosul only 20km away. By the middle of June our dogs and I were evacuated out of Erbil and my husband followed in July as things continued to get worse never to return. My husband went back to Erbil in October for a few days to pack up our belongings. We spent an interim period of 10 months in Houston until we got our next position, which was Angola. We were all packed to go, my husband had his work visa and we were just waiting for my clearance when we were told that we would not be going to Angola but instead to Bangkok. We felt it was a fair trade.

We have been here for four years and would have loved to stay four more however it is not to be. Since we moved back to Asia we have made sure to go to many of the Asian countries we didn't see before.

*It has been wonderful to travel to several islands in Thailand. Two favourites pop out: Koh Samet and Koh Tao. Both magical in their own way:*

*one for its beauty and close proximity and the other for its marine beauty. My favourite vacation was trekking in Bhutan. I almost got trampled by a herd of yaks but it was a terrific experience. I have loved having good well-priced healthcare.*

This has been a blessing as I have faced some physical challenges since I moved here. It has been great to live in Nichada Thani outside the city centre because it gave us the chance to have our dogs in an environment that was healthy for them. I will not miss the traffic or the time it takes to go a relatively short distance because of the gridlock. We have a Thai treasure we are taking with us – her name is Sassy and she is a Yorkie born here. Just like her human counterparts she is warm and friendly to everyone and everything she meets.

It is the people and the food of Thailand that I will miss most as there is nowhere better.





# Ageism in Thailand

by Johanna Stiefler Johnson



We live in a global society that heavily emphasises youth and beauty. Billboards across the world feature young faces with pristine white smiles; stereotypically stunning celebrities saturate the big screen; and old people are often disregarded as valid members of our communities. Ageism is defined by Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as "prejudice or discrimination against a particular age group especially the elderly."

**W**ith a rapidly increasing population size worldwide, and simultaneously a growing population of well-educated young people looking for work, employers have a larger pool to choose from than they had in the past. Therefore, young people are chosen for jobs more and more often, pushing older people to the side.

As the World Health Organisation indicates, "Ageism is widely prevalent and stems from the assumption that all members of a group are the same. Like racism and sexism, ageism serves a social and economic purpose: to legitimise and sustain inequalities between groups." This occurs even though "older workers are not necessarily less healthy, less educated, less skilful or productive than their younger counterparts."

Although many countries emphasise the importance of respecting one's elders, Thailand included, ageism nonetheless lingers in countless forms. One of the main places in which

ageism persists is in the workplace. I had the opportunity to interview two women who had firsthand experience with ageism in Thailand. These women prefer to withhold their identities for personal reasons, and I will refer to them as Ms Smith (age 56) and Ms Brown (age 68).

Smith arrived in Thailand with training as a teacher and practical experience as a translator, librarian, copy editor, and researcher. During her job search, she was met with blatant ageism in stipulations that applicants must be "under 30," along with sexism in the specification that applicants should be either male or female.

"These are jobs where no argument could be made that age or gender are in any way relevant," said Smith. "On the contrary, diversity and experience seem definitely to be an advantage, and yet I was eliminated already before I could apply."

Brown had a similar experience. Job applications often gave a certain age window, usually ending at 30 or 40, and because her age surpassed that she had no chance to even be considered. "If I have way more experience than you and we're going into the same job, you'll be the one that's chosen," she said, referring to my being in my 20s. More value is placed on youth than experience – especially for women. Consider the entertainment industry, for instance. While male actors' careers may continue long after they pass their middle age, regardless of their greying hair and appearing wrinkles, actresses rarely have the same experience. Instead, there is pressure for them to perpetuate their image of youth through cosmetic surgeries. Male actors are far more likely than women to continue to be cast in roles as, for example,



love interests. They are often paired with a woman much younger, though this is not as rampant as it was in the 90s. Even so, it is not uncommon for an older man to be cast with a young woman (i.e. *Pretty Woman*, *Silver Linings Playbook*, and *Seeking a Friend for the End of the World*), but if the roles are reversed, it is frequently only as a plot device in the film (i.e. *The Graduate* and *The Reader*). The point is that men's careers often continue unhindered as they age, but this usually is not the case for women.

"I think sexism and ageism – as it pertains to women – definitely play a big role," said Smith, "and I think all the stories coming out of the #MeToo movement are stark evidence of that. If you are a 56 year old man you are still considered a full-fledged member of society; if you are a woman you have to be 20 years younger for that kind of respect."

Both Smith and Brown referred to their experience as becoming "unseen" to society. Brown told a story of sitting at a restaurant with a young female coworker when they were approached by a young man. He spoke to her coworker without sparing Brown a glance. "He just talked to her," she said, "and I was totally invisible." She had to insert herself into the conversation to gain his acknowledgement. Brown credited this lack of attention to her appearance, stating that she realised this discrimination began to occur when her "looks were not as they were before." She said, "I think in any society, if visibly you're of no use to them, then you don't feel acceptable and that's not a nice feeling."

Ms Smith echoed a similar refrain when referring to her job search. "By the time I was 53," she said, "I had my Masters of Refugee Protection and Forced Migration Studies and spoke 6 languages fluently and had years of experience living overseas, but it was as if I had suddenly become invisible."

Instead of receiving respect for being experienced, intelligent, and capable women – something men their age would likely receive without question – they were disregarded because of their age. The result of ageism, in many cases coupled with sexism, is often that women must turn to volunteering rather than paid work.

"It is common knowledge that women are used to working for free," said Smith, referring to household work, childcare, elders care, and more. "So it seems a fair assumption that if the job market shuts these women out then they can be relied upon to do work for free." She explained that during her search for paying jobs – "Why shouldn't I be paid when most men at 56 are paid for the work they do?" – she found countless appeals for volunteers in roles that, in the past, would have been paid. Some examples are fundraising, activism, and teaching. "The people who apply for these positions are by all accounts well-educated, middle-aged, unemployed women," she said.

