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Apr/May 2020

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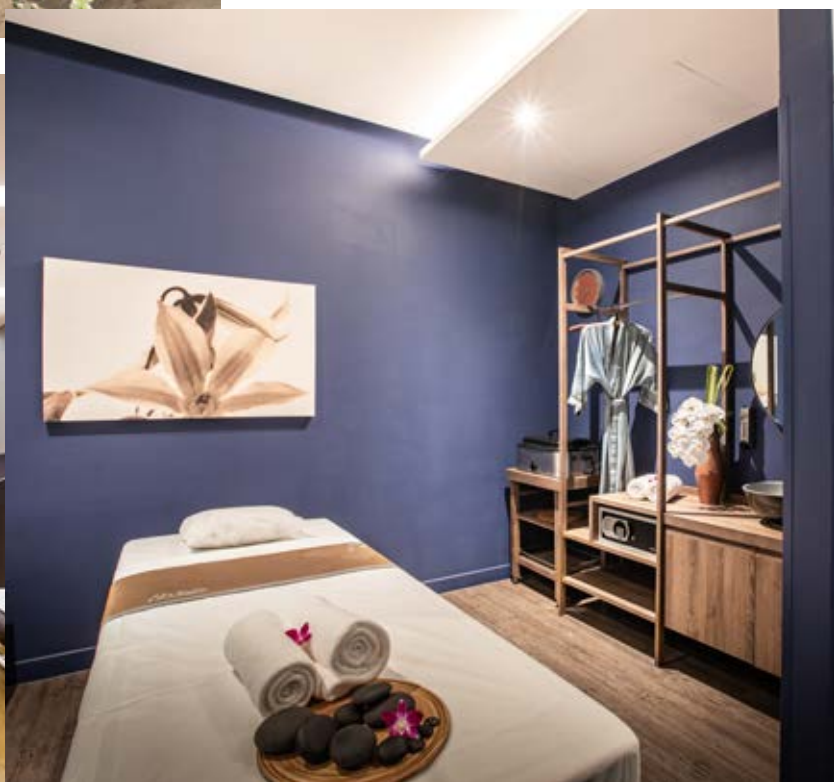
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## “LET’S RELAX WELL-BEING HUB”

*provides 3 heavenly  
pampering experiences  
in one*

**N**estled on the 2nd floor of Ginza Thonglor, at the Hotel Nikko, Sukhumvit 55, in Bangkok the “Let’s Relax Well-Being Hub” offers a ‘3 in 1’ pampering experience to uplift, revive and rebalance your body and soul.

Since 1998, Let’s Relax Spa has built its reputation as Thailand’s most popular ‘boutique day spa chain’ that delivers a remarkable Thai spa experience to customers by offering the latest equipment on the market, luxurious products and treatments by experienced and well trained therapists.

Twenty year later, Let’s Relax Spa continues to offer spa excellence pleasure to perfectly balance your physique by opening its subsidiary brand “Stretch me by Let’s Relax”, a muscle and tendon stretching studio under the supervision of physiology experts. And results oriented facial treatments by a newly created professional facial spa, “Dr. Spiller, Pure SkinCare Solutions” designed to help you enjoy the long term benefits of healthy skin.

To elevate the experience to the next level. Let’s Relax Spa embarks on its new wellness journey by opening the first “Let’s Relax Well-Being Hub”, offering a place where you can escape for an urban retreat in the middle of Thonglor. Allowing you to uplift and revive with the 3 masters of relaxation; a pampering and luxuriant experience at

Let’s Relax Spa, a stretching session by a professional stretching specialist at Stretch me by Let’s Relax and to scrub, cleanse and exfoliate your facial features at Dr. Spiller Pure SkinCare Solution.

Let’s Relax Spas create an interior design to reflect the uniqueness of each location, paying homage to local tradition and culture wherever the spas are located. The atmosphere of this branch provides a classic Japanese influence from the moment you walk in with earth tones, soft music and wooden partitions

Visit Let’s Relax Well-Being Hub to enjoy the head to toe experiences combining our Thai massage therapy with a unique stretching experience and enhance your facial indulgence all within the same compound.

Let’s Relax Well-Being Hub is located on the 2nd floor of Ginza Thonglor, Hotel Nikko Bangkok.

For more information and to make a reservation for a new you, please contact:

LINE@: @letsrelaxspa

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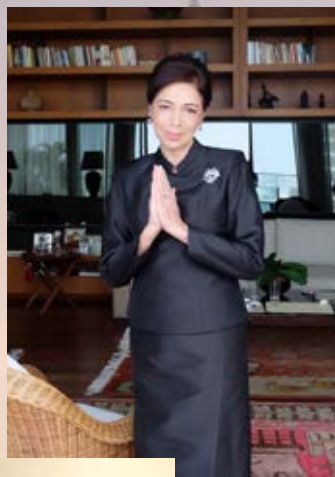
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# CENTARA

One of Bangkok's timeless landmarks the Centara Grand at Central Plaza Ladprao celebrates its 37th anniversary on the 23rd April 2020. It has 565 rooms and suites, 5 signature restaurants, an international buffet for all day dining, a coffee bar and patisserie, a sky bar and the lobby lounge.

It is situated in the Ladprao business district a short walk away from Chatuchak Park. With the recent extension of the BTS skytrain it is less than 5 minutes walk undercover from BTS Ha Yaek Ladphrao station (N9) and the MRT Underground Phahon Yothin station.

It has become a realistic option to staying on the overcrowded and overpriced Sukhumvit Rd as it is just 17 minutes from Siam BTS station but is nowhere near the prices of downtown hotels.

To mark this announcement Centara Grand Lad Prao is offering a special promotional price of for Thai

residents and Expat Life readers in Thailand (a deluxe room at 2,800B net/room/night including breakfast for 2 persons – book now until June 2020)!

## Special Sunday brunch buffet and weekday dinner buffet at Chatuchak Café in celebration of their forthcoming 37th anniversary

Choose from any one of the quality dining choices:

- Don Giovanni: Italian favourites
- Dynasty: Classical Cantonese cuisine
- Hagi: Traditional Japanese cuisine
- Le Danang: Authentic Vietnamese cuisine
- Suan Bua: Authentic Thai cuisine and seafood
- Chatuchak Café: International buffet and all-day dining
- Zing: Coffee, tea and patisserie
- Lobby lounge: Cocktails with live music
- Blue Sky rooftop restaurant and bar: Chic urban bistro dining and wine bar

## The hotel also offers extensive association meeting spaces:

- Bangkok Convention Centre Hall and Central Plaza shopping and lifestyle complex, together offering all that is needed for guests staying in Bangkok for a leisure break or business stay
- The hotel features extensive meetings and events facilities spanning over 10,000sqm complementing those of the adjacent 2,506sqm Bangkok Convention Centre Hall which can accommodate up to 3,800 persons in cocktail style serviced by separate kitchens.
- The hotel's elegant, pillar-less Vibhavadee Ballroom can serve 2,000 for a reception, dazzling wedding party or product launch

Centara Hotels have a reputation for attentive service, sublime dining with quality fare and modern tasteful accommodation. Centara sets the standards in the hospitality business.



## Special FB offers 37 days up to our turning 37 years old on April 23, 2020

### At Chatuchak Café – Our all day dining restaurant

- Breakfast from 940 net to 623 net
- Lunch 1,001 net to 664 net
- Dinner 1,411 net to 936 net
- Weekend BBQ Night 1,569 net to 988 net
- Lazy Lunch 1,569 net to 988 net
- Sunday Brunch 2,362 net to 1,488 net
- 37% discount on ALL YOU CAN EAT DIM SUM at Dynasty Restaurant from 1,001 net to 664 net

Promotion Period:  
From March 18 to April 23, 2020

37, this years' grand number

37% off on 3 best drinks and 7 signatures dishes of all specialty outlets e.g. Don Giovanni, Blue Sky, Suan Bua, Hagi & Dynasty

Promotion Period:  
April 21 to April 23, 2020







# MQDC BRINGS 'SMART CITY' WELL-BEING TO BANGKOK

An eco-friendly 'smart city' on Sukhumvit integrates 3 upscale condos with co-working, green spaces, shopping, dining, and sport for the ultimate urban lifestyle.

To explore Bangkok's most innovative neighbourhood, take the Skytrain to Punnawithi and leave the station past the poster of a unicorn (a sign you're on the right track, in the steps of startuppreneurs for whom he symbolises market takeoff).

Then follow a shaded skywalk above Sukhumvit for a few hundred yards. Hang a left and there you are. Before you stretches an award-winning 'smart city' designed to set a new standard for well-being and sustainability in Bangkok.

## Innovative lifestyle complex

Across a walkway you will see a vast glass shield over walkways and gardens. Explore further and you will find tree-shaded lawns, galleries of shops, and a multi-level maze of restaurants.

For app developers stalking unicorns, the heart of it all is True Digital Park, SE Asia's largest digital innovation hub. But the multilevel green campus further hosts co-working space, a '24-Hour Street', and SE Asia's largest Virgin Active gym.

There are also 3 upscale high-rise condominiums – Whizdom Connect Sukhumvit, Whizdom Essence Sukhumvit, Whizdom Inspire Sukhumvit – to put all these attractions in your backyard.

This innovative work-live-play community is built around the idea of the 'Third Place', explains Ms. Natenapis Sookbang, President of The Estate, a rental and resale specialist for the developer MQDC.

## 'The Third Place'

"The idea of a 'smart city' is to provide an outstanding quality of life while saving resources," she said.

"You can feel this the moment you arrive, walking over



the 'PaveGen' as it harvests green energy from your steps. But the other key principle here is 'The Third Place' – the perfect place beyond the 'first' place, home, and the 'second', work."

The Third Place idea comes from the writer Ray Oldenburg. Successful cities, he found, all offer a third place "where you relax in public, where you encounter familiar faces and make new acquaintances".

On Sukhumvit, the developer MQDC has brought the idea to life with a combination of green spaces, inventive design, and high technology, said Ms. Renu Thanomkul, Vice President of The Estate.

## For All Well-Being

"Whizdom Connect Sukhumvit, Whizdom Essence Sukhumvit, and Whizdom Inspire Sukhumvit feature elements like home automation to enhance quality of life under MQDC's guiding principle of 'For All Well-Being', meaning the well-being of all living beings," she said.

"But they also elevate life quality through everything on site for an exciting, fulfilling lifestyle. And when you travel to work or into town, a covered walkway takes you to the Skytrain."

MQDC has gained several awards for this smart city and its ingenious features like the 1.3km 'Whiz Track' that will weave in and out of buildings for joggers and cyclists.





## Sustainnovation

Thailand's Ministry of Energy recognised the development with a 'Smart Cities-Clean Energy' award. The green district cuts energy use by 30% through alternative energy, high energy efficiency, and 'passive design' features to create a cooler microclimate.

MQDC's 'sustainnovation' approach also secured SE Asia's first trophy in the prestigious global AEC Excellence Awards. This award recognised how MQDC has used building information modelling (BIM) for 'all well-being'. The 3 condominiums, for instance, are carefully aligned for sunlight and winds to need less AC.

## Become a 'Smart Citizen'

To discover this 'smart city' living, contact The Estate, where you can get expert guidance for every angle of lifestyle and investment, said Ms. Sookbang.

"Our team aims to help you and your family live your best life, with each element in place, such as good schools, green spaces, and places to shop, dine out, and exercise," she said.

"We can also advise on investment and help with the practical aspects. MQDC offers the assurance of high-quality residences, covered by a market-leading warranty of 30 years."

To discover your finest lifestyle on Sukhumvit, contact The Estate at

[consultant@theestate-thailand.com](mailto:consultant@theestate-thailand.com)

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# BANGKOK'S BEST LIFESTYLES WITH THE ESTATE

Looking to enjoy Bangkok to the full? Turn to the lifestyle and investment experts of The Estate.

The Estate offers you a select choice of top-quality new, resale, and rental residences as part of the leading developer Magnolia Quality Development Corporation Limited (MQDC).

MQDC's portfolio provides a choice of superb lifestyles under the watchword 'For All Well-Being', which commits the company to benefit residents, local communities, and all living beings.

Your options include the spectacular riverside opulence of The Residences of Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok and Magnolias Waterfront Residences, twin pinnacles of luxury at ICONSIAM.

MQDC's elite Magnolias brand also covers Magnolias Ratchadamri Boulevard, one of the city's most prestigious addresses overlooking the Royal Bangkok Sports Club. As a resident here, your lifestyle gains further distinction from having the Waldorf Astoria Bangkok onsite.

MQDC's Whizdom residences, meanwhile, provide a map of urban cool with high-tech condominiums at transport hubs for dynamic, youthful urbanites.

The connected lifestyle can be enjoyed in hip districts like Thonburi, Ladprao, and Sukhumvit, where a smart city incorporates Whizdom Connect Sukhumvit, Whizdom Essence Sukhumvit, and Whizdom Inspire Sukhumvit.

At The Strand Thonglor you can live a luxury lifestyle at 30 yards from the Skytrain station in Bangkok's 24-hour creative district.

To discover your best Bangkok lifestyle, contact The Estate at

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# ALICIA SONSCHEN AMBASSADOR OF ARGENTINA



**E**xpat Life was sat down with the elegant and gracious Ambassador of Argentina to Thailand H.E. Mrs. Alicia Cuzzoni de Sonschein. She has a small staff in Thailand and is kept very busy looking after four separate countries, but she found time to talk to us and the rest of the affluent expat and diplomatic community resident in Thailand.

**Good afternoon Alicia may I start by asking how long you have been in Thailand.**

I have been in Thailand for three and a half years. Being Ambassador of Argentina to the Kingdom of Thailand is a dream come true for me as I consider Thailand my second home and love Pratet Thai and Kon Thai very much.

My story with Thailand started in 1998, when I came for the first time with my late husband, it was love at first sight!

Since then, I managed to visit the country regularly then, in 2008, I was sent as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy in Bangkok. I stayed until 2012 and came back every year for holidays passing through Bangkok to go to India, Nepal or Bhutan, until I was appointed Ambassador.

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

Directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Buenos Aires.

**Where are you born and brought up?**

In Buenos Aires. I did my studies there. I studied Political Science at the Catholic University in Buenos Aires, with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations. I am a career diplomat officer.



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

I decided early to be a diplomat and studied Political Sciences with the purpose to continue my diplomatic career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My career started in 1980, after graduating from the Foreign Service Institute of the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, which is our diplomatic academy.

In 1982 I had my first post as a diplomat in Switzerland. It was at the General Consulate of Argentina in Zurich.

I have worked in different roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the departments of International Cooperation, Politics, Human Resources, Africa amongst





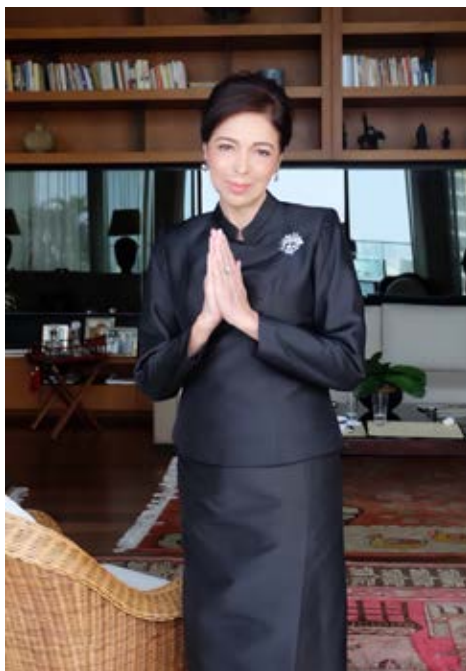
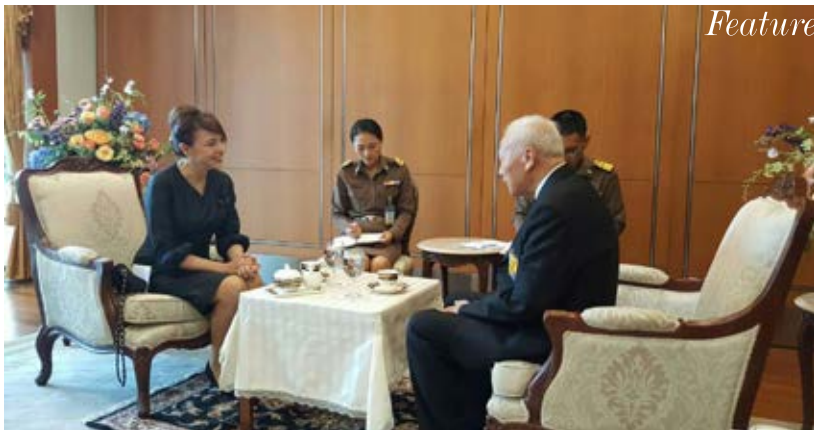
many others. But I spent most of my time at the Protocol Department heading the direction of international visits that dealt with the visits of high-ranking officials and heads of states from all over the world as well as the Argentine Presidential visits abroad.