This mirrored Brown's experience. "I've met so many people, people with PhDs," she said, "and they're all so frustrated because they're trailing their spouses here. Usually it's the husband who gets the job." Even with the highest degrees in education, these women must turn to organisations such as American Women's Club, charitable causes or the PTA of their child's school for something to do. These groups do important work, but it is unpaid.

Meanwhile, if they do manage to obtain paid jobs, women are often forced to leave before they want to. Brown told a story of a friend of hers, who after a long time at a company, arrived at work to find her computer was gone. Until that point, her coworkers had made the work environment hostile to her by ignoring her ideas and speaking only in Thai during meetings.







To avoid paying women severance fees, companies find ways to spur them toward quitting. These practices should absolutely be illegal, and yet they still happen. “The only way to successfully work as a woman here,” said Brown, “is to have your own company.”

But this is not a possibility for everyone. So how can we get rid of this toxic ageist environment?

“Why does anybody have to know anybody’s age in the first place?” said Smith. “Or your gender? Or your ethnicity? If your training and experience make you the most qualified for the job then none of those things should matter.” In this sense, she agrees with blind recruitment, wherein applications omit all those details and are reviewed purely on experience, while interviews are also conducted blind.

However, Smith pointed out that this would probably work in favour of “those who have all the advantages already” – that is, white men. Therefore, she asserted that she is also “a proponent of positive discrimination, or affirmative action, until women and minorities have been allowed to catch up with white men in job experience. This means legislating the opportunity for women and men to have both a job and a family and legislating the fair treatment of disadvantaged members of society.”

There are also actions individuals can take to stop ageism from manifesting in every corner of society. Brown stresses the importance of appreciating old people as real people, as legitimate members of our communities, and as valuable sources of knowledge and stories. “They’ve had their day that they contributed,” she said, “and they might still be

contributing quietly, in a behind-the-scenes kind of way, not going out and shouting about it.”

*It’s time that we view ageing as a benefit rather than a nuisance, especially in a time when people live much longer than they once did and are viable professionals long past retirement. Old people have seen and learned more throughout their many years than young people have. They are some of the most important people in our world, and it is time that we understand, acknowledge, and appreciate them as such – especially in the workplace.*

When it comes to jobs, older people should be able to compete with everyone else on equal footing; they should not be weeded out by an age limit in an application. They should be assessed as applicants based on their training and experience rather than the year they were born, and they should be appreciated as vital employees for companies and organisations. This would take society a step in the right direction – toward a more balanced, diverse and accepting world.



# The Cíes Islands

by Scott and Nori Brixen



G Galicia, that rugged, rain-soaked corner of Spain that looks more Irish than Iberian, would seem an incongruous location for ‘tropical island’ tropes: beaches as fine and white as baby powder, pellucid waters ranging from teal to turquoise, that sort of thing. Yet here they are, three islands whose heavenly beaches routinely make it onto the most-informed “best of” lists. This sort of praise is hardly new. The Romans called them “The Islands of the Gods.” Their unexpected, almost equatorial beauty is what makes the Cíes Islands so surprising and so special.

I first read about the Cíes in a gushing 2007 Guardian article. I adore near-offshore islands, loved the Cíes’ peculiarity and had never forgotten them. But I had lazily assumed that we could just pitch up at the ferry terminal in Vigo and purchase our tickets. Thankfully, Nori had looked into the details while we were still in Portugal. First, she had to submit an online permission request for our family – only 2,200 visitors are allowed on the islands daily. A few days later, she received an approval email with a QR code. Only then was she was able to buy our ferry tickets.

Even then, we still nearly missed the Cíes Islands. With the European sun dropping at an unreasonable 10pm in July, we had slipped into a bad habit of late nights and later mornings. The boys couldn’t sleep until it got dark, which forced Nori and I to stay up well into the *madrugada*

(early morning) to do the hundred things that couldn’t be accomplished with four screamers rampaging about. When I awoke at 8am, I knew it would take a miracle and incessant shouting for us to make the 9:40am ferry. Both occurred.

The voyage to the Cíes Islands lasted only 40 minutes and cost €18.50 per adult and €6 per child round trip. On a clear day, you can see the islands for the duration. Most of the passengers on our boat went straight to the upper, open deck – both to start catching some rays and to potentially see dolphins, who often hunt and play near the mouth of the Vigo estuary. Still hot from our last minute dash to the pier, we claimed a table inside the lower, enclosed deck and got out the UNO cards.

Las Islas Cíes (Illas Cíes in the local Gallego dialect) impress from the moment you arrive. The ferry pier stood at the north end of Rodas Beach, a 1.2km arc of the whitest, squeakiest sand. Rodas is the only natural link between Monte Agudo (Sharp Mountain) and O Faro (The Lighthouse) Islands. It’s a bit hard to describe. But from the air, the beach looked like a white hairband supporting novelty moose antlers (the two islands). Behind the beach, a large, crystal clear lagoon thrived with many varieties of fish and seaweed.

There are no villages on the islands. No roads and no cars. You can’t ride your bike either. Everybody must walk, but you must remain on the small number of sanctioned trails



that wind along the coast to beaches and lighthouses. There are no hotels — if you want to overnight, you must stay at the 800 spot campsite. If you camp, you can't play music, throw a party or light campfires. There are casual restaurants at the ferry and the campsite, but they're expensive — which is why most people bring fat-tired beach wagons full of picnic food. You need to bring your own water too. There are no trash bins on the island; whatever you bring in you must take out.

If all those rules sound a bit stifling, they are. But it would be impossible to argue with the results: excluding the slicks of seagull poop below their favourite roosts, the trails were clean, the beaches were litter free, and the water devoid of the plastic bag



‘jellyfish’ and bobbing PET water bottles we had seen everywhere else.

I wanted to get a nice walk in before the midday heat. So we followed the beach wagon battalion along a wide trail that skirted the edge of the Monte Agudo (Sharp Mountain) Island before crossing to Faro (Lighthouse) Island over a 200 metre concrete causeway that partially dammed the lagoon and protected Rodas Beach from big waves and erosion.