That post allowed me to travel thoroughly. My profession took me as part of official delegations to places like Moscow, St. Petersburg, Canada, Washington D.C., New York, Singapore, India, Tokyo, Seoul, Vatican, Rome, Switzerland, and several countries in Latin America as well.

Normally, I arrived at destinations before the President and his delegation in order to prepare and arrange with the local protocol department all the details of the official visit. It was an extremely challenging and risky role, but I enjoyed it immensely. It was a pleasure for me meeting different people from other countries, cultures and languages.

However, my career was not homogeneous or indeed a classic one. I got married to an Ambassador, so decided to follow him and when he was posted abroad, I took leave of my duties as a diplomat and became an Ambassador's wife. I swapped my "chapeau" once back in Buenos Aires and started working again. I enjoyed being with my husband complementing his posts, both being diplomats we were the perfect couple! He was a remarkable senior diplomat with a lot of experience, culture and knowledge. I learnt many things from him.

We stayed in Dublin, Ireland, actually we got married there. After that, we moved to Yugoslavia, Belgrade. The first 2 years were very interesting, as the Balkan countries have a special charm but then, the Kosovo war broke. My husband refused to leave the capital even though the government advised us to return home. So I decided to stay with him and we spent 72 days of bombardment of NATO. It was a very tough period, but we survived, and it was an extraordinary experience.



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

I know Thailand very well and have adapted accordingly.

Asia has rapidly become one of the most important regions in the world, not only in demographic and economic growth terms but also due to a growing international presence. In this framework, the continent in general and SE Asia in particular constitutes one of Argentina's top foreign policy priorities.

Given the undeniable regional importance of Thailand – as a founding member of ASEAN; as well as the "gateway" to the countries that make up the regional group; for its key geostrategic position; and future potential – and that of our country in Latin America, it is essential that both nations continue their efforts to further strengthen these bonds of friendship, especially after the accession of Argentina to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in SE Asia.

In 2019 Thailand celebrated the general elections and was also the chair of ASEAN, which constituted a milestone of enormous importance for the relations not only for SE Asia, but with the rest of the world. It was also an opportunity to position itself in the economic, commercial and investment levels.

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

As developing countries, Argentina and Thailand have proved to share similar views of the world, enabling them to act jointly in international forums on many key issues on the international agenda, especially those concerning the search for a more just and inclusive society.

With regard our national cultures, they might be totally different, but such diversity is precisely the fascinating part of working here and one of the main driving forces.







Distance is not – and should not – be an obstacle in our relations, on the contrary the most important element to enforce and strength our partnership.

Finally, allow me to highlight that the governments of Argentina and the Kingdom of Thailand agreed to establish diplomatic relations on February 2, 1955. This means that Argentina and Thailand have enjoyed a long lasting and cordial relationship over sixty five years of bilateral ties.

Not only that, but Argentina was the first Latin-American country to establish diplomatic relations with Thailand and chose this country to establish its first Embassy in SE Asia.

#### **Were you and your late husband blessed with children?**

My husband was an outstanding Ambassador and was committed to his role in international relations. We had a fabulous marriage and were immensely happy. I accompanied him when he was appointed Chief of Mission in some countries in Europe. We never did have children.



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

I start my days early clearing emails, paperwork and my instructions from Buenos Aires. Then I must apply myself to the role of politics in Thailand. Make official visits with the various Thai government departments – trade, culture, cooperation and sports.

My role gives me an opportunity to fully engage in my job to which I have dedicated my life too. It could not be more interesting and overwhelming.

#### **I assume you have some goals you really would like to fulfil before you leave your post?**

I think that I have reached several goals during my posting here and the whole team at the Embassy work very hard to enhance our friendly and long lasting bilateral relations.

We make a special emphasis to diversify and grow trade and

commerce, as a priority of our government, as well as to detect investments in the field of energies amongst others. In September 2019, after many years of hard work, Thailand opened the market for Argentinian grapes and cherries, we are looking forward to seeing this product alongside our meat and wines in the local market.

I was also appointed as Ambassador to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Kingdom of Cambodia. I have to understand the complexities and cover them accurately, politically, economically and culturally. But I am fascinated with this part of the world and dedicated to my duties. In over sixty five years of fruitful relationship, several visits have been exchanged. The most relevant, President Arturo Frondizi, made the first Head of State visit to Thailand, in December 1961. He was received by King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit and Prime Minister Sarit Tamarat.

In October 1996 Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, made an official visit to Argentina, where he met with President Carlos Menem and inaugurated an exhibition on Thailand on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the coronation of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Later, President Menem officially travelled to Bangkok in February 1997, an occasion in which he was received by King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Prime Minister General Chawalit Yongjaiyut.

Several others took place, by Members of the Royal Family as HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and HRH Princess Chulabhorn.

As Chief of Mission, I have, since the beginning of my



tenure, been dedicated to maintaining links with the highest authorities of Thailand and to representing my country with pride. I have had interviews with Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and numerous members of the cabinet, amongst many other political, professional and commercial bodies.



The two countries have held four political and economic consultations over recent years – the last ones were held in Buenos Aires in 2017 – and we expect to do the same in Thailand during this year. This mechanism is very useful for both parties to exchange views on international, regional and bilateral matters of mutual interest and also to exchange ideas on ways and means to strengthen and expand that relationship.

Twelve bilateral agreements have been signed in very diverse areas such as trade, culture, science and technology and other topics.

Cultural and educational activities promote mutual understanding and awareness of our people. We must ensure that distance between our countries is a driving force - and not an obstacle - for both peoples and societies to meet and get acquainted.

In that sense, The Embassy has a very active cultural agenda – cinema festivals, tango performances, exhibitions, artists' visits, etc. Also, several agreements have been signed between Thai and Argentine universities in the last years.

In December 2019 we celebrated the 14th Polo Cup



“Embassy of Argentina” at the Thai Polo and Equestrian Club in Pattaya. This prestigious event is organised annually and has been successful in promoting and growing this fabulous engaging sport in particular and Argentinean gastronomy, culture and tourism in Thailand.

Last year was a great event and everybody enjoyed it very much. My country made really the headlines and I was very happy and delighted.

We have received several requests in the last few years from different Asian countries regarding the provision of training football managers and trainers, due to the high level of the sport played in Argentina.

We acknowledge the interest and importance of the practice to develop the level of the sport but also as a tool for social inclusion.

With a view to foster a desire to discover works of Argentine literature and thinking abroad, in 2009 we established a translation subsidy programme “Programa Sur” to promote and strengthen the publishing of Argentine works in a foreign language. This project was launched as a result of the commitment made by the Argentine government to promote the translation of works by Argentinian authors and to encourage their printing in foreign languages and to disseminate our imagery, ideas and values overseas. Since it was created,

the programme has awarded 800 works by more than 300 Argentinian authors and has been translated in to almost 40 languages.

As for international cooperation, Argentina has had for nearly 30 years the Argentine Fund for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (FO.AR) as its main tool to establish and to develop partnerships for development.

FO.AR is the foreign policy instrument whereby the Argentine Republic implements joint technical cooperation projects with other countries through mechanisms of association, collaboration and mutual support.







of delegations, myself and other officials.

My country has several investment opportunities in multiple fields. The power of its rivers, the ocean tides, the strength of its winds and the fertility of its soil are only some of the wonders offered by a wide variety of opportunities in energy generation and access.

The ample availability of natural resources added to the outstanding technical skills of human capital and the longterm public policies establish an excellent scenario for the materialisation of investment in Argentina.

The largest opportunities that my country provides in this field are renewable energies, oil and gas, mining, roads, railways, water and sanitation, irrigation, ports and airports, urban mobility, telecommunications and public housing.

Thailand has been our most important partner in this field in SE Asia. We are, of course, keen to expand this cooperation and open to receiving new proposals.

The latest project is related to forensics, called "Missing migrants and non-identified human skeletal remains: exhumation and analysis skills development" between the Central Institute of Forensic Science Thailand (CIFS) and the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (AFAT). Another, is related to biotechnology, "Genetic variability of sugar cane for bioenergy" between the Thailand Sugarcane Breeding Centre (TSBC) and the National Agricultural Technology Institute (INTA).



### Have you travelled around Thailand?

I constantly travel around Thailand, North, South and I like to discover new places off the beaten track. Thailand is a truly amazing country full of history and tradition which offers a wide range of possibilities to explore. The extraordinary nature of the tropical fauna and flora, the turquoise waters of the Andaman sea make a landscape of exquisite beauty. As a Buddhist I appreciate the magnificence of the Wats in the North as well as the majesty of the jungles and the beaches of the South.

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

Furthermore, the Embassy has organised several events to promote Argentine gastronomic products, with the aim of increasing visibility and spreading their name amongst the Thai public.

In this sense, as an example, numerous beef and wine tastings took place in important hotels in Bangkok, as well as at the Official Residence of the Ambassador.

I must highlight the role of Argentina as one of the largest food producers in the world and one of Thailand's main trading partners in Latin America.

During THAIFEX Argentina organised an Institutional and commercial mission of the Central Region to the Kingdom of Thailand, which was headed by the three Governors of the Provinces of Córdoba, Santa Fe and Entre Ríos, in the company of provincial officials and agri-food companies, with the objective of increasing exports and attracting investments to the sector.

I am proud that Argentina was the "Partner Country" of this annual exhibition and that we had a 300sqm pavilion, which was inaugurated by the Deputy PM Somkid Jatusripitak, the Argentine head

It is not easy to have a day off having 4 countries to take care and a small team at the Embassy. I am really a very happy person full of joy and gratitude, to be here is a blessing. For my holiday I travel back home to visit my dear Mother.





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

The Argentinean community living in Thailand is only around 150 people. But we have many tourist visitors – over 60,000 a year because Thailand is one of the most desirable destinations in Asia.

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

Under the American Field Service (AFS) programme many high school students travel to Argentina to complete an entire academic year. This growing number – since 2001, the Embassy has granted visas to almost 700 students under the framework - shows a keen interest in Argentina, not only for the language but also for our culture, customs and habits. Argentina is the preferred option for Thai students that choose to study in Latin America.

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

I do not choose a country or a place. I am a civil servant; therefore, I go where my government sends me. I am a career diplomat who loves her career and country and since the beginning I have been sure of what I am doing, so, irrespective of when and where I serve my country, I am happy.

**Any memory from Thailand that you'd like to share with us?**

Obviously the most important event in the Kingdom of Thailand was the passing of His Majesty the Late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The Great Monarch with the unique “Barami”, like the King Mogut or Chulalongkorn, was not only the Father of the Nation but also a great inspiration for the world.

I have never seen a whole country mourning the way the Thai people did. It was emotionally a dark period in Thailand's history and I personally mourned the whole year

alongside the Thai people in their sorrow, sadness and loss.

May the good deeds of H.M. the late King and the guiding light of the new King Maha Vajiralongkorn bring wellbeing to the Thai people.

The Coronation Ceremony of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, was a joyous and wonderful event that I will always treasure.

On both occasions – of course with different moods – I followed them from the depth of my heart. As a Buddhist I fully understand the religious Buddhist rituals and I was intensely moved.

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

I meet the community on the National Day. My fellow Argentinian's are of course always invited to cultural, sport and other events, and, of course, the Embassy and Consular Section is always open and available to them.

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

The most important task is to bridge the gap amongst our two nations in order to develop and build strong relationships in all areas between Thailand and Argentina for the benefits of our countries and wellbeing of our people.

I always ensure that the Argentine Embassy in Bangkok is focused on the importance that our government places in Asia in general and SE Asia in particular, and, therefore, I have set clear rules to strive and to



advocate for a realistic, proactive and complementary relationship with one of the most important countries in SE Asia, Thailand.

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

I congratulate King Maha Vajiralongkorn on his coronation and wish happiness, wellbeing for the Thai people.

I would like also to send my great appreciation to the government of Thailand for the successful job during the chairmanship of the ASEAN 2019.

My assignment could not be better and I put the best of my knowledge to keep fostering the bilateral relations between Argentina and Thailand.







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# THE 40th BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY of His Majesty The King of Bhutan

The Royal Bhutanese Embassy in Thailand celebrated the 40th birthday anniversary of His Majesty The King of Bhutan on the 21st February with a reception hosted by the Ambassador H.E. Mr. Tshewang Chopel Dorji and his lady wife Madam Karma Tsering at the Athenee Hotel in Bangkok.

The reception was well attended by members of the Privy Council, the diplomatic corps, Thai government officials, the Bhutanese community and friends of Bhutan. The programme began with the offering of Zhabten for the wellbeing and long life of His Majesty.

The Ambassador in his welcome remarks informed the gathering that the 40th birth anniversary is a significant and auspicious occasion for the Bhutanese community to pay tribute and celebrate the outstanding leadership of their selfless King, whose singular goal is to improve the social and economic wellbeing of the Bhutanese people while preserving, protecting and enhancing Bhutan's status as a sovereign independent nation.

Bhutanese students studying in various universities in Thailand presented a variety of cultural performances. Bhutanese cuisine and drinks were served.

The guests also had the opportunity to view royal photographs of His Majesty, as well as photographs taken by His Majesty during various occasions which were displayed in the gallery at the reception.



The reception concluded with Tashi-Lebay.

King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was born on 21st February 1980 and is the son of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck and is the current reigning Druk Gyalpo or Dragon King, of the Kingdom of Bhutan. He became King on 9th December 2006. A public coronation ceremony was held on 1st November 2008, an auspicious year that marked 100 years of Monarchy in Bhutan.

“A King’s sacred duty is in looking after the wellbeing and Kidu of our people. Thus, I have spent these years meeting my people in their homes and villages as I fulfil this duty. I pray that my people will utilise to the fullest the Kidu I strive to bring to them, and ensure that its benefits accrue, not only them but to the future generations.”

– His Majesty the King, 26th July 2012.

“In all my work, I consider my personal interactions with the people to be of greatest importance. Wherever I travel, I make it a point to enter every household and meet every family.

Besides this, I have also tried to meet every day, small groups of people from all walks of life.

In the two years since 2008, I have met about fifty thousand such people in my home. It is a source of great happiness for me that I am able to meet you, my people. With the old, I have the satisfaction of being able to express personal gratitude for their long service to the nation. With the young, I build the beginnings of a lifelong relationship through which we will serve the people and nation together.”

His Majesty’s royal address to the nation, 17th December 2010.











# My favourite Coffee Club branch

by Jocelyn Pollak

**A**s someone who doesn't drink coffee, I find it a bit amusing that Coffee Club has become one of my favourite spots in the city. I have lived in Bangkok for about seven years and until recently, I never went to Coffee Club because I thought it was just about coffee. I was so wrong. At this point, I have become a bit of a Coffee Club connoisseur and have racked up a ton of points on their app from ordering basically everything on the menu (besides coffee).

After having tried at least ten different locations all over Thailand, my favourite one is the Siam Paragon branch. I'm actually sitting here sipping some mango mojito iced tea as I write this. Most of the work I do is freelance and I'm often orbiting around Siam. Location wise, this branch is great for me. It took me a little while to find it because it's not where you would expect to find a restaurant – it's on the furniture floor. All Coffee Clubs have good Wi-Fi, this one is no exception, making it a great place to get some quality food/drinks and knock out some midday work. Since it's away from the hustle of the food court, I don't hear the constant din from the crowds outside which adds to the relaxing atmosphere.

I'm not exactly sure of the details, but this branch is a bit different from the others because it is in partnership with the luxury property company, Sansiri. The design and furniture are clean and bright with the overall look and feel of a hybrid between a comfy modern living room and a restaurant. Oversized off-white pillows in all sorts of different textures make the plush benches welcoming places to find respite from the bustle of the city.

There are tastefully done plants everywhere (some fake, some real) which makes for quite a tranquil environment. The soft jazz background music ties it all together.

The one thing that keeps me coming back to Coffee Clubs all around Thailand is the menu. I can always count on them to have a diverse offering of reasonably priced, high quality food. The menu has a few staples (which I hope the sun never sets on!) plus a selection of new dishes that rotate every 3-6 months or so. The drink menu is equally enticing. I prefer their tea selections but there are all sorts of creative coffee and smoothie options as well as some indulgent sweet treats.

For a refreshingly different Coffee Club vibe that keeps true to its roots of wonderful service and a delicious menu, give this branch at Paragon a try!





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# H.E. MR. GEOFF DOIDGE THE SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND

by Kathleen Pokrud

On April 27th 1994, millions of South African's turned out to cast their very first ballot to vote for two objectives, to end the apartheid system and for the very first time in three hundred and forty years of colonisation and minority rule, elect the government of their choice. This turning point in the political history of our country, is designated in law as Freedom Day and is celebrated on April 27th as our National Day. This was a watershed moment for all South Africans, and this was the birth of the "Rainbow Nation" united in our diversity.

The current day Republic of South Africa is a constitutional democracy, defined by its constitution as a non-racial, non-sexist state based on justice, equality, the rule of law and inalienable human rights for all. The South African Constitution is acknowledged to be the most progressive in modern times and has embedded in Chapter 2, the "Bill of Rights" which includes its distinct "Equality Clause" a first in a Bill of Rights.

Expat Life greatly appreciate His Excellency Mr. Geoff Doidge in granting us an interview despite his grueling schedule as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand, and also accredited to Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos whilst still a prominent national leader in South Africa.

## Political activist

Growing up in racially segregated communities and having witnessed firsthand the brutal racism and oppression and land dispossession through illegal forced removals based on race; Ambassador Doidge vowed to make a contribution to ending the brutal system of apartheid. His strong conviction for political and racial equality cost him to willingly sacrifice a thriving trading business built over a decade, to focus solely on the liberation struggle for a free and democratic South Africa.



Whilst many family members left the country in droves my family decided to remain, a choice that I am very proud of today.

Sharing the personal story, "My family was classified Coloured under the notorious Population Registration Act of 1950 which segregated all South Africans as either Bantu (Africans), Coloured (mixed races), White and Asian (Indians/Pakistanis) despite the fact that my grandfather was an Englishman, Ernest Doidge, a cabinet maker from Devonshire England and my grandmother was Stella Rose Doidge, a descendent of Sir Walter Booth.







time in the country of their birth. Under the leadership and Presidency of President Mandela and the Chairmanship of Archbishop Emeritus Tutu, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to “give a voice to the perpetrators and victims of apartheid and to provide a mechanism of restorative justice and to heal the wounds of the inhumane past.”

This had become institutionalised racism.

On my paternal side, some family members were classified as “whites” while others as “coloured”, not by choice. The Apartheid system was brutal as it compelled families to be separated, and was fittingly declared a crime against humanity by the United Nations.”

“South Africa is today a proud “Rainbow Nation” that found its own solutions through a highly acclaimed negotiated political settlement and found ways to overcome its many challenges, through which, the racial discrimination and oppression was ended. Today South Africa proudly has as its nation's motto, “United in Diversity”. The project of nation building is ongoing, notwithstanding the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment bequeathed to us by apartheid. We remain determined as we have been since 1912 that we will overcome these challenges.

President Nelson Mandela was 75 and Archbishop Desmond Tutu was 62 when they voted for the very first



South Africans deliberately chose restorative justice as opposed to retributive justice, as a means to reconcile the wounded nation and build a new nation, united in its diversity.

### Calling to serve the country

Ambassador Doidge was elected to Parliament for the African National Congress in 1994 and served for as an MP for sixteen years.

During the liberation struggle, the risks of being arrested and charged with treason were very real to the young family of Ambassador Geoff and Madame Carol Doidge. The couple was not discouraged and both were founding members of the then Kokstad Civic Association, he became Chairman of the Kokstad Branch of the African National Congress (banned at the time).







following five and half years as High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal. Prior to being posted to Sri Lanka, he was a National Government Cabinet Minister and served under President Kgalema Motlante to be followed by President Jacob Zuma. In 2011, President Zuma appointed Ambassador Doidge as the High Commissioner to Sri Lanka. As his first diplomatic posting, he was there for five and a half years.

I asked the Ambassador how he has found Thailand since his arrival; "It is almost four years since we first visited Thailand for the first time in May 2016. Two of my most memorable experiences were bearing witness to the passing on and funeral of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and the Royal Coronation of His Majesty Maha Vajiralongkorn. It was truly touching to observe such immense devotion that the Thai people have for the Monarchy and Royal Family."

Forging bilateral relationships between Thailand and

Candidly admitted, "Our roles in the liberation struggle exposed us to several risks and three attempts on my life."

Since the beginning of his political career in Parliament, Ambassador Doidge has served in numerous senior positions over the past 25 years, from being a Provincial Whip for Programming and Legislation Whip, Deputy Chief Whip of the Majority Party, Chairperson of Committees, and House Chairperson of Committees. He humbly declared, "I believe I served at the most intriguing time in the history of South Africa. I have been very fortunate to have the opportunity to meet President Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Winnie Madikizela Mandela and many other prominent leaders of our times."

### Moving to Thailand

Ambassador Doidge moved to Thailand in 2016, to be Ambassador of Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar,







South Africa since 1993 when the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and South Africa began, the relationship between the two countries has strengthened dramatically in all areas. His Excellency explained, “Thailand has embarked on a policy to expand its ties and influences with Africa which results in South Africa being Thailand’s largest trading and strategic partner. Simultaneously, South Africa also regards Thailand as a crucial gateway to SE Asia and the Mekong region countries”, he further added, “The South African-Thai Chamber of Commerce was established since 1995 and is critical partner in the promotion of trade and investment for South Africa. The Thai Government recognises and has a dynamic relationship with the African of Ambassadors Group as a strategic entity in its African agenda, something we African Ambassador highly appreciate,

In 2019, the top five exports from South Africa were iron and steel machinery, wood pulp and paper, chemicals and automotive parts. Top five export products from Thailand were original equipment components, machinery, automotive parts, plastics and rubber products, vegetables. Thailand enjoyed a trade surplus with South Africa because of the significant exports of original equipment component for the automotive industry for Toyota Motors and Ford Motor and several other brands. in South Africa.

### Member of G20 and BRICS

South Africa is a member of the G20 and BRICS. According to Ambassador Doidge, “We are well positioned as our gross domestic product accounts for 25% of the African continent, the highest industrial output and 50% of the continent’s spending power.” Under the stewardship of

His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa who took over the presidency of South Africa in 2018, a “New Dawn” policy was initiated for a new growth path in economic development and global competitiveness. “The development needs of the majority of our people have been the topmost priority of our government since 1994. To address the horrid legacy of the past where certain areas of our country still suffer from lack of electricity, infrastructure, running water, education and health facilities, the government endorsed the Reconstruction and Development Programme.”

South Africa was the last country to join BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). With a combined GDP of USD 18.6 trillion and accounted for 23.2% of the gross world product, all these BRICS countries represent the largest emerging market economics and have significant influence in their regional affairs. South African has made its position clear that its participation in BRICS is to be the voice and platform for Africa.

As a current member of the United Nations, South Africa fully participates in all other multi-lateral institutions and plays a purposeful role in world affairs. The South African government continued to call for comprehensive reforms of the United Nations and Security Council, and relentlessly offered its commitment to the World Trade Organisation.

### Inspiring South Africa

I asked Ambassador how many South Africans are in Thailand? “We estimate in the region of 1,500 South African residents in Thailand. As for South African tourists here, it is close to 100,000 while the Thai tourists to South Africa are in the region of 10,000 who are mainly high net worth visitors.”







Tucked away at the southern most tip of the African Continent, South Africa offers a wealth of different and beautiful attractions. It shares neighbouring borders with Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. South Africa encloses both Swaziland and Lesotho. It has an extensive coastline of over 2,700kms shared between the Atlantic Ocean on the west coast and the warm Indian Ocean on the East Coast.

South Africa is home to multi-cultural melting pot of 58 million beautiful people of diverse origins, cultures, languages and diverse religions. Although English is widely spoken and is used for informational signage, South Africa celebrates diversity in language with a total of eleven official languages. These languages are Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga and English. Ambassador Doidge speaks English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu and what remains of his childhood favourite Sesotho.

Home to the some of the African continent's best safari parks and protected destinations, South Africa offers the Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and rhino). Aside from attractive wildlife, the country's dramatic and stunning



landscapes, action-packed outdoor adventures, favourable vineyards to exotic cuisine, offer a staggering variety for visitors to indulge.

"Is South Africa safe to travel?" I asked Ambassador, as the frequent question is the concern of many first-time international visitors. "South Africa is safe if you are sensible and like any other destination in the world, caution is always advisable." I echoed Ambassador's sentiment; I visited South Africa a few times for business and personal reasons, and each visit was professional and awesome.

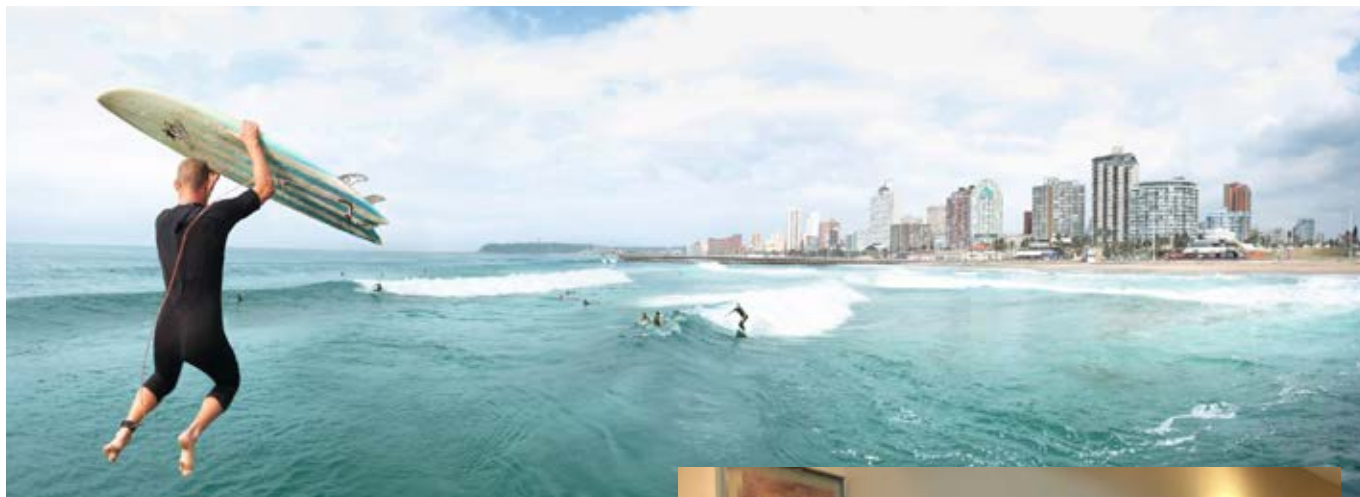
With my previous times to South Africa for business, I found the country to be very Westernised, especially Johannesburg. Cape Town is magical where my family spent two weeks on a self-drive vacation. To visit South Africa without learning about its turbulent history would be to miss a momentous part of the country's identity. Despite heart-wrenching to visit to the townships like Soweto (Jo'burg) or Gugulethu and its famous Mzoli's Place for an authentic South African Braai or to visit Robben Island in particular the jail cell of Nelson Mandela (Cape Town), seeing the

museum exhibits on the apartheid era help visitors like me to understand the fabric of South African society and appreciate how far The Rainbow Nation has come in building a new unified nation...

As Ambassador to Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, His Excellency travelled extensively throughout Thailand and the region.







He admitted frankly that it was difficult to pinpoint his particular favourite destination, as there are so many alluring and exotic places in the region.

Growing up on the farm, Glen Edward, on the foothills of the beautiful Drakensberg Mountains (the highest and longest mountain range in Southern Africa), which form the border between South Africa and the Kingdom of Lesotho, Ambassador Doidge welcomes the splendour of mountains natural beauty. "With the abundant fauna and flora across the magnificent mountain range in both summer and winter, I have always regarded my childhood home as "God's own country". I have many adoring memories of going camping with my father where we engaged outdoor activities like hiking, horse riding, hunting, and trout fishing".

With continuous visiting foreign delegations and overseas duties in the neighbouring countries, Ambassador Doidge has very little free time. If there is any precious opportunity to relax, "I consider myself an avid reader. I enjoy touring and exploring new places to indulge on my love for photography at the same time."

Nevertheless, "I love and enjoy my job in representing my country. I am passionate about what I do, I am always inspired and positive to serve!"



I am also supported and assisted by a very able and competent team of South African Officials and Thai personnel whose long service and high work ethic are an asset to our Embassy here in Thailand. The Thai Government and officials and it would be remis of me not to mention the Foreign Ministry are most supportive and accessible to us and we are grateful to have such a dynamic relationship.





# THE ROYAL CLIFF HOTEL IN PATTAYA

We decided to get away from the smog, traffic and the polluted air of Bangkok and decided to have a long weekend away at a large integrated resort within easy reach of the capital city.

I wanted somewhere that we could spend most of our time at without needing to leave the complex, so it had to be a large luxury 5 star complex with a varied choice of food and beverage options. A good quality spa for massages, steam, sauna and plenty to keep us occupied.

A complex that had private beach access but also a good swimming pool (they have 7)! A health and fitness centre, not for me, but for my partner, but I wanted somewhere that I could walk every day to get my exercise without having to take the same route. The Royal Cliff is set in more than 100 rai.

The drive down from Bangkok to Pattaya was pretty uneventful – just under 90 minutes but the moment I turned off the Phra Tamnuk Road into the entrance of the Royal Cliff Hotels Group, I could feel the stress levels subside, took a deep breath and soaked in the sights.

The manicured lawns, mature trees and beautiful colourful flower beds abound. The smartly dressed security guard saluted us and welcomed us to the and gave us a parking card.

I drove down the slope towards the Royal Cliff foyer of the hotel and we passed the convention and exhibition hall. I didn't realise at the time but PEACH stands for Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall. Apparently, it is 13,500sqm and can accommodate well over 10,000 guests in comfort for all manner of events – exhibitions, conventions, company meetings, weddings.

In front of the hotel there is a huge circular water feature and as I pulled up, I was met by both a security guard and bellboy who both welcomed us with a cheery greeting and



together they unpacked our luggage from the car and carried it to the foyer. I entered the large modern reception area.

It looked impeccably clean and as we walked towards the desk 2/3 uniformed staff said good morning to us.

We checked in our room which was ready despite us being early for the 12 midday check in. I liked that, it showed promise. The immaculately dressed young lady said that she would show us to our room.

There are 4 separate hotels on site it would seem, to suit all tastes. The Royal Wing Suites and Spa seems to be for the VVIP's. I haven't seen the rooms there personally but all the pictures that I saw and read indicate that this is where the celebrities and superstars stay. It looks wonderful, maybe one day...

Then there is the Royal Cliff Grand Hotel which I guess is the relative newcomer to the proposition which has 372 rooms, all with their own south facing secluded balcony with two day beds. It is a stylish elegant building with an expensive feel with its marble and teak floored lobby. It has its own swimming pool and a wide range of facilities. A luxurious spa, the Nah Pha Thai cooking school, 12 meeting rooms and high-speed internet in all rooms and suites, the Grand Hotel is ideal for







sophisticated business and or leisure travellers.

We stayed in the main hotel the Royal Cliff Beach Hotel on the seventh floor in an Ocean Deluxe room 36sqm and a 6sqm plus balcony which had sunrise and sea views, with table and chairs looked out over the vast terrace with two swimming pools. It was a lovely room, with light wood floors, delightfully appointed, very modern had a king size bed, lovely marble bathroom with a rain shower and a bathtub. It was light and airy and very well equipped with all the necessary amenities and many, many more.

The hotel has 11 different food and beverage options so there really is no need to set foot outside of the hotel complex and we didn't – well once and I regretted that!

Each morning we had breakfast in the Panorama all day dining restaurant. A buffet breakfast to behold. I have never seen so much food which was constantly being refreshed and added to by the chefs and waiting staff. Being Western I had juice to start, cereals with milk and fresh fruit. Poached eggs with sautéed spinach, some lightly cooked bacon, grilled tomatoes and fresh French croissants. Plus 2/3 café latte each morning. I usually ate too much and had to skip lunch! Fit to burst... my eyes were larger than my stomach!

We had Indian one evening in the Maharani – which was delicious. Chinese another evening in the Huang Chao – lived up to expectations. The Royal Grill Room with a fine bottle of Argentinian Malbec another evening. The Caprice for a touch of French nouvelle cuisine the following day. The Larn Thong traditional Thai another evening and we still did not visit all the specialty restaurants.

My partner took tennis lessons, spent a fortune at the beauty salon, spa and visited the health and fitness suite on a regular basis (so she told me). I swam in three of the swimming pools and managed to walk around the grounds



almost every day, I was very proud of myself!

We had two spa visits where I steamed, sweated profusely in the sauna, and relaxed in the Jacuzzi whilst my partner had body wraps, a facial and a body scrub. We came out glowing with pride...

We walked to and along the beach one day and sat watching the activities with a cafe latte on the shoreline. There was plenty to watch with people swimming, shrieking, playing on the sandy beach, on jet skis and further out the fishing boats and pleasure craft. But I preferred the sanctuary of the hotel complex, which was quieter, secluded and more private.

We had a lovely break, only left the complex once and I wanted to get back after 20 minutes, so I can recommend it highly!

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# MEET THE CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR H.E. AMBASSADOR MR. SORPHORN OUK

**C**ambodia, officially known as the Kingdom of Cambodia, is a country located in the southern portion of the Indochina peninsula in SE Asia. It is 181,035 square kilometres in the total area, bordered by Thailand to the Northwest, Laos to the Northeast, Vietnam to the East, and the Gulf of Thailand to the Southwest.

The sovereign state of Cambodia has a population of over 15 million citizens, of which 90% belong to the Khmer ethnic group. The official religion is Theravada Buddhism, practised by approximately 90% of the population. Cambodia's minority groups include Vietnamese, Chinese, Chams and 30 hill tribes.