Drake and Kiva had to pee, so I helped them off the causeway and across the rocks to a more private location. Dark waves were shattering in cascades of froth on Monte Agudo's rocky west coast. The cloud muffled light gave the cliffs a sombre majesty. I yelled at Tai and Logan to join us, and took one of my favourite photos of the trip. The whole time I heard a shrill whistling. Then I realised that a park volunteer was blowing the whistle at *us*! I shook my head and did a ‘oh please!’ motion with my hand. Where we had been was not remotely dangerous. Our footfalls had not done a bit of damage. But those were the rules.

When the trail forked, we followed the lower path past the pretty Playa de Nuestra Señora (Beach of our Lady) and along the coastline until it ended at a little picnic spot set among rocks emblazoned with orange lichen. Across the narrow strait to the south, San Martino Island sat green and un-touristed. You could only reach it by private boat, and there were no campsites on the island. To the west, the tiny Faro da Porta (Gate Lighthouse) watched over the strait while high above us, the Faro do Monte (Mountain Lighthouse) commanded views of all three islands and much of the Vigo estuary.





overdevelopment and despoliation. Mercifully, the Cíes will never become another Benidorm or Marbella. In 1980, the islands were declared a nature reserve. In 2002, they joined the newly created Atlantic Islands National Park, which carried even stricter regulations. As we had seen, the Galician authorities were taking these rules very, very seriously.

Around 85% of the area of the Atlantic Islands Park lies underwater, protecting “one of the richest (maritime) ecosystems in the entire Galician coast.” That said, I wasn’t terribly impressed with the terrestrial wildlife. Apart from a few sparrows and finches and the odd cormorant, the only animals we observed on the islands were seagulls. Lots and lots of big, guano bombing seagulls. Apparently, the Cíes host Europe’s largest colony of yellow footed seagulls. Now, I’m all for protecting endangered species – but seagulls? Seagulls are as omnipresent as pigeons. But while pigeons are endearingly dumb, seagulls are irredeemable jackasses. Aren’t all seagulls yellow footed?

Just beautiful. I’ve seen people describe the Cíes Islands as the “Maldives of Spain” or the “Spanish Seychelles” but both are a stretch. To begin with, the water surrounding the Cíes is cold. Wetsuit cold. I’m from North Idaho and even I gasped when the family jewels were first submerged. Instead, what the Cíes Islands resemble perfectly – complete with stunning beaches, orange stained boulders and gum trees – is Tasmania’s Freycinet Peninsula and Bay of Fires.

After a classic lunch of sun heated hot dogs, we returned to Our Lady’s Beach and spent the next 3 hours wading cautiously into the water and then rushing out before hypothermia could set in. By early afternoon, the beach was as crowded as Bondi on a Saturday. A group of scuba novices wearing swim fins waddled backwards into the water. (I had done some free diving and saw only rocks and a few tiny fish). Two handsome young brothers did backflips off the barnacle covered rocks. Pale Spanish breasts were set free. Everyone was polite. No one left trash on the beach. I was impressed.

Spain isn’t exactly known for its environmental stewardship. It’s *Costa del Sol* is synonymous with







With a few hours to kill before our ferry returned to Vigo, we found a secluded spot between the pier and “German” Beach (the nudist one) and uncorked a bottle of Douro Valley red. While the boys played war with pine cones, Nori took a nap and I caught up in my travel journal. On cue, the man sitting alone at the picnic bench next to us brought out his guitar and serenaded us and the seagulls.

Normally, I would have resented the aural intrusion. But he played and sang gently, somehow magnifying the peace in that little pine grove.

In this age of low cost airlines, TripAdvisor and Instagram, remote and beautiful places are being discovered, swarmed, trashed and trampled at a frightening pace. While I considered the Cíes Islands’ myriad rules too proscriptive, the sad fact is that many people need to be told how to behave in the outdoors. I left the “Islands of the Gods” thinking that hard visitor limits and rules based tourism are exactly what many popular spots in Asia need.

**About the author:**  
**Two Twins Twavel**

*Scott & Nori are avid travellers and knowledge seekers who have travelled to 110 plus countries across all 7 continents. Now*

*they’re sharing their wanderlust with their two sets of twinboys, Tai, Logan, Drake and Kiva.*

*Follow their travels at: [www.twotwinstwavel.com](http://www.twotwinstwavel.com)*



**hotel**  
**INDIGO**  
AN IHG® HOTEL  
Bangkok Wireless Road



# Surprise Menu



*Chef Nik invites you to discover his cooking with a special, surprising journey through nine courses or five courses inspired by you and featuring the freshest ingredients locally sourced from our #neighborhood brimming with flavours you'll love at first bite!*

**9 courses 3,000++ baht**

**OR**

**5 courses 2,000++ baht**

*Daily, from 6.00 pm – 12.00 midnight*

CHAR Bangkok, 25th and 26th Floor,  
Hotel Indigo Bangkok Wireless Road  
81 Wireless Road, Lumpini, Pathumwan Bangkok 10330  
T : +66 (0) 2 207 4999 | F : +66 (0) 2 207 4998

CHARbangkok.com | [f](#) [i](#) [t](#) [@](#) CHARbangkok  
#CHARbangkok #bestkeptsecret





# Acting out in Bangkok

by Ravit El-Bachar Daniel



In the last decade, I haven't missed any opportunity to watch an English language theatre play in Bangkok, and one face kept showing on stage all these years – of Bonnie Zellerbach's. Once in a while I could also spot her familiar face on the big screen, in Hollywood movies.

If you have ever watched an English-language play in Bangkok, most chances Bonnie was involved with its production in some way. She acts and sings, she produces, she writes and directs, she designs theatre costumes, and in the last two years – she's also chairing the Bangkok Community Theatre (BCT).

Bonnie is definitely the undisputed queen of theatre in Bangkok's expat scene, having been involved with countless productions during the 29 years she has lived in Bangkok.

In September you will see her on stage in BCT's newest production, *Shipwrecked*, which she produces as well. During the rehearsals she took a short break to talk to me about theatre, acting, motherhood, and life.