The capital and largest city is Phnom Penh, the political, economic and cultural centre of Cambodia. The kingdom is an elective constitutional monarchy with a monarch, currently Norodom Sihamoni, chosen by the Royal Council of the Throne as the head of state. The head of government is the Prime Minister, currently Hun Sen, the longest serving non-royal leader in SE Asia, ruling Cambodia since 1985.

Looking back through the history, Cambodia had both prosperous and destructive periods. In 802 AD, King Jayavarman II declared himself the King, uniting the warring Khmer princes of Chenla under the name “Kambuja”. This marked the beginning of the Khmer Empire, which

flourished for over 600 years, allowing successive kings to control and exert influence over much of SE Asia and accumulate immense power and wealth.

The Indianised kingdom facilitated the spread of first Hinduism and then Buddhism to much of SE Asia and undertook many religious infrastructural projects throughout the region, including the construction of more than 1,000 temples and monuments in Angkor area. Angkor Wat is the most famous of these structures and is designated as a World Heritage Site.

After the fall of Angkor in 1431, the kingdom entered a dark period, experienced scarce resources and internal conflicts, and occupied by a different lineage of the Khmer kings who took the opportunities to establish their own power and empires including Chaktomuk (1431-1516), Longvek (1516-1620), and Oudong (1620-1863).

Cambodia became a protectorate of France for nearly a century (1863-1953) before it gained full independence back in 1953 and proclaimed itself as Sangkomreasnium regime (1955-1970), the second golden age of Cambodia under leadership of King Norodom Sihanouk. Between 1970 and 1991, the kingdom experienced regime changes such as Khmer Republic (1970-1975); Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979); People's Republic of Kampuchea (1979-1989); and State of Cambodia (1989-1993). Following Paris Peace Accords (October 23, 1991), Cambodia was governed briefly by







a United Nations Mission whose main task was to organize the state's first democratic election, participated by Cambodian citizens. The UN withdrew after holding elections in which around 90% of the registered voters cast ballots. Cambodia, once again, became a sovereign, independent, permanent and neutral state as described in the 1993 constitution. The monarchy was then restored, King Norodom Sihanouk was on the throne again, and the country was renamed as the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The Win-Win policy brought by Prime Minister Hun Sen in 1998 has ended a decade of war and armed conflicts. The kingdom then enjoyed full peace and reconciliation when the Khmer Rouge defected and joined the government. Today, Cambodia is a member of the United Nations since 1955, ASEAN, the East Asia Summit, the WTO, the Non-Aligned Movement and la Francophonie.

While per capita-income remains low compared to most neighbouring countries, Cambodia has one of the fastest growing economies in Asia, with growth averaging 7.6% over the last decade. Agriculture remains the dominant economic sector, with strong growth in textiles,

construction, garments and tourism leading to increased foreign direct investment and international trade. The United Nations designates Cambodia as a least developed country.

Expat Life was pleased to sit down with Cambodian Ambassador to Thailand H.E. Mr. Sorphorn Ouk and ask him about what the new Cambodia is all about.

Despite being neighbours for over 1,000 years, it was somewhat surprising

to learn that Thailand and Cambodia have only had diplomatic relations since 1950. For two countries that have such ancient histories, 70 years is but the blink of an eye. 2020 marks the 70th anniversary of diplomacy between these two SE Asian kingdoms and as the head of Cambodian diplomats in the Kingdom of Thailand, H.E. Mr. Sorphorn Ouk has assured that there is so much to look forward to.

Sorphorn was born just a week before the Khmer Rouge came into power in 1975. Though he was just a baby during the Cambodian genocide which took the lives of nearly 25% of Cambodia's population, he grew up in the unstable aftermath of the tyrannical regime. In spite of the darkness and war, Sorphorn drew inspiration from

the resilience of Cambodian people and has dedicated his life's work to helping his countrymen realise a better future. "Peace has been hard-earned in my homeland and my government has pledged to maintain this peace so that Cambodia may attain her full potential."

After earning his Associate's degree, he began to work in the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, quickly moving into leadership positions domestically and within ASEAN. In 2001, Sorphorn went back to school to earn his Bachelor's Degree in General Management, while simultaneously working various jobs within ASEAN. Interestingly, his current Ambassadorship is not his first long-stay in Thailand.





In 2008, he attended Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok for his Master's in Political Science and completed his thesis on the Future Direction of ASEAN. "I have many friends in Thailand and when I returned to serve as Ambassador last year, it felt like I was coming home." His years of public service, continuing education and direct exposure to Thailand made him a unique fit to assume the Ambassadorship position in April of 2019. As he nears his one-year mark, he has already accomplished a great deal, and he outlined the major focuses that he has for the duration of his appointment, all of which are centered around strengthening Thai-Cambodian relations.

One of Sorphorn's biggest focuses is on people and how Thais and Cambodians can work together for mutual benefit. He sees a lot of similarities between Thailand and Cambodia: both are kingdoms, both are primarily Buddhist with rich histories and traditions, the food is quite similar and both cultures see the power in a good smile with "Sampeas" as a polite way of greeting.

Luckily, Thailand has not experienced the bloodshed and hardship that Sorphorn's own people have endured. However, Thailand has opened their homeland for Cambodians to stay and work. There are nearly 1.2 million Cambodians in Thailand. They are mostly employees, labourers, students, and monks. As the Ambassador, it's Sorphorn's responsibility to look after their well-being and he takes this duty quite seriously. He has been to more than 30 provinces in Thailand to meet Cambodians and talk with

them about the importance of having the correct paperwork so they can legally work and reside in their adoptive home. He believes legal compliance is so important that he physically goes to meet with workers who need assistance and sometimes spends hours in Cambodian communities just for photo opportunities. He aims to provide better services to all Cambodians living and working in Thailand.

In terms of commerce, his focus is largely in two areas: border trade/transportation and investment. Thailand sells fuel, petroleum oils, machinery, electric parts, construction materials, consumer products and industrial products to Cambodia. Cambodia sells agricultural products such as corn, soybean, maize and cassava, ignition wiring sets and scrap gold to Thailand. In the past, there were long lines at the borders which impeded trade. On the Cambodian side, he has worked to better organise traffic and improve the roads in order to cut down on these literal roadblocks to trade. Not only is he promoting overland transport improvements to increase trade, he's hoping that this will encourage more people to come to Cambodia by bus so that they can see the beautiful landscape and what Cambodian people are all about. He wants more Thai people to familiarise themselves with their neighbour as Thais are currently ranked the third nationality for entries to Cambodia. It's just a three-hour drive to the border from Bangkok and another three to Siem Reap.

A major infrastructure project will be completed in 2020: the Cambodia-Thailand Friendship Bridge with customs offices on both sides. In addition to the new bridge, in April of 2019, the handover ceremony of the four Diesel Multiple Units (DMU) or train heads was held. Both the rail and bridge links are sure to improve trade routes between the kingdoms. On top of these major infrastructure projects, there are 19 border checkpoints with 7 international checkpoints. He hopes to upgrade another 4 international checkpoints during his tenure to provide more additional gateways for international travel and trade.

Cambodia is ripe for investment. As the country has been at peace for more than 20 years now, they have demonstrated that they are dedicated to stability and growth. The GDP has grown six-fold in this time period from US\$3.1 billion to





US\$24.4 billion. With the opening of the new international checkpoints, he anticipates even greater trade growth.

One of the best reasons to invest in Cambodia is they waive taxes for the first nine years. Coupled with an inexpensive labour force and steady growth, this makes it quite an attractive place to invest. There are already more than 1,000 Thai companies registered with the Ministry of Commerce in Cambodia including some major players like BJC Big C Group, Makro, Siam Cement Group, and so on. For anyone looking to invest in Cambodia, the Ambassador suggests construction, tourism, real estate and agriculture. In response to economic growth, the Cambodian government is seeking to open embassies in new countries so that they aren't reliant only on their current partners.

While tourism isn't one of the top earners for Cambodia, Sorphorn sees it as an area that should not be neglected. They currently earn about US\$4.35 billion from tourism, which is nothing to scoff at. As the home of Angkor Wat, one of the most incredible ancient sites in the world, Cambodia definitely has a gem to entice people to visit. Besides the Angkor Wat, Phnom Penh has an impressive Royal Palace and National Museum that is frequented by an increasing number of travellers.

Cambodia also has beaches and islands that haven't yet experienced the development boom that their neighbouring countries have so they are still somewhat. With something for everyone plus a friendly population, great food and inexpensive prices, Cambodia is set up to be a major player in the tourism arena.

So, what does the Ambassador see for the future of his beloved Cambodia? With all the attention toward development, investment and people, Cambodia has already proven its dedication to improving the lives of its people. According to the World Bank, Cambodia's status changed from a less-developed country to a lower-middle income country in 2015. The poverty rate has dropped from 53% (in 2004) to 10% (in 2018). As a countrywide goal, Cambodia is aiming toward transforming into an upper-middle income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050.



This clearly presents a good opportunity for international investors and Cambodians alike. After all the time he has spent here, Sorphorn feels like Thailand is home away from home. In his current position he will be here for another three or four years. The food and the shopping make it an enjoyable place for him and his family. In coming years, there is a lot to look forward to for the continued positive relationship between these brother kingdoms.

*“The Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand is preparing a number of activities to mark our 70th year of official friendship, in the spirit that what we have in common has united us since time immemorial. May we record another 70 years of prosperity in peace and may we live on as an example to our brothers and sisters in the broader ASEAN community.”*





# EATING AND HEALING WITH TRADITIONAL FOOD

by Sevcen Gast and Tara Conrad



of Ayurveda treatment stems from our personality traits and the belief is that adjusting your diet, can balance and synchronise the health and wellbeing of your mind as well as your body.

In Chinese culture not only did they believe that eating certain foods were beneficial to their wellness, the Chinese also believed the way you eat can influence your health. For example, when eating a meal, it is important to eat while sitting down and slowly in a quiet place. It is essential to chew your food well and warm cooked food is better for digestion than raw foods. It is unhealthy for the body to skip meals and you should not eat a meal while distracted. They also believed it was important to nap after eating to help food digest. In our crazy, fast paced,

world we live in today, it is very difficult to accomplish even one of these important habits

*Food is one of the most important parts of our everyday lives, culture and community. It brings people together and is used in times of celebration and festivals.*

**T**raditionally, food was not as abundant as it is today. More often than not, food was used during celebrations, but mostly it was used for sustenance and, in some, cultures it was used for healing. As time moved forward and the world became industrialised food became easier to access, very plentiful, and much cheaper. In today's world, for most, food has become more of a want than a necessity and as the quantity of it has increased the quality has decreased. Society and cultures stepped away from using food as a sustenance and maintaining health and wellbeing and used it to fulfil cravings and to indulge in regularly. This has led to the increase in lifestyle and chronic diseases amongst many different cultures, including, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Food is no longer healing us, but slowly making our lives unhealthier. The following takes a look at different cultures and their use of certain foods to help heal our bodies.

In India, the traditional Ayurveda medicine included nutrition. Food was thought to heal and prevent illness, creating a balance between the mind and body. The basis

The following are a list of foods that are used both in Ayurveda medicine or traditional Chinese healing, and can easily be incorporated into a healthy daily diet, as they are readily available in most cultures.

**Ginger:** The ginger roots, fresh and dry forms, help for the digestion process by stimulating the digestive enzymes and has scientific approval for it. The efficacy of ginger rhizome







has been well documented for the prevention of nausea, dizziness, and motion sickness (1).

**Cumin seeds:** Cumin (*Cuminum cyminum* L) is a leafy plant that grows low to the ground in China, India, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean region. Black cumin, *Nigella sativa* L. seeds contain antioxidants and anti-inflammatory effects, so it has been used since centuries in Middle East, Northern Africa and India for the treatment of asthma, cough, bronchitis, rheumatism (2). The anticancer properties of cumin seeds are also well known, such as in cancer prevention and also as anti-proliferative and chemo preventive agent. (3), (4), (5). Otherwise, cumin seeds are used as a potent analgesic (6).

**Mung beans:** The seeds and sprouts of mung bean play a physiological function in antifungal, antitumour genesis, anti-oxidation, improving immunity, and reducing cholesterol (7).

**Almonds:** Regular consumption of almonds has been associated with reduced risk of a variety of chronic disease, including obesity, heart disease, and diabetes (8).

**Dates and figs:** Supplements like dates and fig exert their beneficial effects against neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease (9).

**Garlic:** Sulphur compounds, including

allicin, appear to be the active components in the root bulb of the garlic plant. In 1858, Pasteur noted garlic's antibacterial activity, and it was used as an antiseptic to prevent gangrene during World War I and World War II. Garlic is well known for many properties, such as lipid-lowering effects,

antihypertensive effects and other cardiovascular-related effects, anti-neoplastic effects and antimicrobial effects (10).

**Cloves:** Dietary supplementation with cloves reduces tissue injuries, especially in the lens and cardiac muscles. Additionally, the cloves treatment significantly reduces blood sugar increases and restores the antioxidant enzyme levels (11).

To be fair, we feel the pendulum shifting back again, as people become more educated about nutrition and their bodies, they are drifting back to eating for nourishment and health as opposed to eating for enjoyment and fun. This has become more popular as we see super foods and healthy restaurants marketed everywhere and as many lifestyle diseases become more and more prevalent, we must face that our food can actually help heal us, and eating the right foods can be beneficial to our overall wellbeing.

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Slovakia is a small country located in the middle of Europe not very well known in Thailand. So it was a very good news for me to learn that Kathleen Pokrud together with her husband visited my home country. My pleasure was enhanced, when she informed me that she had written an article about her short trip to Slovakia and about her impressions of our country for Expat Life in Thailand. Unfortunately, due to the lack of time she only visited the capital city Bratislava, which is one of Europe's youngest capital's although its history goes back thousands of years.

But Slovakia has much more to offer each and every visitor. Along with the many tourist attractions and opportunities to unwind, relax or set out on an adventure, it truly is a natural meeting point. And all this is to be found concentrated in one small area.

I am convinced that if you spent more time here than Kathy and her husband that you will inevitably succumb to our country's charm. Please take time out to visit our breathtaking mountains and national parks. Explore at least one of our numerous large caves, dozens of picturesque, historic town centres or healing spas famed for their beneficial effects. Spend the day at one of our highly equipped ski resorts or world class golf courses. Then you can decide which appeals more to you most. The vibe of the capital city of Bratislava or the unique folk architecture of the countryside. In either case, I am sure that you will be disappointed.

Readers of Expat Life, explore the best of Slovakia, get to know her wonderful people and make sure you do not miss out on a single natural attraction... except perhaps the sea...

I hope that you enjoy reading!

## H.E. Mr. Stanislav Opiela Ambassador of Slovakia to the Kingdom of Thailand

### BRATISLAVA: The Capital of Slovakia The beauty on the Danube

*by Kathleen Pokrud*

On planning our Eastern Europe trip, Budapest and Prague were the major cities on our list. As I researched on the map, Slovakia is bordered between Hungary and the Czech Republic, with its capital "Bratislava" which I couldn't pronounce properly the first time. It made sense to stop over for a two nights stay, and we never regretted a moment of it.

Established for only a short span of 27 years, the landlocked country Slovakia is officially known as The Slovak Republic. Bratislava, a city of half a million inhabitants, is often referred to as the Beauty on the Danube. It lies in the north by the confluence of the Morava River with the mighty Danube, and in the south by the fertile valleys of the Rye Island. Bratislava is uniquely positioned in the immediate vicinity of the border of two neighbouring countries – Hungary and Austria.





### Bratislava Castle

The castle, on its hill above the old town, dominates the city of Bratislava. The site of the Bratislava Castle has a rich historical past. It is believed that to have been inhabited for over 4,500 years. Castle Hill was populated as early as the late Stone Age and its first known inhabitants were the Celts. Official records show that the castle was an important fortress during the Great Moravian period in the 9th Century. Numerous battles and changes in the seats of governments took places in the hundreds of years that followed. One of the present-day “Crown Tower”, which is the largest of the four existing towers of the structure was built around 1250. Since its independence, the castle serves the purpose of a representative venue for the Slovak Parliament and the Historical Department of the Slovak National Museum.

### Devin Castle

With the historical background under the rule of the Hungarian empire, Bratislava entwines part of its history with Budapest. It also serves as a younger version of the more prominent cities like Prague and Vienna. Nevertheless, many modern travellers like me fall in love with this romantic city with its architectural grandiose, fascinating museums, and elaborate old houses.

When I walked around Bratislava, I could feel the local Slovak charm by seeing mostly local residents, which is unequivocally not the case in Budapest, Prague and Vienna, when one can encounter foreign tourists everywhere. I found the city vibrant and dynamic. I was delighted with the size of Bratislava and its allurements. Sometimes, the appeal of a city is lost when it is overcrowded with tourists.