## What brought you to Bangkok?

**Bonnie:** "I was working for Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising in NYC and requested a transfer overseas as I have always loved travel and wanted the chance to live in another country. Prior to Bangkok, in my student days, I had lived for a short while in Madrid, on the French Riviera and London; I have always loved experiencing other cultures.

So in 1991 advertising brought me to Bangkok where I met my husband, and the rest is history!"



## You come from business and advertising background. How did you get into performing arts?

"I was a theatre major as an undergraduate and always dreamed of a career in the performing arts. However, during my senior year at university, I became very disillusioned with my career prospects because none of the performers I knew from the classes above me had done anything except wait tables since they had graduated. I had huge respect for their craft and thought that if they couldn't get work, what hope was there for me?

So after graduating from university, I took a job as an administrative assistant at the League of New York Theatre's and Producers, which allowed me to see every show on





attended the theatre when I could, but I had no chance to be involved – not until I moved to Bangkok

### How did your romance with the Bangkok Community Theatre (BCT) start?

“To be honest with you, I went to my first BCT show with very low expectations. I went to support a friend from the office expecting low standards since it was titled “community theatre” after all. However, I was taken aback by the sheer professionalism of the cast and became a convert overnight.

Later that year I attended my first Panto (they don’t exist in the USA) and fell in love with that genre too. BCT brought back my love of theatre and introduced me to so many wonderful people as well. I can’t imagine what my life in Bangkok would have been or would be now without it.

On stage with BCT I have played countless roles from a minor bit as a dancing tree in BCT’s 1998 production of *The Wizard of Oz* (was so much fun!!!) to principal parts such as Miss Hannigan in *Annie*, Adelaide in *Guys and Dolls*, Olive in *The Odd Couple* female version, Madame Arcati in *Blithe Spirit*, and more recently, the Evil Queen in the 2018 Panto *Snow White* and Mama Euralie in BCT’s March production of *Once on this Island*.

I also work behind the scenes on lots of shows with jobs ranging from costume design to directing, producing and more. It’s all challenging creatively and great fun, and for the past two years I’ve been Chairwoman of BCT as well.”

### You had few small roles in Hollywood and local movies and TV. Which are some of the productions you were involved with?

“I have been fortunate enough to work on a range of projects in the film and TV industry. I’ve done repeating roles in a couple of Thai TV Series and have had some fun parts including that of a creepy ghost in some big films. In terms of western films, I have played a nurse caring for Christian Bale in *Rescue Dawn*, an annoying and in one scene, drunk, tourist in the German comedy *Türkisch für Anfänger*, a nurse/tourist with Ewan McGregor in *The Impossible*, a dying mother in *Dragonwolf*, a businesswoman chatting with Owen Wilson in *No Escape*, a realtor pushing a property to Blake Lively in *All I See is You*, a US Senator in *She Has a Name*, a dying mother in *Future Sex*, a UN film producer chatting with Wagner Moura in *Sergio* and a few others that are still in production. I do seem to get type cast as nurses, tourists, dying mothers and businesswomen!”

Movie sets and international stars are quite different than our local theatre stage.

Broadway that year for free, and I also worked backstage at the Tony Awards which was a highlight.

I then moved onto a job as a marketing assistant at Citicorp and had a wonderful supervisor who encouraged me to fulfil my potential as a business professional. Two years later I completed my MBA at the University of Virginia and was ready to jumpstart my business career. While at Darden, I took an advertising course and realised I had found my niche! It was the perfect blend of theatre and business – and I found I had an undeveloped knack for strategy. So in 1982, I started work at Saatchi & Saatchi as an Assistant Account Executive. I moved up quickly and was transferred to Thailand as the head of Client Services in the Bangkok Office in 1991.

I became much more interested in film than stage through my advertising years in New York. Of course, I still



**Do you have any special experience imprinted in your memory?**

“One of my fondest memories on set is when I was working on *Rescue Dawn* with Christian Bale and the Director, Werner Herzog, whose work I have admired for years. The scene involved my caring for Christian Bale in a Vietnam War era hospital so we shot upcountry in an abandoned Thai hospital. No air con, no fans, no nothing. The sun was beating down outside and we had stage lights shining on to the set as well. I was literally dripping sweat and in between takes Werner Herzog was the one who would lean in and wipe my face and straighten the sheets on the actor – no “not my job” attitude from those consummate professionals. While the conditions were pretty miserable, the experience was amazing.”

**Let's talk about *Shipwrecked*, the upcoming theatre play by BCT. You are holding two hats in this production – one of the producer and another of an actress. What attracted you to this play?**

“I worked with the Director, Cian Green, in 2017 as an actress in a small play called *Circle Mirror Transformation*. I loved working with Cian and have the highest respect for him as a director, so I offered to produce for him in 2019. When he chose to direct *Shipwrecked*, I became even more excited about being involved in the production and knew that I wanted to audition as well.”

**What is the show about? Why people should come to see it?**

“*Shipwrecked* is family friendly storyteller theatre suitable for ages 6 to 96. A small ensemble cast work together to help the central character, Louis de Rougemont, tell his amazing story of bravery, survival and celebrity that left nineteenth-century England spellbound. The story moves between London, the high seas, exotic islanders, flying wombats, giant sea turtles and a monstrous man-eating octopus. *Shipwrecked* examines how far we are willing to blur the line between fact and fiction in order to leave our mark on the world. Multiple characters will appear from nowhere and melt away in an instant. Random objects on stage suddenly come to life as something else entirely. *Shipwrecked* is a perfect example of how to capture an audience with the ‘magic’ of theatre. It'll be staged for two weeks at the end of September and beginning of October at Creative Industries, M Theatre.”



**What do you do when you are not on stage?**

“When my daughters were still in school, I volunteered on various sub-committees and chaired the Marketing Committee at Bangkok Patana School. Now that they are off at university in the USA, I have retired from those committees and devote my time primarily to BCT, corporate role play jobs, professional film and voiceover work. Being a woman of a certain age, I find I get more voiceover work than anything else these days as my voice is ageless! I also manage all of BCT’s costumes which is a full time job in itself!

I am aware that I live a very privileged lifestyle so I try to give back by volunteering as much as I can – and there is so much to do for BCT that I rarely have time to volunteer for other things. I think the organisation is a wonderful way to bring people of different nationalities together in Bangkok – and to have the joy of creating something for the stage. And then there is the joy of sharing that with an audience. That’s really my main focus. I do love dancing, so when I can, I fit in Zumba and line-dancing too!!!





"I definitely feel that Bangkok is home – I am more at home here than in the USA at this point. I have a great appreciation for the culture and the people, but I wouldn't be so bold as to say

I understand it!! Speaking Thai, even badly, helps."



**You are a mum to twin daughters; they grew up in Bangkok but now they are overseas in university. How is it to maintain motherhood in a remote control?**

"What comes around goes around. I remember being so excited to move overseas back in 1991 and my mother being a bit weepy about the distance between us. We'd been living on separate coasts for years so it wasn't as though I'd been living at home, but Thailand is literally the other side of the world. Now I have that with my own twin daughters. They were born in Bangkok but are not Thai citizens so they cannot come back to work here for summer jobs, etc. Nowadays we only get to see each other for a few weeks here and there and it is hard! I am very grateful to the advent of the internet which allows us to video chat regularly!!!"

**What type of child/ teenager have you been? Back then, what did you think you will be/do when you grow up?**

"I wanted to travel, I wanted to perform, and I wanted to have children – I know I am incredibly fortunate to have had all my dreams come true. Sometimes I wonder when the proverbial other shoe will drop... I am so very lucky!"

**You live so many years in Thailand. Do you feel you understand by now the culture, people, Thainess? Do you feel Thailand is Home?**

**Thailand Tatler has listed you for a few years in a row in its definitive guide to Thailand's most affluent and influential expatriates. Holding this title, can you share your top tip to inspire other expat women in a foreign city?**

"Find something you love outside of what you need/have to do on a daily basis, and make time for it. There are so many opportunities in Bangkok – you can try new things that you never thought of before. And if you want to expand your social circle, volunteer for BCT or another one of the social or creative volunteer organisations. They are a great way to meet new people and develop new skills."

**About the show: Shipwrecked, The amazing adventures of Louis de Rougemont (as told by himself)**

**Written by:** Donald Margulies; **Directed by:** Cian Green; **Produced by:** Bonnie Zellerbach

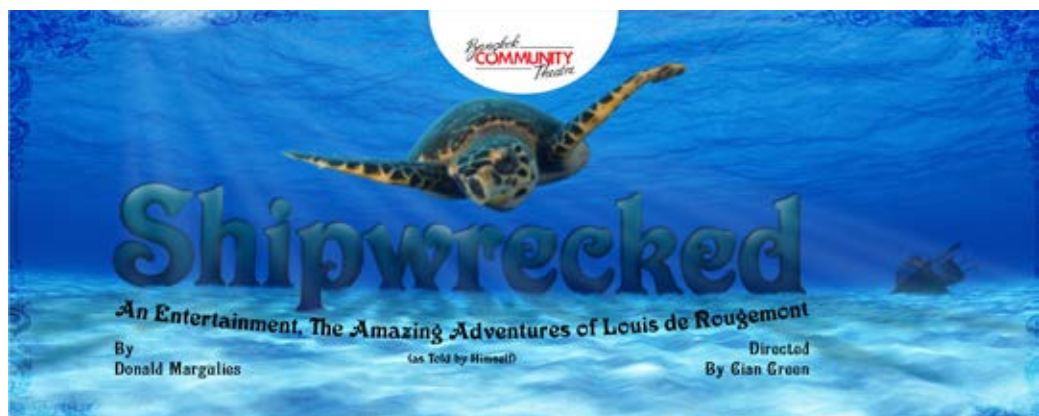
**Cast:** Peter Assimakopoulos, Toff Cabuyao, Daniel Smith, Anastasia Adams, Bonnie Zellerbach, Iris Park, Ana Nunez Roma

**When:** Evening shows September 27, 28 and October 4, 5; Matinees September 28 and October 5

**Where:** Creative Industries, M Theatre, New Petchaburi Rd., Bangkok

**Tickets:** at [www.bangkokcommunitytheatre.com](http://www.bangkokcommunitytheatre.com) & Ticketmelon.com

**Further info:** [info@bangkokcommunitytheatre.com](mailto:info@bangkokcommunitytheatre.com)





# Men and women in fashion

by Hanim Jain-Dogan

**H**ave you noticed that the most famous top designers, brands and CEO's like Karl Lagerfeld, Ralph Lauren, Michael Kors, Bernard Arnault are all men? So, where are all the women in fashion?

Do women have the same opportunities as men when climbing the ladder in the fashion industry? Is there equality in salaries and promotions? Can you easily combine a successful career whilst having a family too? We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and still talking about basic human rights?

The fashion industry is like a pyramid. On the bottom of triangle, women fill the ranks in the fashion business as sales assistants, buyers, merchandisers and models. Then in the middle of the pyramid, men start appearing. Filling positions as middle managers of brands and retail organisations. Getting to the top, we really have to search hard to find a woman.

Having lived and worked in many countries around the world, the position of women in the fashion industry has many different faces. I will share with you my own experiences and observations. Funnily enough, some very obvious situations are not that obvious.

The Western world versus the rest of the world for example. I grew up in a Western society, the Netherlands but have roots in an Asian country, Turkey. So, from an early age on I was able to observe the cultural differences in families, societies, schools and in businesses. A culture of a country can be very liberal and democratic but on the work floor this culture can look



completely different.

In Turkey, there is still a huge gap in inequality and opportunities for working women but when it comes to the top positions, it suddenly gives us a whole new perspective. Turkey had the highest percentage of female chairpersons; women occupy 11.1% of the country's chairman roles. (\*Fortune.com 2015)

In the years when I worked at "de Bijenkorf", the luxury chain of department stores in Holland, the pyramid structure was definitely in place. In stores as well as at the head office, making it to the top as a woman was not easy. Making it to the top as an "immigrant" woman was even more difficult.