We spent an entire morning soaked in the rich medieval history of Devin Castle, which is mirrored in its ruins. The castle marked the glory and fall of Great Moravia and was blown up by Napoleon's armies. It was later declared as a national cultural monument of Slovakia. Devin Castle is situated in Devin, which is a borough of Bratislava, a short drive out from the city centre. Situated on a high cliff over the Morava and Danube rivers, it offers panoramic views of the frontiers between Slovakia and Austria.

Inside the castle walls, my first stop was a Christian chapel from the 4th Century. It is a one room building with the fundamentals of the chapel. I felt the tranquility of the atmosphere. The ruins of the Devin Castle were a delightful area to walk around.





## Slovakian people

A history lesson... since the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic were officially separated. As a visitor tourist, it may be worthwhile to learn about the country behind the Iron Curtain in the past.

Additionally, Slovaks will often feel offended if outsiders confuse Slovakia with Slovenia (though they sound very alike they are in fact, unquestionably two separate countries). Multinational corporations have offices in Bratislava, which is rated as the sixth richest region in the European Union when comparing GDP per capita.

## Food and wine

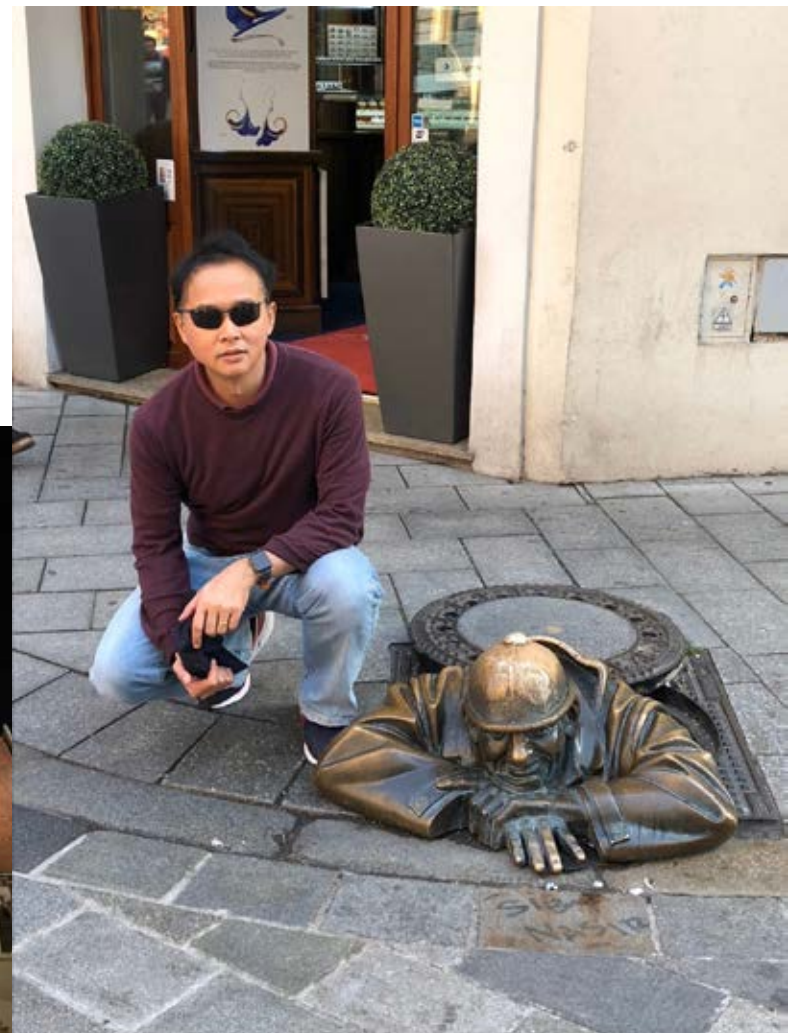
### A walk around the Old Town

The old town of Bratislava is definitely a place worth to visit for its romantic charm. It is very compact and easy to navigate with spectacular historical buildings, narrow corridors, clock towers and cobblestone streets. Pedestrian only areas offered a perfect leisurely stroll. For two nights, we enjoyed the walk back to our hotel under the cool autumn sky and crisp fresh air. There are plenty of shops, cafes and restaurants to explore. Do not miss the man at work bronze statue!

During our walk around the old town, we saw a long queue of people outside one particular patisserie. We were attracted by its exceptional window display. It turned out the building that housed the tearoom is 100 years old, furnished in grandeur with Parisian mirrors, ornate light fixtures and carved wood panels. We sat at marble tables and were served with antique china porcelain and silver cutlery.

While indulging in the gorgeous cakes on offer, we admired the Italian Renaissance paintings on the ceiling walls. This amazing afternoon tea set cost us only 10 euros each. Simply, splendid and I highly recommend to visit this gem!

During our two days in Bratislava, we tasted some authentic Slovak cuisine which was only available in Slovakia itself. Slovak cuisine was greatly influenced by their two neighbouring countries, Austria and Hungary. I found the food in Slovakia wholesome. Meat, sheep cheese, dumplings and potato make the basis of many dishes, and the desserts are sweet.







Here are some of the unique Slovakian dishes:

- Potato dumplings with sheeps cheese
- Pork with dumplings and cabbage
- Fried cheese in breadcrumbs
- Schnitzel
- Potato pancake
- Cabbage soup
- Goulash soup
- Slovak pancakes

Although Slovak wines are not well known internationally, they are popular domestically and in neighbouring countries.

The quality of Slovak Wines has been proved by dozens of awards from prominent international competitions and from year to year their numbers grow. Wine is produced mainly in the Bratislava region called – Small Carpathian Wine Region.

### Take a bite of the Golden Apple

The Golden Apple award in the field of tourism is equivalent to the Oscar Academy awards in the film industry. The prize was “picked” by Bratislava in 2017 to salute its excellent achievements in the ‘destinations’ category from the World Federation of Travel Journalists and Writers (FIJET).

*It acknowledges the city's representation of crossroads rich in history, culture and experience. There have been different nicknames for Bratislava purposely engaging such as BARTislava, PARTYslavia because of the fun in the city's nightlife. For me, the name of Bratislava is just fine being a romantic European city!*







## Adana Legros in her own words...

by Adana Legros

**A** 24 year old Franco-Cambodian, I spent most of my life in Cambodia travelling around the world with my parents. I ended up studying Law and Political Science at university in France. During my studies my path took a different turn after falling ill with cancer. That disease transformed my body and soul and I abruptly became an artist and activist.

I remember, even if I was very young, the noise of shelling and mortars falling near our home in 1997. The sound of death traumatised me as my family was stuck in the coup and evacuated by the International Red Cross.

I understand how a child can be traumatised by the sound of war and gunpowder and the smells of death. Those events initiate my sense of activism and the absolute necessity

to fight for peace and protect children from adult's madness, war and their consequences.

My parents in the mid 90s opened a Cambodian NGO fighting sex slavery and human trafficking. In nine years, it became one of the most recognised NGOs internationally. They expanded to operating in 9 countries. I grew up with girls and women from the centre. They were like family to me. I gradually been sensitised to violence, rape, domestic violence, human trafficking, social perversion and decadence.

I was around seven year's old when my father asked my mother to prepare luggage and leave the country within the next 4 hours. My sister, older than me, was so terrified she just hugged me all the time. My parents received one more deadly threat from the pimps/traffickers. My father taught me how to manage my stress during those events. He evacuated our family secretly to Laos where we stayed a few months hoping that the problem would resolve itself. I was facing the possibility of losing both of my parents and we learned later on, that the traffickers had threatened to rape and kill my sister and I as well. I started to have doubts about Homo sapiens and our ability to be empathetic.

Since that time my lifestyle changed. I went to school with bodyguards and was not allowed to play normally outside or even have friends. My life was like a canary in a gilded cage, a living prison. I remember my bodyguard who I named "Monster". He was 190cm high and 110kg of sheer muscle. He was so kind to us, so gentle, handling us girls politely with sweetness. He had a big gun with him at all times and a Kalashnikov at home. In fact, he was a killer but I did not see him as that.

The stress was so draining on my parents that they separated and later divorced. My world exploded, witnessing unimaginable destruction. It was like having two







tigers trapped in the same room. My father left home to stay on his boat on the Mekong river. This experience was one of the most traumatic. I had and I am convinced that my cancer matured at that time refusing to accept my parents' separation. I was sick of their constant bickering and fighting. I was looking down on myself watching my own "descent into hell". At school, I got bad grades. I couldn't concentrate on my studies. My mother became distant from me, from us – my sister and I. My father was fighting to survive the separation as he lost everything; his job, his children and his honour...

My revolt started to mature inside my mind and I wanted to act for them and the humans.

My mother, Somaly Mam, born in Cambodia around 1970, before the Khmer Rouge. She had been disturbed and distressed by the Cambodian history, the war, the senseless killing and the genocide. She herself, was a victim of sex slavery. After meeting my father, she became an

international icon of women's rights and a controversial personality fighting the sexual slavery of children.

In trans-generational psychology, I like to think that I was predestined to fight for women and children right as well as against all form of inequity.

Today, I still fight to overcome all my traumas from my childhood and teenage years. I've been attending psychoanalysis for almost 3 months now and I have learned a lot about myself, my past and my traumas. I've also learned a lot about us, human beings.

"Humans are only the expression

of their genes, cultures and neurosis". We all have to work on those issues. It is why my activism is related to self-awareness, self-understanding and empathy.

As for my French father, Pierre Legros, orphaned by his father, he was trained as a tropical disease specialist. He worked in Africa with the Pasteur Institute, then came to Thailand with MSF (Medecins Sans Frontieres) working on the Cambodian, Vietnamese and Karen refugees' camps. Humanist by political conviction, he educates me in this framework. He arrived in Cambodia in 1989 just a few months after the Vietnamese army withdraw the country. Being a malaria technical advisor, he travelled all around the country and discovered the devastation of Cambodia. From the film "The Killing Fields" to reality. He assisted the invasion of Cambodia by the United Nations and the installation of the international community. "A mega disorder" he repeated to me. It is why he opened the NGO with my mother.

At 16 years old, I left my mother's house and stayed with him. From then on, I followed his education. At that time, I was a self-destructive teenager with tremendous pain. I was suffering. The time spent with my father, helped me to pull myself together. Step by step, I was able to rise up through the most devastating moments in my life.

His education was based on building a strong emotional foundation.







Every summer vacation I was able to fly to be with my mother while she was working. I was able to attend important event such as the Glamour Price Award, the Prince of Asturias Awards... I was also able to visit the Queen of Spain at the Royal Palace, to visit Hollywood actors and actresses, assist a New York Time journalist during a documentary on women's rights.

I was made aware of the existing gaps in our global society. This environment made me prematurely aware of the problems of the contemporary world. I was revolted by social injustices and the world evolution. I often asked myself, if we, humans, are too ignorant or too simpleminded to understand that our global civilisation is going to crash. We call ourselves

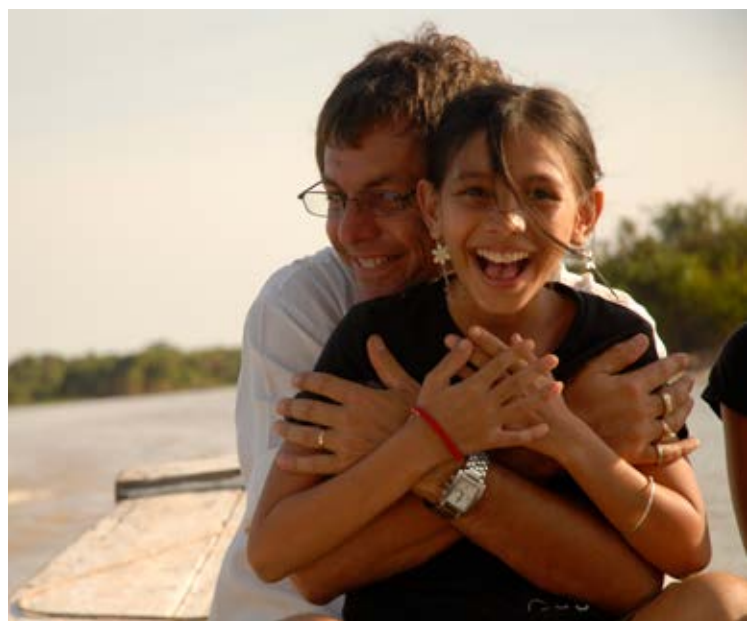
the most evolved and intelligent species, but we are somehow unable to be in charge or control of our own evolution.

I also understood that money was not the solution to all human problems. Economy is a scam. This is what read from numerous philosophers, activism, economists. It never has been a hard science and will never be. It is not because mathematicians integrate algorithms, that economy can become a hard science. How can we base everything around it? How can we possibly believe that GDP is a development value? It only considers the money and not the human values.

Most of the philosophers nowadays say that our global religion is money. I hope that the meaning of our lives is not only based on consumption and number.

Our world is driven by lies, corruptions and decadence in our political systems. It is time to wake up. It is time to reconnected with our world and our values as humans. All in all, I'm optimistic because I have to be and because I see people gathering together for the same reason.

During my third year of law school, multiple events have terribly impacted me. On the day of my birthday in 2015, on the corner of the hospital room, I was watched my Uncle die from cancer. A few months after, my Grandmother passed away from a heart attack. The pain of losing members of the family is unbearable. Two years spent in France was a harsh time confronting the truth of life, the meaning of impermanence. I started to read more and more books,



That abled me to be tough enough to fight through cancer. He taught me to be a fighter and to never give up. He taught me multiple life lessons but the most important one is never to be too scared to dream big and no dream is impossible. Know your goal and set your objectives. He gave me his 30 years of life experiences and lessons through his education. He taught me to learn from his mistakes.

Most of my childhood, I felt powerless. I was indignant by the violence and the inability of human to be empathetic. I was angry at the world for being selfish and ignorant. Nowadays, I still feel so resentful of the way Homo Sapiens choose their path.

I participated in my parents' NGO at many levels since an early age. From social work to international travelling for conferences. I played a role in fundraising and learnt how to give speeches.







willing to be prepared for the campaign I want to launch. A movement I am preparing.

At the end of 2016, my cancer was discovered when I was in Cambodia doing a documentary on a story of a victim of abuse. I had to spend 18 hours alone on a flight back to France. In those moments, I was facing humans worst fear – death. One call with my father, he said “Arm yourself with patience, courage and meditate as much as possible”. I understood the wisdom and importance of parenthood. The cornerstone of the life cycle, we are not aware that it is a masterpiece of our evolution and our future. In my campaign, I will explain why parenthood is so important on our life and on our evolution.

“Journey to Wisdom” was the title I wrote down on my journal. The mind and body couldn’t process all the traumatic events happening in a short period of time. It was a bit harsh to celebrate being 21 years old in a hospital bed fearing the worst. No matter the age, no one is prepared for the amount



of pain and fear I was experiencing. I was forced to learn the impermanence of life, a lesson from Buddha.

Shaving my own head was a symbol of accepting my illness. The complete acceptance of cancer, is to completely accept one’s own death which is for me, one of the most important lesson in our life. If we avoid our mortality, how can we truly live?

The heart attack I had in the hospital was the turning point. The anxiety haunted me for months until the day I was able to move on and accept. Nothing seemed to matter anymore. I saw human inner misery with distance. Life itself wasn’t important anymore. I felt free from the attachment of everything, as the truth remains the same. Death is not something we can avoid but we have to accept.

All that was left to really matter, was the notion of time. Every minute felt more important to be in the present. I was able to grasp every moment I was saying goodnight to my father. I understood that the only thing that was important was being in the now and sharing that moment.







I am learning not to hate and to forgive because most of human's corruptions come from hate. We are living in a corrupt and perverted system. The system is only the projection of each one of us. If we are not yet aware of ourselves, our thought process, our psych mechanism, our actions, how can one be possibly aware of the existence of others and it's environment. This can only result in an evolution towards absurdity and nonsense. I am asking you. I am asking us. I am asking Homo Sapiens, where are we evolving? Where is our limit? Where is our ethic, our responsibility? Where is the human in us?

My message is "Either we control our evolution harmoniously and with consciousness now, or evolution will compromise us". It is time to wake up. Perhaps the COVID-19 pandemic will have the impact on in this process.

It is time to act globally with ethics and responsibility. My role as an artist and activist, after having launched an international call for an art renaissance is to ask the right questions about our future choices in our societies, our impacts and earthly footprints, our desire to live together in conviviality, not in an inept competition.

I hope that you will see some of me in my art.

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

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After going through cancer, a probable death, I reached out and found my answer of life, of its meaning. To leave this world by knowing I have done my best, to be a part of a great change.

During illness, I have learned to use my solitude to observe the inner and the outside world. To observe my thoughts, actions, and reactions. I have learned to be honest to myself and to others. Learned to be ethical and responsible.

