Yes, the Dutch are very easy going, informal, open and direct. In business they are pretty straightforward which can feel intimidating if you are not used to it. Being in a top position as a woman can be sometimes intimidating for men as well.

Once upon a time in my early years, my boss, an older experienced gentleman, gave me feedback during a performance review. He told me I was doing a good job but I only had to behave more vulnerable towards my team. The majority of my team

members were men. I had to show my emotions by being more delicate. At the time, I actually felt slightly insulted. I thought just because I am a woman he used these words. He would have never used the same words to a man. Why does he treat me differently? Why am I judged about my behaviour and emotions instead of evaluating my work results?

I don't remember exactly I replied to him but I am sure my reply was not what I actually had in my head. Now looking back at it, I wish I were more experienced and mature enough to ask him these questions. Of course, I was too scared to talk about my real thoughts since I knew that to reach the top I needed to work harder than the men and not make a fuss about any inequalities.

Years later, I had another interesting encounter at C&A, one of the biggest fashion retail companies in Europe. My manager – a man (again) who worked all his life for the Brenninkmeyer family who owns C&A. He was old school, control freak and had his own way of doing business. Having me in his team was not an easy job I figured out. I was young, ambitious and had given up a very lucrative life in IT to follow my passion.





Nothing would stand in my way or stop me from reaching my dreams. Not even this manager. I worked very hard, had brilliant new ideas and was confrontational.

His way of disapproving my “female” ambition was to give me a very bad performance review and lay an official complaint about me to the director. He was determined to have me kicked out of the company because I did not fit his “woman” profile as a colleague. It really got to me. I could not understand how I got myself in this situation. I started to blame myself. Like most women do. I became insecure and felt betrayed by the company who headhunted me to accept this job. Nobody backed me up. I was in a lower position against a middle manager guy so who would care about me? Well someone did! It was a “she...” my dear female director and board member! She probably saw me struggling and maybe saw some potential in me for the future.

Thanks to her support, I was transferred to a different department and got even a more fun job to do. I am so grateful up until today as she really saved my career and my life. I am where I am today because of what she

showed me that time. She gave back my confidence. The rest is history.

As I am not the only one with these kinds of stories, I have started a global foundation called “Women in Fashion”. Guess what, the lady who helped me years ago, is now my co-founder.

- Our vision is a world in which women have the opportunity, support and resources to thrive as entrepreneurs and professionals in the fashion industry.
- Women in Fashion exists to break the “glass runway” in the fashion industry by supporting and empowering.
- Women in Fashion exists to promote the full and equal participation of women at every level in the fashion industry.
- We are dedicated to achieving gender equality and to eliminating barriers to give opportunity for women in the fashion industry.



**About the author:**  
**Hanim Jain-Dogan** is an international business advisor, writer and motivational speaker. She works with companies

and individuals on projects in fashion, retail and e-commerce. Hanim is a member of Advisory and Executive Board for companies and non-profit organisations. Her book “10 Successful Steps Into Fashion” is now available in Papersmith by Booksmith bookstores across Thailand.



Press inquiries please contact  
[hd@hanimdogan.com](mailto:hd@hanimdogan.com)

Follow her on:  
[Facebook.com/hanimdoganjain](https://www.facebook.com/hanimdoganjain) and  
[Instagram.com/iamhanimjain](https://www.instagram.com/iamhanimjain)



## *Be a Starlette*

With fall approaching, it is time to make one of the most special transitions of the year as far as our wardrobe is concerned. It's about the transition from summer to fall clothes. I know that it is a time of the year when both shop windows and fashion magazines are filled with new proposals and become accomplices of the new trends. I want to give you some small tips that will help you in this transition in an easy and successful way.

It's time to change the textures, I know that during the summer we use very fresh textures that help us to carry the high temperatures of that season. In this time comes the use of new textures more warm and thick like tweed, wool, etc. The combination of textures is another of the suggested slogans.

We saw many fabrics and designs mixed in the runways from the 70s and the 80s too. Many of the designers showed hope by not moving away from the environment. Which brought many basic articles of the 70s to this new season. We also noticed more designers who use vegan and sustainable materials, some created articles inspired by men's clothing for women or unisex garments.

Of course, we could notice a little fantasy, in ruffles and voluminous garments. The sensuality is still a topic. Without more to say, I'll leave you my top 10! I hope you are ready for the new fall/ winter fashion trends and hope you will like it as much as I did:



The colours change from light and bright to a little darker. In fact, amongst the basic colours of this season are ochres, yellows, oranges and earth colours in general. The patterns also change, we can continue to carry flowers but the colours of this type of prints are from medium to dark and more sober designs, geometric patterns are imposed.

Very important: We cannot leave aside the trench coats in our wardrobe, it's one of the times of the year in which we cannot do without this garment. On the other hand, appealing to wild cards will lead to a certain success. There are garments that serve any season and that should always be in a visible place.

For last season, there was very minimalist and utilitarian garments. The 90s was everywhere.

### *1. Colours are the focus of this fall:*

Fall 2019 colours are so vibrant and unique, that it gives every individual the liberation to choose their own colours and wear it with confidence. Leatrice Eiseman, Executive Director of the Pantone Colour Institute said : "This palette of versatile hues builds a sense of empowerment and confidence, enabling the wearer to choose the colours that best reflect his or her mood and persona." from red, yellow orange to green, play with the colours this season and enjoy it.





## 2. Oh Chanel! The winter in which we want to live forever

A historical runway, Chanel leads the trend of tweed and among the most outstanding garments are the coats that are functional and practical. The length goes beyond the knee creating a fluid silhouette. You can also use this texture in pants, in different colours and you can return it according to the combinations in a casual or formal piece. I can only say thank you Karl, you are and will be missed, the end of a new era begins.

## 3. Very slouchy suits

A minimalist, utilitarian touch that we hope will easily filter into the general fashion. It can be very comfortable and stylish, it's a benefit to discard those tight and rigid suits. The difference of the suits of this season is the added belts to it. The colour grey is the most predominant, and let's not forget that suits are unisex garments.