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## GETTING TO KNOW STEFAN SANCHEZ ... BANGKOK MAESTRO

by Robin Westley Martin

*Bangkok is a city of many sights, sounds, flavours, tastes, and aromas... all of which are essentially Bangkok. But I believe that another facet of Bangkok that makes it so fascinating is the eclectic mix of interesting people that this giant city has drawn into it, who have chosen to make it their home, or base of operations.*

I am lucky in my profession that I have been able to meet many of them. On one of my assignments around town I had chanced to meet Darren Royston, highly regarded choreographer and dancer from Britain's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA). Over an interesting and illuminating chat I told him about my interest in music, comedy, and

theatre in Bangkok, and he said that I should meet his friend Stefan Sanchez, a fellow Brit who was an opera singer.

After saying goodbye to Darren at the end of the evening I thought no more of our conversation until a couple of weeks later when I received a message from Darren inviting me to meet Stefan, and also to go along to see 'Fame, the Musical' at Mahidol University's Salaya campus.

I of course replied in the affirmative, and Darren arranged for me to meet Stefan on the corner of Sukhumvit Soi 33, where he and some friends would pick me up and drive me to the venue in Thonburi, on the other side of the river. I had no idea what Stefan looked like, but I imagined a Pavarotti styled type of guy, as I knew he was an opera singer. After a few minutes wait I spied an imposing figure with a beard, parading down the street, owning the pavement. This had to be the guy I had come to meet, I thought. It was indeed, and he greeted me with a booming 'Hello, you must be Robin, nice to meet you.'





That first meeting turned into many more, and I am now happy and privileged to be able to include Stefan amongst my circle of friends. So, let's learn a little about Stefan. Stefan Paul Sanchez is a baritone opera singer who studied singing and piano at the Royal Academy of Music, London, graduating with distinction, and has the honour of being the youngest ever baritone at Sadler's Wells Opera with a major role. In 1998 Stefan was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music for his work with opera singers.

Throughout his career he has directed in the UK, Europe, USA, and throughout Asia, in productions of La Boheme, Tosca, Rigoletto, The Magic Flute, Le Nozze Di Figaro, and Carmen. In Bangkok Stefan has produced Savitri (Holst) and Tosca (Puccini) at the Thailand Cultural Centre, Blue Beard's Castle at the National Theatre and the Mae Naak Thai opera at the Chalerm Krung Theatre. In 2011 Stefan was responsible for the transfer of Mae Naak to the Bloomsbury Theatre in London, taking 70 singers and musicians to London to participate in the production.

Stefan is the founder of Grand Opera Thailand, a professional opera company that provides training and performances in Thailand and other countries, and its associate, the company for Young Thai Opera Singers, which was formed in 2012 and has performed in prestigious

venues in Thailand and overseas.

I really got to know Stefan when I was covering the development of his 2019 Bangkok production of 'The Workshop: A Dress Rehearsal for Life'. Stefan was the Producer, Napisi Reyes the Director, Darren was the choreographer, while Cherie Carter-Scott and her sister Lynn Stewart were co-creators of the

whole shebang. Dr Cherie is currently a Bangkok resident, and has been a professional life coach since the mid-70s... she is the #1 New York Times best-selling author of motivational book 'If Life is a Game, Here are the Rules'. Together with her sister they had the idea that the individual stories of each of the people they coached in their workshops would make a great story. So, they set about doing just that! With Michael Pomije dealing with the financial and business aspects of the production they took on the mammoth task of putting on the production themselves. Ten years later down the line the end result was a world-class musical that a packed house of Bangkokians were thrilled by at the performance held in the Thai Cultural Centre in mid-2019 by Thai actors and actresses in English!







I followed the production from the early rehearsals right through to the finale. Thanks to Stefan I got to see how a major production like this comes together.

I was, though, an outsider looking in. The bond between the cast, the production team and the director only grew stronger as showtime approached. It was a privilege to have seen them all at work.

But there is another string to Stefan's bow that has given him a chance to unleash his seemingly boundless energy in yet another direction. Voice Wellness. What on earth is that you might ask. Stefan explains in his own words; "I discovered during my work as a singer and producer that vocal health also encourages spiritual and mental wellbeing. I have always enjoyed looking at symbiotic relationships between different disciplines, and began experimenting with the casts of the shows I was directing, to find more connection between them, their voices, and the characters they were portraying. The results were amazing and led me to conclude that the process of rehearsing and training was not only to enable a better understanding of an opera character, but also of promoting a deeper relationship within the self."

*Through Stefan's voice wellness training you can learn about sincerity, strength, excitement, empathy, imagination, emotion, gesture, and how to make your voice vocally captivating. I can think of no-one better than to teach this.*

Once Stefan enters a room the dynamics change, he is a strong character with a deep confident voice that reaches to all corners of a room, without having to resort to shouting. His presence demands attention, without any need to strut around like a peacock. You just know that he is present in the room.

A few weeks ago, Stefan invited me to a wine tasting competition at the Pacific City Club. There were 12 teams, and I was in Team Stefan. To cut a long story short our team came second. I was pleased with this placing. But Stefan always wants to be at the top, number one. He usually is!

I hope you get the chance to meet him. If he is in the same room as you, you won't miss him for sure!

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#### **About the author:**

#### **Robin Westley Martin**

Robin has been living in Thailand and SE Asia for over 30 years. He first worked as News Editor for *Business in Thailand* magazine, before moving on to edit and write for the *Thai Airways* domestic inflight magazine, and also *Hotel & Travel*, amongst others. He continues to work in SE Asia and Thailand as a freelance writer or editor for several magazines, covering a wide range of genres.

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# DUANG PRATEEP FOUNDATION

The first in our series of articles  
in Thailand on Unsung heroes...

*by Jocelyn Pollak*

**I left the Khlong Toei slum with two things that are  
connected in a surprising way:**

- A sack of fresh mushrooms grown by senior citizens
- Having witnessed the closest thing to a Saint that I think I will ever see, Khun Prateep Ungsongtham Hata

As I write this, it will be impossible to put into words what I felt walking around on that Tuesday morning with Prateep. I experienced the full range of emotions; I was brought to tears while simultaneously feeling a sense of hope from her gentle touch on my shoulder that I have never experienced in my life.

**I**n the 1960s there was a tiny girl who lived in the slums near the port, the same slums that still exist today, nearly 60 years later. Her name was Prateep. She had 4 years of primary school education and she worked at the port earning 12B per day, and a whopping 36B at night. Her main task, along with many other children, was scraping the rust off of the enormous ships that came to dock in the ports of Bangkok and then exposing themselves to noxious fumes while repainting them. One day, the unthinkable happened. Scaffolding that the children were working from collapsed



and threw them to the ground with the pipes crashing down on top of them. Prateep watched as blood poured from the fractured skull of one of her friends. “He was twisting and shaking in agony like a fish that had been hit on the head. He was paralysed”. There was no justice, no welfare. No one stood up for the boy for fear of losing their own pittance of a salary. In speaking with her, this memory is clearly as fresh in Prateep’s mind as if it were yesterday.

At 12 years old, she started saving her meagre wages to pay for night school so that she could give herself more education. After surviving the docks and completing her secondary education, she was awarded a place at a teachers college. She continued to work and take classes at night and 10 years later, she graduated with a teaching license. She recognised, at a very early age, that education could transform lives. “If poor people have no education, they can’t protect themselves. They have no voice.” After making sure to get herself a proper education and escaping the slum, she could have easily walked away and never looked back, but instead, she decided to do exactly the opposite.

Prateep knew that there were no schools for slum children as many of them have no identity cards so with Mae Kru Mingporn, she decided to open one by herself, at her home in 1968. It was a 1B a day school that aimed to simply teach children to read and write. Some families couldn’t even afford that but Prateep didn’t turn them away. Many of the students who attended her school lacked the paperwork to prove their citizenship which made it impossible for them to enrol in a Thai government school. This left the children and families in limbo and almost ensured their tether to poverty.





It soon became very apparent that rather than focusing on formal education, most of her time was spent helping families and children simply cope with the abysmal day-to-day conditions of living in the slum. Prateep was a trusted voice for many of the destitute families so her role transitioned from a passionate educator into a community leader. The school became a gathering place for people in the community to voice their concerns in desperate hope that someone would listen and help them. Naturally, this assembly of the poor attracted the government who then shut down the 1B a day school citing lack of permits and subsequently demolished that section of the slum in order for the port to expand.

That didn't stop the Khun Prateep "We are always afraid. If we are all afraid then who amongst us will be brave?" Prateep based her funding plan on the simple idea that the more we give, the more we receive. The mantra has served the Duang Prateep Foundation for nearly 40 years. In 1978, when Prateep was 26 years old she achieved a major milestone. She won a financial prize from the Magsaysay awards in the Philippines. It amounted to roughly 20,000USD, all of which she donated to start the Foundation. When she announced that it would all go to the children directly rather than investing it and using the interest to fund projects (as was common for similar ventures at the time), people from all walks of life started pouring money into her efforts, more than tripling her initial donation.

Around the same time, her re-established 1B school was recognised by the Bangkok Metropolitan Association (BMA) as a proper school. Prateep became the principal of her officially established school. After becoming principal, she determined that anyone with an understanding of how a BMA school runs could do the job but the job of working directly with poor families was much more complicated and required someone with intimate knowledge of the situation. She stepped down as principal and became Secretary General of the Duang Prateep Foundation.

#### In the first 5 years they:

- Opened 15 slum child development centres
- Worked with the Central Registration Department to get proper documents for the nationless children
- Established scholarship programmes
- Lunch programmes
- Helping evicted communities (the port owns the slum land and can act at will to demolish sections)
- Dealt with drug problems
- Requested water and electricity

For the past 40 years, they have continued doing all of these activities and more. Much, much more.

On a cool Tuesday morning in January, Prateep generously



picked me up and took me to her school. I have lived in Bangkok for 7 years but like many expats and Thais included, I have never ventured into the slums. When we were dropped off at the doorstep of her elementary school, I could hardly believe a school so welcoming, organised and simply happy could exist at the heart of a place that is plagued with desperation and hardship. Prateep held my hand as she escorted me into the English class where volunteers were teaching a kindergarten class. The smiles, there were so, so many smiles. My eyes started to tear up. Prateep gracefully floated away from me and straight to the kids, especially the naughty boys who she soothed with a soft hand on their backs and a smiling 'sawatdee ka'.

The kids lined up and marched their way out of English class and Prateep guided me around to some of the general classes. The thing that struck me most about the school was how open it was. The classrooms were essentially three walled with the fourth 'wall' facing a courtyard and a playground that would be a dream for any child. I commented on the layout and Prateep explained that it was designed like that on purpose. In the slum, everything is so dark and enclosed. At the school the kids can breathe. They can see the sky and look more than 10 feet without seeing a wall.

The school uses a Montessori method so as we ambled through the halls, the kids were doing all sorts of different tasks. But one thing was consistent, their affection for Ajarn Prateep. The kids were drawn to her like a magnet and she gave each and every one of them genuine and tender attention as if they were the only person in the world. It was hard to imagine that some of these kids who were in their little uniforms singing, dancing, doing puzzles, matching shapes, drawing and smiling with the purest happiness in the world would, at the end of the day, go back to a home where they may not have dinner, or someone would be passed out from drugs on their floor, or perhaps no one would be there at all. I couldn't help but be overcome with emotion as I placed my hands on the railing facing the courtyard and dried my eyes before turning back around to a little tyke missing a couple front teeth tugging on my shirt and wanting to show me her class photo.





After touring the school, which is all I thought we were doing that day, Prateep took me into the housing area nearby the school. 5 steps in, I could immediately understand why she designed her school the way she did; it was an utterly claustrophobic maze. We strolled down the tight pathways with each passerby greeting Prateep and her taking a minute to check on them and see how they were doing. She truly knew everyone. She showed me the houses her foundation had built (another one of her ventures) and took a solid 10 minutes to hear the grievances of a woman with a pushcart talking about how there is a house on the verge of collapse and they desperately need help.

Our final stop was for lunch at the senior/community centre, also run and financed by the Duang Prateep Foundation. Here's where the mushrooms finally enter the story. The staff had prepared a delicious lunch for us which included stir-fried mushrooms grown by the senior citizens. It's a project that helps to give them purpose and a reason to stay involved with the community as well as provide a healthy, inexpensive protein source for their families. I am not a mushroom fan, but as a sign of politeness and because of what I felt like after what I had seen that day, I should never be picky about food placed in front of me, I ate them. They were absolutely delicious. I had seconds. As we said our farewells, Prateep handed me a huge bag of mushrooms and a book and thanked me. I was speechless.

So, what is in store for the future of the Duang Prateep Foundation? Prateep once said, "Once there are no more poor people, the job of the foundation will end." We can only hope that the foundation will shut its doors someday for the right reasons. For now, just like its namesake angel, the foundation is a beacon of hope, a calming voice in a time of chaos and a gentle touch on your arm that makes you realise what is actually important.

Khun Prateep is currently in yet another David and Goliath battle with the Port Authority of Bangkok who are

pressing to remove the 'squatters' as they call them that have made a home over the years in and around the Klong Toei area.

Technically of course these poor disadvantaged people are squatters on private land, but does Thailand really need yet another luxury shopping mall on the banks of the Chao Phraya River?

The following article is reprinted from Coconuts Thailand.

One of Bangkok's 50 districts, Khlong Toei, or "pandan canal," was named for the plant that grew along its banks.

The Port Authority owns the land where the community is located, and many consider that fact the end of discussion when it comes to evicting upward of 150,000 people living there. But that concept of land ownership is a relatively modern development established after the community was settled.

When the Siamese capital moved from Ayutthaya to Bangkok over two centuries ago, all land was owned by the King, who could lend, grant or gift it for use. Many of today's neighbourhoods and streets began as such royal gifts.

Up through the mid 20th Century, Thailand had abundant land and scarce labour, and people were allowed to take possession of unused land by cultivating it, wrote David Feeny, Professor Emeritus of Economics at Canada's McMaster University.

Ownership rights based on use and exploitation were left intact when modern property laws involving titles and deeds were written in 1954, just as families were encouraged to settle around the Bangkok Port, which had opened a few years prior between two sharp bends of the Chao Phraya River.

Thailand's rice boom led to the port's construction being funded by the World Bank, and nearly all trade passed





through it for decades. But even a large expansion couldn't keep pace with demand, and the opening of a deep-sea port Southeast of the capital at Laem Chabang heralded its decline.

Those who settled there to work the docks included immigrants from Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and what was then Burma. They formed close-knit supportive neighbourhoods, according to research by the Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Today's campaign to erase the slum, as one transport official put it, is the latest in a cycle almost as old as the community.

Three years after land-ownership laws were written, in 1957, the Port Authority sought to force out the dwellings to build a market and other buildings. It succeeded in relocating over 100 households from what's called the Lock 6 area to Lock 12. The residents then organised against the expulsions, petitioning the Prime Minister and physically blocking demolition of homes.

Similar efforts were pushed back in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1983, residents departed voluntarily from some land for the port to develop under a 20 year land sharing agreement under which claims of both landowner and settlers were recognised, according to Global Perspectives on the History of Squatting.

Many living there today remember what happened when a forced relocation failed following a 1991 chemical fire that left thousands sick and homeless. Many were rehoused about 30kms away in government projects. But they couldn't find work and most eventually returned to living in Khlong Toei.

It's easy, he said, for those who've never experienced such poverty to say, "Oh they're getting free land and they're not happy about it?" But that betrays poor understanding of the basic realities faced by the poor, community organiser Garat "Duang" Peumrab said in August.

Today, there are nearly 30 communities living legally and illegally on the 500 rai (80 hectares) of land, according to Penwadi Sangchan, manager of the Duang Prateep Foundation, an NGO that has played a key role in negotiations.

Evictions and campaigns against "encroachment" took on renewed fervour under the military government which seized power in 2014. With that, a new appreciation for waterfront real estate brought a particular zeal for redeveloping the Chao Phraya River. Many long-time



riverside residents were cleared out and an unpopular plan to build boardwalks along its banks continues to be revived.

Beginning in late 2018, the Port Authority, an agency supervised by the Transport Ministry, began flaunting splashy plans to redevelop Khlong Toei into a riverside mall similar to the newly opened IconSiam, a luxury mall frequented by tourists.

Coconuts Bangkok Thailand's leading news online website.

Should you wish to assist those less fortunate than you and make a donation to the Duang Prateep Foundation you can do so by sending a donation to the following:

**Bank: KASIKORNBANK**  
Branch: Klong Toey

Address: 1262 Rama 4 Road, Klong Toey, Bangkok 10110, Thailand  
SWIFT: KASITHBK  
A/C No: 017-2-06336-5  
A/C Name: Duang Prateep Foundation

(Once the bank transfer has been completed, please send a copy of the transfer documentation so that they can easily trace your donation at their bank and remit a receipt promptly).

People wishing to volunteer in the English Programme should contact: Ms. Susanne Joachim (English Programme Coordinator)  
Email: [nutriself@yahoo.com](mailto:nutriself@yahoo.com)

Thank you again for your interest in the work of the Duang Prateep Foundation.

*About the author: Jocelyn has lived in Bangkok for 8 years and primarily focuses on Education. She is a teacher and owns a company that trains/certifies new people to teach English abroad (TEFLPros). Her writing focuses on high profile interviews but she also writes informally about her own experiences living abroad.*





## Dr. Teerakiat Jareonesettasin Honorary Principal of Newton Sixth Form in Bangkok

*by Jocelyn Pollak*

Expat Life sat down with the ex-Minister for Education to find out what he is up to after being the longest serving Minister of Education for the last 30 years now that he has moved back to Thailand from the UK.

### **What is your background?**

I was a good student, let's put it that way, I worked very hard and got into medical school at Chulalongkorn University here in Bangkok. After graduating from Chulalongkorn, I then got a Thai government scholarship to study psychiatry and child psychiatry in the UK. I came back and worked at the Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University and then became Vice Dean for the Faculty of Medicine. Later, I was invited back to the UK to be a consultant. A consultant is a top medical position in the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK where I brought up my two sons who then went on to study Medicine at Cambridge University of Medicine.





## How did you get involved in education?

As a child psychiatrist, I also taught at the University of London in the UK. Because of the nature of my work, naturally I was involved in education and worked closely with schools. I attended regular school meetings and advised schools on mental health in young people and so on. Then in 2014 I came back to Thailand to set up an educational foundation with the Crown Property Bureau of Thailand. A few months into the project, I was asked to be a Vice Minister of Education and was promoted to be the Deputy Minister of Education (a cabinet post) in 2015. In 2016, I became the Minister of Education and held the position until 2019, so nearly 5 years' service, including my Vice Minister position.

As Minister, I liberalised Thai education by bringing Carnegie Mellon University (a private research university based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Founded in 1900 by Andrew Carnegie) to Thailand. I invited Cambridge University to work with us on various projects, and oversaw Thailand joining PISA. (PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges).

I learnt a great deal about education with a blend between local context and international knowledge.

## What attracted you towards education?

Because this is where the future lies. The more I work on it with people, the more important I realise it is. Put it this way, as a child psychiatrist, I am fixing somebody who has been wronged by the system and I do that with one child at a time. The people who need my help the most, benefit the least from this system. Preventive measures are always better. As a psychiatrist, you can only treat a small number of people. Working in education, we can actually influence a lot of young people at one time. So, if we get it right, the difference can be enormous. Many of the policies I introduced have finally started to bear some fruit. I'm not talking about



it romantically or idealistically, but we can really make an impact on education. A lot of politicians come and go, they don't ever learn about what education means. Just because you become Minister, it doesn't mean you know about education. I learned about education from associating myself with educators around the world, at almost every level, who I then learned from. At least I can claim that I know a little bit about what good education is.

## What are the roots of Newton Sixth Form?

There are a collection of very clever people called Enconcept. They have been in private education tutorials for 20 years and helped the Thai government produce various education apps for English and vocational skills. They came to me a year before I stepped down as Minister and asked if I had any ideas about uplifting Thai education and exposing Thais to an international curriculum.

I told them in Thailand if we need to have an international curriculum to be taught biligually, i.e. teaching maths and science in our mother tongue alongside developing English to the best level.







So, I conceptualised that if we have a sixth form, we also need to prepare the students in their character building in order to go to top universities. They need to work on clarifying themselves, developing their purpose and aspirations, their interests and that's what we call the Newton Leadership programme. We teach our students to develop character and their academic skills.

#### **What is the Newton's vision?**

Newton Sixth Form is a personalised pioneering maths and science specialist sixth form with emphasis on character building for top universities – the first in Thailand.

Newton School's vision is to produce the best human capital by preparing students aspiring to go to top universities, either nationally or internationally, to realise their dreams. It aims to provide personalised solutions with high-level teaching in academic subjects, character building and English language, all required to enter top universities of their choice. Newton's philosophy is that of high expectation of students and staff in academics, character and English. The curriculum and methodology is under the guidance of a team of experts in education from Enconcept and Edukare (UK). Our campus is located right in the city centre of Bangkok.

*At Newton we have a motto, “In Newton, we CARE”, which is an acronym for Character, Academics, Resources, English. At Newton we “Build character or top universities and put excellence at the heart of learning and teaching.”*

#### **Who can study at Newton?**

Newton admits students who have completed IGCSEs or secondary students of the Thai curriculum, wishing to pursue A level.

#### **Pre-Sixth Form**

For those who have not had GCSEs or IGCSEs, they can enrol themselves at Newton to study pre-sixth form programmes to help them obtain good IGCSEs results and to be A level ready.





A level qualifications are generally respected and accepted globally including American, Australian, Canadian and European universities. Students may be required to sit SAT and/or AP exams for which Newton can provide extra-tuition.

### Why study at Newton?

Number one is our location, we are a city campus in Siam Square. Number two, there are no uniforms as per sixth form tradition, so they can wear what they are comfortable with. Number three, we are probably the only sixth form open on weekends so we have flexible schedules. Number four, each student has a personalised plan and supervisor to work with them. That means, if they need resources anywhere, we can get them and bring them onsite. The main resources in any school are the teachers. We bring the best teachers in Thailand to Newton.

Other tests preparation such as IELTS, TOEFL, BMAT, etc can also be provided. We also offer a special Newton English course for those who seek to improve their English to a high level speedily. Harvard based computer science programme is also provided to those with interest in pursuing computer science or engineering.

I would like the community to see this as an opportunity for Thailand that can provide world-class quality education with reasonable tuition fees so that more Thai students can reach their academic potential. I want people to know that we integrated the best practices in education. I have done my best with this group of people who really want to upgrade Thai education. Now we are admitting students, and we begin in earnest in September.

Please come and talk to us and look at us as a better alternative to the traditional sixth form options.

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

or call 065 998 6528 or 065 429 2454



*About the author: Jocelyn has lived in Bangkok for 8 years and primarily focuses on education. She is a teacher and owns a company that trains/certifies new people to teach English abroad (TEFLPros). Her writing focuses on high profile interviews but she also writes informally about her own experiences living abroad.*





# WEEKLY BOARDING

## – AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING CHOICE FOR EXPATRIATE CHILDREN IN BANGKOK

by Dr Dan Moore

*‘We are moving to Bangkok in July’.*

Saying these words out loud over drinks, back in January 2014 to my good friend and colleague Steve, was the moment that the reality of our next family move hit home.

‘The Bangkok traffic will drive you utterly insane’ was the only comment offered up by Steve during our drinks together. ‘It can’t be that bad’ I countered defensively. Oh, how I would come to rue those words...

The single most important consideration when moving to a new country as an expatriate family is choosing the right international school for your children. Thailand has over 200 and this number continues to grow every year. With this choice of international schools available to expatriate families, exactly how do you choose your new school?

As an international school headmaster, I have been asked this exact questions on numerous occasions over the years by many expatriate parents and they are not easy questions to answer; apart from the curriculum question, having worked in British international schools for many years (and being British myself) I am biased towards our British curriculum model. Choosing the right school for your child is complex and it is vital that expatriate parents take time to do this and do not rush into this decision.

In Bangkok though, there is one major problem with following that last piece of advice – traffic!

A recent study found that the average length of time a child spends on a school bus or in a private car, travelling to and from their school in Bangkok, is 10 hours and 35 minutes per week. What looks like a relatively small distance on paper (‘20 kilometres door-to-door will not take that long? Surely’, we say to ourselves) is quite different in reality when the Bangkok traffic rears its ugly head on a daily basis. Surely there is an alternative to these lengthy travel times and wasted hours of our children’s lives each and every week?

I do believe there is, and that solution is Weekly



Boarding at Bromsgrove International School, Thailand (BIST).

Weekly Boarding is, for those of you who have no knowledge of a British boarding school, where students arrive on campus on either Sunday evening or Monday morning for the start of the school day. They spend the school week, Monday to Friday, living on site in the boarding house, being immersed in boarding school life. Then, on Friday after school they travel home for the weekend to spend quality time with their family.

The traditional strengths of British boarding schools are still their greatest attraction. Academic rigour, individualised learning and high expectations are central to their success. But boarding schools have an additional and invaluable asset: time. The school day starts early and ends late. It has a rhythm that is quite different from that of a day school, allowing for activities which give opportunities for students to learn independence, leadership and teamwork.

Weekly boarding prepares youngsters for living away from home but in a structured way with an appropriate level of pastoral support and increasingly parents and the pupils themselves are seeing the benefit of that. At university, suddenly you are responsible for your own decisions and it can be a big jump for many young people. For this reason, there is a significantly high drop-out rate; it is very easy for youngsters in the first year of university to get lost in the system and become homesick. Boarding schools act as an effective bridge to university.

Bromsgrove School is one of the oldest independent boarding schools in the UK established in 1553 and their





sister school here in Bangkok opened in 2004. Our school, located on the outskirts of Bangkok, away from the hustle and bustle (and pollution) of city life, continues to grow in size, facilities and academic stature in the Bangkok expatriate community. In addition, we are fully accredited by the British Boarding Schools Association (BSA) the benchmark of standards and quality that all UK independent boarding schools must adhere to.

Mrs. Tracey Tweddell, Head of Boarding, joined BIST this academic year from Bromsgrove School in the UK, where she was Head of Boarding for twelve years. Tracey's huge array of experience and knowledge of UK boarding practices has already made a huge impact here at BIST.

Our intensive homework 'prep' programme for our boarding students ensures that each student is appropriately stretched and supported academically across all their subjects every day, resulting in good academic progress and success in their external IGCSE, A Level and BTEC examinations, leading to admission to some of the world's most prestigious universities. In addition, our students have opportunities to partake in a wide range of sporting and social activities

throughout the week as part of the weekly boarding programme. In short, our weekly boarders make the most of every minute they are with us throughout the school week and do not waste many hours travelling to and from school each day.

So back to that conversation from 2014 with my friend Steve in Seoul, with his words still ringing in my head... 'The Bangkok traffic will drive you utterly insane'.

Well it has Steve; many, many times. And it is that bad, really. But there is an alternative for expatriate children in Bangkok not wanting to experience the insanity of the traffic to and from school every day – it's called Weekly Boarding.

Dr Dan Moore

Headmaster, Bromsgrove International School, Bangkok

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







# To board or not too board – the pros and cons

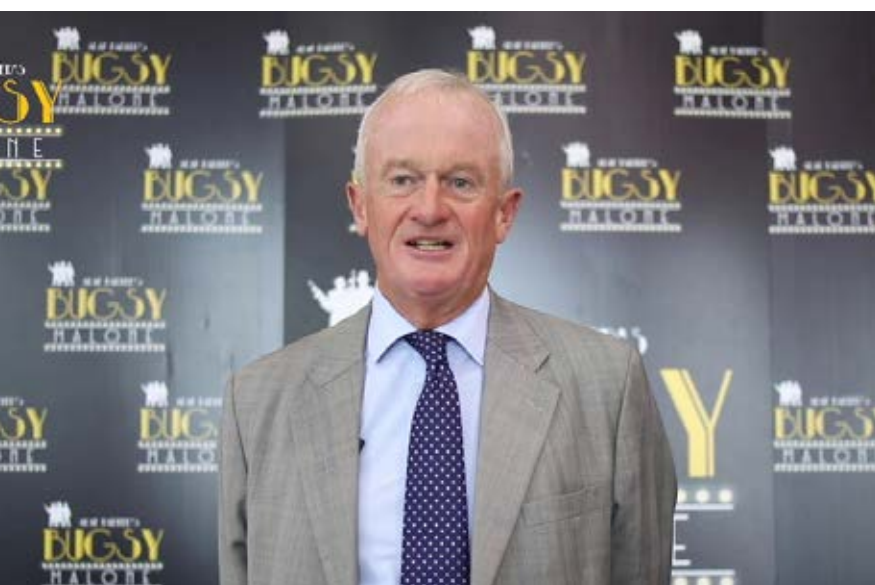
by *Hugh Cocke*

It has recently been announced in the UK that the first state boarding school for children of primary school age will open in September in Norfolk. It will be the first in a string of similar establishments, opened under the Government's free schools programme, which has been driven by the increasing demand from families with two working parents. The specific arguments behind the boarding provision at the Norfolk school include the long working hours along with the expectation to be always available in the modern working place, which have had a detrimental impact on family life. Families also find themselves today living too far from grandparents who in the past provided

support. Another significant factor is the enormous increase in mothers who have entered the workplace over the last two decades, making families with two working parents far more unexceptional than before. But this latest innovation by the Government has opened up, once again, the whole debate concerning the strengths, the appropriateness and relevance of boarding in the 21st Century.

Lord Harris, British Ambassador in Washington from 1941 to 1946, once said: 'Men love their children not because they are promising plants but because they are theirs.' He was right: children are our future as well as our present and in them we invest our love, our time, energy and finance. All parents want the best for their children, but the challenge comes with the letting go. The undertaking for parents is to give their children a good, strong foundation: the values, the manners and code of behaviours that are vital for their future lives, as well as the wings which give their children the ability to become independent and as a result to progress smoothly into adult life.

Making that decision to let go by considering the boarding school route is a huge choice for both parents and their children to make. Boarding schools will not suit all children, and indeed for many parents it is not a feasible option with the expense putting it beyond the reach of all but a small minority of families. As a result, day schools have had to adapt to both the increasing pressure on family life and to parents' expectations. Many schools now offer breakfast clubs and an after-school programme going on until the early evening. Parents expect an expansive co-curricular programme and as a result day schools have acquired the buzzy atmosphere found in boarding schools. At the Denla British School, the rigorous and broad-based curriculum is enhanced by an integrated and full co-curricular programme. Right from the outset, the school was passionate about creating situations and opportunities which allow, encourage and inspire the school's students to fulfil their potential-to perform at their very best







range of characters, backgrounds and skills but who share the same boarding experience, so boarders learn a level of social skills far in advance of their years – the opportunity to mix, tolerate, and appreciate the strengths and differences of their peers.

The enormous respect around the world for these different aptitudes, which boarding schools champion, is reflected not only in the 28,910 overseas pupils found in ISC Schools in the UK last year but also in the increasing number of ISC Schools operating campuses overseas and providing boarding opportunities for their students. UK Independent Schools have a reputation as the best in the world, and by extending the appeal and availability of the boarding experience, their popularity will

and to live out their dreams, together with the hopes and aspirations of their parents.

Boarding schools have also had to adapt. The 20th Century was a time of significant change: a diet of muscular Christianity, strict discipline including corporal punishment, discomfort and bad food, all of which was at one time considered character building, were repudiated, and the lack of any real accountability was overcome by The Children Act of 1989 and ensuing legislation. This act brought about a seismic evolution with children's welfare and their pastoral care now firmly established at the forefront of all aspects of school life.

The result is that parents can relax in the knowledge that boarding schools of today are very different places from what they were even twenty years ago. 21st Century boarders are not sent off, divorced from family life, but instead benefit from a total immersion in boarding school life, a close and healthy partnership between home and school, and where the traditional strengths remain intact: academic rigour, small classes, and high expectations as they are indeed found in day schools. But boarding schools have that additional and invaluable asset – time. The result is a unique education experience which offers a range and breadth many day schools struggle to achieve. The extended day provides the time which is the key to so much more than academic study: as well as striving for academic excellence, equal emphasis is given to the creation of a rounded learning experience by encouraging creativity, self-expression and individuality in its students, which Tony Little, former Head Master of Eton College, refers to as 'a genuinely holistic approach which sees the curriculum as a totality: an educational philosophy in which sport, music, art, drama and many other activities are seen as being of a piece with moral, social, and intellectual development.' This wide range of activities gives opportunities for students to learn independence, teamwork and leadership with the goal of developing the whole person. And with the ever widening demographic of boarding schools with students from diverse backgrounds creating a community with a

continue to grow.

Boarding schools offer a total, unique education. It is not appropriate for every child, but when it is, and parents are prepared to sacrifice as much as parents and grandparents have in the past, it offers something spectacularly special. In 1869 when Bishop William Wilberforce dedicated the Wellington College Chapel, he spoke to the pupils of the opportunity to 'learn how to live'. That desire is as relevant in our schools today as it was in the 19th Century. But learning to live, whether in day or boarding schools, is not always straightforward: it requires effort, compromise, commitment and imagination, but the rewards are enormous, and the benefits gained will stand all pupils in excellent stead when they move on into their adult lives.

Hugh Cocke taught in UK Independent Schools throughout his teaching career and was Headmaster for twenty-one years of two leading boarding Preparatory Schools in Suffolk and West Sussex. During his final year at Brambletye, he won the prestigious 'Tatler Award for Best Head of a Prep School 2011'.

On retirement, he was invited by the Pandeipong family to become an Advisory Board Member for the Denla British School [www.dbsbangkok.ac.th](http://www.dbsbangkok.ac.th)

He is also Chairman of Governors at a Dorset Preparatory School, and is involved with consultancy work in Dubai, Hong Kong and Switzerland.





# HARROW BANGKOK

## A WORLD-CLASS BOARDING SCHOOL RIGHT ON YOUR DOORSTEP

*by Dr Tim Jefferis  
Second Master*

**H**arry Potter has a lot to answer for. For many people, boarding conjures up images of wizards, spells, antiquated uniforms, and sorting hats. But none of these things, I'm happy to report, reflects the reality of boarding in the 21st Century, least of all at Harrow Bangkok.