## 4. The essentials: Trench coats

They are a basic element of this season, they always come back with a twist, they are elegant, they have class and they fulfil their function of protection. Wear them with a big belt in the waistline. Now we have mergers of patterns and textures, without a doubt it is a key and necessary piece.

## 5. Leather creations

Leather jackets, dresses, skirts, coats and more coats are a must this season. My favourites for this are definitely the leather dresses and the skirts, this season it is noticeable the leather are soft and easily worn.





## 6. No fastening

Jackets that are worn as simple floating shapes, without obstructions, and open, on top of trousers or skirts. Who does not like comfortable and elegant clothes? For me this is easy to wear and very classy.



## 7. Pleated skirts

The folds are something that will always come and go, this season they have returned. Soft fabric made with smaller folds, textures that surely combine well with oversized blazers. The best is to wear it with an oversized belt, or with a bag belt.

## 8. Goodbye sandals!

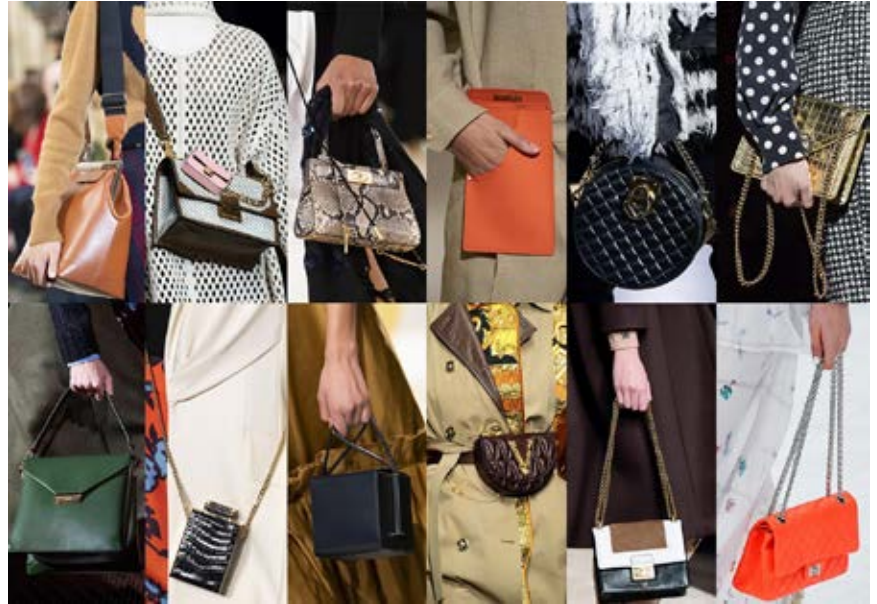
It's time to put aside the sandals! And put back heels and boots, time to wear more comfortable heels with platform! Rain boots, are always present for the fall. Sneakers, boots or even heels with rubber soles. We saw the Grandma shoes back (Victorian style at Gucci, Miumiu)! Regarding the boots, this year the runway was filled with lace up to the knee ones. The snakeskin is back everywhere... As for the must have colour of this year is the dark green (the new black of the shoes)





## 9. For bag lovers

From ultra tiny bags into wearing multi bag at once. The bags this season are so playful, they are like accessories more than bags you can wear them as pendants, Like Brandon Maxwell and the Jacquemus. The fluffy bags are also super in, almost all the brands have used the faux fur in their materials, as seen below with the Givenchy purple bag. For this season the colours and prints are a little more serious. The travelling bags continue to appear, as well as the box handle bags are always in trend.



## 10. Accessory trends

In this season there is a lot of glamour, a lot of jewels and pearls used in all kinds of forms, feathers are everywhere and if it's about belts you have to know that they had a strong comeback this season, in addition to socks and scarves. Between cosy and very chic luxuries, we realise that it is exactly what we need for this time. The huge colourful sunglasses are the main return, unlike the small ones we got used to see for the last 2 years, now the oversized sunglasses are must have.



The weather should never be a pretext to stop looking good, we will live a season of excesses in what the colours, fabrics, and details are concerned. I'm sure that many of these trends were dormant for many years, if you still have them, it is time to relive and bring them to light.

What are you waiting for?

XOXO  
Talar Artinan  
Be a Starlette



### Talar Zambakjian

Successful fashion stylist with a Master Degree in Business Administration. Despite her Lebanese and Armenian origins, this entrepreneurial woman has extensive experience in the Thai market thanks to her 10 years living in the Kingdom.

She currently writes for Expat Life in Thailand under her personal brand Be A Starlette. She is one of the most important fashion and empowerment influencers for the women of 30 years old and up in the country.

For enquiries and for getting the stylist advice please contact her [@talarz @be\\_a\\_starlette](mailto:talarz@be_a_starlette) or email: [talar.beastarlette@gmail.com](mailto:talar.beastarlette@gmail.com)



## Event: Mediterranean-inspired evening of fine chocolate, wine and fabulous fashion show

Date: Saturday, June 15th

Venue: Olive Greek Restaurant  
(hosted by owner Siriluck Lim)

*Olive was honoured to host a special event with our talented friends: Rose Amores Hudson of "Victoria Amores Chocolates", Chie Gatchalian of 5&1/2 Twists (Wine Educator; Wine & Spirit Education Trust Certified) and Len Nepomuceno-Mortel, Bangkok-based designer extraordinaire of bridal & formal attire*

The evening began with delicious Greek mezes served in Olive's ambient garden. Fairy lights and lush landscape set the tone. Guests nibbled on signature dishes such as Patzarosalata (beetroot, yogurt & walnut dip), Tyropita (fillo pastry triangles stuffed with cheese), grilled chicken kebab wraps, and Parmesan crumbed chicken sliders in homemade brioche buns.

Next, a Mediterranean and Chocolate & Wine inspired fashion show highlighted Bangkok-based designer, Len Nepomuceno-Mortel's, bespoke collections. The show opened with a Mediterranean theme. Models showcased white and blue hues reminiscent of Greece's cerulean seas, chic summers, and powdery white coasts. Modern 'goddess-style' draping, bohemian headbands, and funky turquoise accents invoked the Med's glamorous lifestyle. The second collection, Chocolate and Wine, reflected the sensual colours and rich textures of silky chocolate and jammy wines. Sleek black pants were adorned with dramatic 'statement' sashes as a nod to chocolate's sophistication and sexiness. Deep Burgundy was accentuated with glittery golds and burnished copper tones reflecting an exciting night on the town... complete with a shimmering glass of Cava in hand. One striking piece – a sassy, scarlet cocktail dress – created the perfect introduction to the evening's wine pairings.

This lovely red hue is also reflected within Nero d'Avola wine, one of Sicily's

iconic grapes which was featured later in the night.

The festivities continued as chocolatier, Rose of Victoria Amores Chocolates, introduced guests to her Mediterranean-inspired bon bons. These artisanal chocolates were created using the best cocoa from Rose's family farm, Bohol Chocolate Farm, in the Philippines. The Mediterranean flavours included Greek yogurt with raspberry swirls which even utilised Olive's homemade, small-batch Greek yogurt. Another new flavour created especially for the event was Almond praline with Greek honey caramel set within a dark chocolate shell. A standout addition was Baklava presented as a bon bon in bursts of cinnamon lemon caramel with pistachio nuts.

To compliment the chocolates, wine educator Chie Gatchalian of 5&1/2 Twists selected six wines from the Mediterranean coast to pair with Rose's fine chocolate creations. Pairings included a kick-off toast of Cava (Pere Ventura Mas Pere Brut) complimenting a bright lemon and dark chocolate bon bon. Burnt caramel & Mediterranean sea salt chocolate accompanied sips of Il Roso del Vespa 2017 Primitivo. These wines truly capture the Med's sun & sea in a bottle. It was a memorable evening inspired by chocolate, wine and all things Mediterranean!









# Events / social picture

*What's been happening*



Russian National Day,  
Intercontinental Hotel,  
June 11th,







National Day of Portugal, June 10th







Philippines National Day  
121<sup>st</sup> Anniversary,  
June 12th











**HKLG Dragon Boat Festival luncheon by Kathleen Pokrud,  
President of Hong Kong Ladies' Group**

The Hong Kong Ladies' Group recently celebrated the Dragon Boat Festival (known as The Duanwu Festival) at Coca Restaurant of Surawongse Rd. The festival has over 2,000 years history – it originated from ancient China to commemorate Qu Yuan (340-278 BC), an ancient Chinese patriotic poet and statesman of the Chu Kingdom.

Mrs. Ai Xianghua, spouse of Major Counsellor Mr. Li Chunlin represented Madame Pan Peng from The Embassy of The People's Republic of China who is the long-standing patron of HKLG. Other diplomatic dignitaries included Madame Olga Shumylo-Tapiola (President of SHOM from EU), Madame Doreen Fong (Germany), Madame Ewa Dubaniowski (Poland), and Madame Viera Opielova (Slovakia).

Other VIPs included representatives from the newly opened Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Mrs. Joanna Leung and Ms Stella Chiu, together with Mr. Danny Yu, the President of Thai-Hong Kong Trade Association, Khun Suvimol Mahagristsiri, ML Poomchai Chumbala, and Ms Diana Foo.

It is the Chinese custom to eat "Bajangs" during the Dragon Boat Festival. Bajang is a pyramid shaped glutinous rice dumpling wrapped in reed leaves. During the luncheon, a live demonstration on how to make dumplings was held, followed up by a hands-on workshop.





AWC ladies at many events, including the Brazilian Festival, the annual Membership Lunch, the Monet to Kadinsky Art Exhibition and the cheque presentation for the AWC Scholarship programme so that many girls in rural Thailand get the opportunity to further their education.







Queen Elizabeth II's birthday event hosted by British Ambassador at Siam Kempinski hotel











Poland – 15 years in the European Union  
at the Alliance Francaise







RIS Swiss Section School Open Day





The International Women's Club Bangkok (IWC) the largest women's group in Thailand open to ladies from all nationalities had their monthly lunch "Mexican Fiesta" on Thursday June 27th, 2019.

The Charge D'Affaires of the Mexican Embassy and his wife Mr. Gonzalez and Silvia Gonzales, H.E.Mrs. Maria del Carmen Martinez Arosemena, the lady Ambassador of Panama to Thailand, Datin Catherina Christine Cherrian – Spouse of the Malaysian Ambassador to Thailand, Honorary Consul of Uruguay – Mrs. Netra Ruthaiyanont and Mrs. Catharine Wieke – spouse of the Deputy Chief of Mission Indonesia. There was a display of Mexican dancing by Mexican guests and Maria del Carmen, Ambassador of Panama, sang with IWC members and guests and members enjoyed Mexican cuisine.











Cosmopolitan Ladies of Bangkok  
monthly luncheon at Summer Palace  
InterContinental Hotel



US Embassy's 4th of July celebration



# Paris

Hair Face Body *spa*



• 25 Chidlom Road, Tel: 02 655 2550

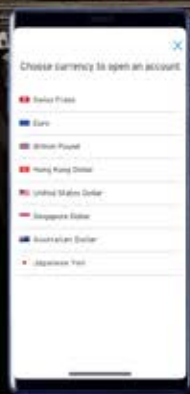
• Mandarin Oriental Bangkok, Ground Floor, Tel: 02 234 7132





Instantly switch 9 currencies  
on your Citi Mobile App® and  
spend like a local around the world

**CITIBANK GLOBAL WALLET**  
The world in one wallet



Activate the feature now through Citi Mobile® App.

Find out more at [www.citibank.co.th/citibank-global-wallet](http://www.citibank.co.th/citibank-global-wallet)



Download Citi Mobile® App  
Search Citibank TH or Scan QR Code

Citibank, N.A.'s Terms and Conditions apply. ©2019 Citi and Arc Design is a registered service mark of Citigroup Inc.

**citi**

Welcome what's next