What still strikes me as I walk around the boarding houses – even three years after arrival – is how light, modern, and comfortable they are. Think world-class hotel rather than the dated dinginess of Hogwarts. Then there is the sheer convenience of living on-site, with the vista of beautifully manicured grounds to wake up to in the morning and return to in the evening.

Whilst day children slog through the traffic on their way home, boarders are able to amble back to their accommodation, put on a cup of tea, and flop into the warm embrace of a well-stuffed bean bag. Then, as the mood takes them, they might pop out for a swim, play a game of tennis, or lose themselves in a good book. These are the halcyon days of youth that for so many have been lost under a barrage of pressures from the outside world.

The mental health of teenagers has been under assault in recent years. In the typical household both parents work; most would admit iPads and other screens take up a lot of the slack. Left to make their own choices, children do little physical exercise and socialising consists of inauthentic online tittle-tattle. Too many families while away their evenings staring goggle-eyed at their devices – parents answering emails, children playing vacuous games. In the increasingly fleeting moments of real-world interaction children remain

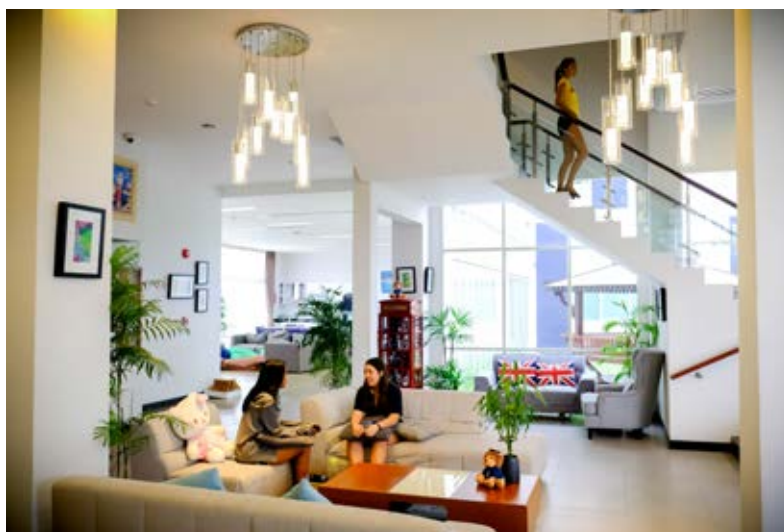


cooped up inside or head off to plastic-filled theme parks, crawled over by lawyers to remove all the elements of risk and most of the fun. Little wonder that children brought up in this sort of environment find the immovable realities of the adult world difficult to deal with.

Growing up as a boarder is mercifully different. Devices are banished from large parts of the week; they are never allowed to replace wholesome physical activity.

Because everyone is in the same boat, no-one complains. Added to this, living in a community means social skills: learning to share, the art of compromise, acceptance of difference, concern for others, and an awareness of self. Where the adult world can jar with the cosseted day-pupil, boarders have already developed the resilience and maturity to get the most out of life when they leave school.

At Harrow Bangkok we have a series of evening 'Table Talks' in which we prepare the boarders for their lives beyond school. The idea behind these is that they replicate the sort of kitchen-table talks that used to be







a feature of family life and which are so important for imparting cross-generational wisdom.

We discuss mental health, relationships, nutrition and physical health amongst other things. Two-way conversations develop and it's wonderful to see the boarders' confidence and self-knowledge grow.

There's also an institutional understanding that boarding is part of school life. All of our staff buy into the idea of a 24/7 boarding school, just as they do in Harrow London.

This has the happy effect of enriching school life for the day children too. The day is longer than at many international schools, with after-school activities often continuing until 5 or 6 pm. At the weekends the campus is as full of life as it is during the week – with every expectation that day children will come in to take part in orchestra rehearsals, swimming galas, revision sessions or football competitions as the school calendar dictates.

For the boarders, just before six in the evening, House Parents call their house meetings. 'Jimmy' is told he's got a dentist's appointment; tomorrow the boarding nurse will go with him to make sure he gets there safely. 'Samantha' is given a special mention and a round of applause for her poetry recital in school assembly earlier in the day.

Normally shy, she beams with delight and offers an enthusiastic high-five to her housemistress. Next, plans for the weekend are unveiled: there will be a treasure hunt on Friday evening, with clues dotted around the expansive campus. On Saturday, there's the option of signing up for a bike ride in the morning, whilst in the afternoon there will be a 'Bake Off'.



Sunday morning starts with a late breakfast in the houses after which it will be time to knuckle down to some homework for an hour or so. A number of staff from the main school will be popping over to help sixth formers with their university applications in the morning too. In the afternoon they'll all be heading off to Ayutthaya for some sightseeing unless, that is, they are involved in the Football Tournament on the pitches just metres from the houses where they live.

The meetings close and the boarders head off to their evening meal. In the dining room, there is the contented hubbub that accompanies teenagers enjoying themselves. This is modern boarding: comfortable, fun, with ample food for body and mind. Dark corridors, wizards and spells are nowhere to be seen, there is though more than a little hint of magic...





# The benefits of boarding

We spoke to Clare Donovan, Head of Boarding at British International School, Phuket, about the benefits of boarding

**Why could boarding be the best option for your family?**

Here at British International School, Phuket 14% of our school population live in boarding full time. Over the years, I have had plenty of opportunity to observe the benefits they enjoy by virtue of living on the school campus, and the benefits are significant, including structure and routine, safety and security, lifestyle, academic and sporting opportunities and the development of essential life skills.

**What can boarders expect in terms of structure and routine?**

Boarding allows students to create a positive, healthy work life balance. The structured routines of boarding life allow them to juggle academic commitments alongside extra-curricular activities whilst also enjoying down time with friends. The commuting time is an average of three minutes to every four corners of the school so this leaves our students more time to study, enjoy sport, performing arts and hobbies as well as developing lifelong friendships.

**How do you ensure the safety and security of boarding students?**

Through 24/7 supervision. Your child's safety is our number one priority. BISP's site is expansive, yet safe and secure with 24/7 security guard coverage. Regular fire safety training takes place across students of all ages and the school infirmary is



adjacent to the boarding houses. The minute the school day ends, our experienced, committed team of House Parents come on duty to take care of the boarders.

We take our duty of care very seriously; if that means getting up at 4:30am to take a student to the infirmary, that's what we do. We celebrate birthdays, daily successes and listen to your child's concerns or worries. In the capacity of "loco parentis" we do whatever you as parents do to ensure your child's wellbeing. As parents, if you work extremely long hours or have to travel extensively for business, then boarding could be the answer for your family.

**You mentioned lifestyle as being one of the benefits of boarding. What is life like for a boarding student?**

Our boarders do not need to sit in the back of the car in traffic or on the school bus at either end of the school day.







Rather, just two minutes to saunter in the sunshine back to the boarding house, where the House Parent is there to welcome them home. BISP's 44 acre leafy, green site is expansive and beautiful, so the short walking commute is not exactly a hardship!

Also, at the weekends we run fully supervised boarding trips to get our boarders out and about across the beautiful Island of Phuket. We take snorkelling trips, we visit the beach and water parks, we go ice skating, wakeboarding, rock climbing as well as shopping and eating out.

### **Can you tell us about some of the opportunities that boarding may bring?**

Boarding allows students to access academic or sporting opportunities that they might never be able to access if they stayed in their home country. To name but a few, we have footballers from Brazil, swimmers from Lithuania, triathletes from the UK, tennis players from India, golfers from Northern Thailand and academic scholars from Vietnam. Some of these students go on to top universities and to receive sporting scholarships all over the world.

### **Which essential life skills may a student develop through boarding?**

Living in the boarding community from the age of 8 years upwards teaches our boarding students life skills they would never perhaps learn at home, or perhaps not so early on. Personal and community responsibility, kindness and compassion for others and sharing responsibility for their living environment are all life skills that emerge as our boarders grow and flourish. They are guided by House Parents to take appropriate decisions and to accept the consequences of their actions. These developing life skills help boarders become confident, independent young people ready to face the challenges of life beyond school.

### **Do boarding students have easy access to school facilities and services?**

Absolutely! As mentioned earlier, the walk to the centre of school is 2 minutes. This allows easy access to thirteen football fields, a 50m and



25m swimming pool, a gymnasium, an expansive sports hall, tennis centre, golf course and driving range.

Then of course there is access to the library, teaching staff, to additional tutoring and classes as well as wellbeing, counselling, medical and support services.

Passing responsibility for your child to a school is not easy. So, if you think boarding could be the right answer for your family, come and visit our boarding facility and talk to our boarding staff. We look forward to meeting you.

**Clare Donovan**  
**Head of Boarding**  
**British International School, Phuket**  
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 +66 (0) 7633 5555 ext. 1116







# HAPPINESS LIVES HERE

by Susan Dineen

*"Regents has become my second home and family; a place I feel comfortable and safe in... I am really happy and don't know who I'd be today if not for boarding"*

– Polina, Year 11 Boarder, Regents

**B**oarding at Regents International School Pattaya is a home away from home. Children immerse themselves in a different side of school life while making lifelong friendships. Regents is an established, well equipped community on a large green estate far from the business of Bangkok, yet close enough to make travelling to us easy. We are ideally placed to offer imaginative supervised trips at the weekends and our sporting facilities provide excellent opportunities – once homework is complete!

We believe boarding is a unique relationship between school, parent and child and that the right boarding environment can benefit your child and their school experience in so many ways:

## Experts in caring for your child

Our boarding houses are led by staff who are experts in pastoral care. This means your child is not only in a safe and caring environment, but that the boarding team are perfectly placed to guide them through any challenging times – this is particularly useful through adolescent years.

## Time and space to grow

There is plenty of space and fresh air. Boarders at Regents cut out the commute and instead enjoy a short walk to class. By choosing boarding children have more time to study, enjoy activities and play with their friends.

## Incredible facilities on your doorstep

The facilities at Regents become part of your daily life and home environment. This means playing fields are right on your doorstep as well as the swimming pools, running track and gym. Life on campus is dynamic and inspiring and we also take boarders to a whole host of exciting local places on weekend excursions.

## A learning environment

At international schools where children are taught in English, boarding will immerse students in a community that fast-tracks their absorption of the language. It has been remarkable to see students who arrive speaking almost no English, becoming proficient speakers within weeks!

## A sense of independence

From the first boarding years through to the last ones in Year 13, we build a sense of independence in children that helps them through life. Our boarding houses encourage (age-appropriate) independence. This all contributes to boarders leaving school with a mature attitude and prepared for the demands of university life.

## Friendships for life

The friendships made in boarding are incredibly strong. There is a sense of family community that comes from living together, caring for and supporting each other, and enjoying free time together. The boarding community are like a family of friends; evenings are about eating together, supporting academic study and enjoying leisurely activities, while weekends offer a whole host of exciting excursions.

## Part of a global family

As part of the Nord Anglia Education family of 66 schools in 29 countries we deliver high quality, transformational education and ensure excellent academic outcomes by going beyond traditional learning. Our global scale enables us to recruit and retain world-leading teachers and to offer unforgettable experiences through global and regional events, while our engaging learning environments ensure all of our students love coming to school.

Read Polina's full blog here:



Our family-friendly approach to boarding offers four different

options: daily, weekly, full time or flexible boarding options. We offer trials too, so your child can come along and experience boarding life for themselves! Contact: [admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th](mailto:admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th)





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# A NEW LOOK AT BOARDING

*by Jocelyn Pollak*

Boarding schools are an ancient concept developed by some of the world's greatest philosophers and teachers. These types of institutions have stood the test of time for good reason.

**B**oarding (children living away from their immediate family and in close proximity to their educational facility) has waned in popularity in recent years due to many factors, but it may in fact be an excellent but overlooked option for many families. I had a limited understanding of boarding and something about the idea of it just didn't sit right with me. However, when I sat down to talk with former Minister of Education, Newton Prep Headmaster and Founder of Sathya Sai School Dr. Teerakiat Jaroensetsattin (Dr. Tee), I learned about not only why boarding has fallen out of favour but also why parents may want to take a second look at it. The question isn't whether boarding is good or bad, that's far too simple. The question is, is boarding right for your child?

First off, it's important to understand the roots of the idea that a student would live at school. Ancient philosophers in Rome, Greece and India were the pioneers of this idea. Granted, much has changed since those times, but the same ultimate goal still persists educating youth while simultaneously building character and morals. When the earliest schools were being established, primarily for the upper-middle class and elite, not boarding was seen as a somewhat ridiculous proposition. Why would you have

your child waste hours every day just to travel to school? Why would you as a parent presume that you could educate children better than professional teachers? What kind of extra time did you have as a parent to spend dedicated to helping your child outside of the regular academic hours? Why should education be limited to 7 hours in a day? While not all of these questions apply to modern families (nowadays, we aren't walking 15 miles to school uphill), many of these ancient ideas are still worth thinking about.

As for modern boarding, there are basically two environments. The first one is where a student lives with a host family and attends the school. For those of you who have not formally boarded as a K-12 student but had the opportunity to study abroad for a period of time, liken this first option to your French host family on your semester at the Sorbonne. Or in my case, my Luxembourgish family who gave me the option of one piece of white bread and some butter (peanut butter if I was lucky!) or off-brand cornflakes and warm milk for breakfast, minus any conversation. The host family can be a good option for some, especially for short term experiences, but it lacks the structure and character-building elements that the second type of boarding includes. Outside of school hours, there isn't any kind of





Dr. Tee was quick to point out that these traditional boarding schools can only succeed if character building is intrinsic in the school's values. At these types of institutions, boarding houses have names so the students can identify with a group thus creating important social bonds. They all live together with older students acting as role models and leaders for the younger students. They have strict schedules and

activities outside of formal schooling. Usually, they all eat together, sometimes in ritualistic ways. There are set hours for homework in the evenings as well. Everyone is doing almost the same thing at the same time, so it creates discipline and extends the number of learning hours later into the day. That is what is meant by the historical independent public schools in the UK.

Despite being pro-boarding, as an academic, Dr. Tee was not shy to discuss the possible downsides and risks that boarding may present. First of all, kids miss their parents, especially kids who start boarding at very young ages, and vice versa. The younger the child, the more difficult the boarding transition can be for all involved. Second, there are sometimes cases of abuse and bullying, particularly in all-boys schools. Hazing and other "traditions" are not uncommon and can lead to mental distress for some students. In co-ed boarding schools, teen pregnancy and drug/alcohol use can be risks. Third, there is a legitimate concern that the students who are already nearing the upper echelon of society upon enrollment become even more out of touch and disconnected from the real world. Despite all the character-building efforts, this disconnection can lead to larger issues down the line. The stereotype of a boarding school student isn't exactly of an average kid heading off to school with his backpack and baseball hat. Dr. Tee made sure to stress that all of these risks can be mitigated if the school is managed properly, which is no easy task. The ongoing debate over whether boarding is "good or bad" typically centres around parental roles vs. school roles. In ancient times, people felt that trained teachers were better at instilling proper social behaviour, values and morals in children than parents were. There must be some truth to this approach since it has persisted into modern times. Now, this responsibility for teaching morals and leadership has largely shifted to the parents.



formal instruction or activities to accomplish the goal of building morals and character. On the flip side, it can be an incredible opportunity to be immersed in another culture, fosters independence and teaches kids to develop meaningful relationships with people who are different from themselves, assuming they talk to you, unlike my host family.

The second type of boarding situation is more what Dr. Tee supports and the type that he warmed me to the idea of. This is a much more formal, traditional boarding school type atmosphere that can be seen at some of the most elite institutions both in the East and West. In schools like this, students typically live in dorms together. The teachers wear many hats; they are formal educators as well as guiding lights for leadership, character and moral education. It's quite challenging to do it properly because besides their regular lessons, teachers and staff have to step into the shoes of a parent.



However, the shift in responsibility doesn't account for the changes in society which often keep parents separated from their children for long periods of the day anyway, giving families little quality time to do the character building that a boarding school can provide in a more tried and true way.

The overall conclusion of our discussion is that boarding school is not simply good or bad. It was that boarding should be an option for families who feel that it is the right fit for them.

*While cost may be a barrier for many families, for those who can afford it, boarding offers a unique opportunity to learn in environments specifically designed to maximise absorption and exposure to academics, mentoring, leadership and character building.*



*About the author: Jocelyn has lived in Bangkok for 8 years and primarily focuses on education. She is a teacher and owns a company that trains/certifies new people to teach English abroad (TEFLPros). Her writing focuses on high profile interviews but she also writes informally about her own experiences living abroad.*



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# How blockchain can change education in Thailand

by *Erich Sayers*

Everyone has heard of blockchain technology by now and few of us understand why it's such a big deal. This article offers several important ways education in Thailand could radically change with the use of blockchain applications.

The first implementation of blockchain technology will be for records and documentation such as: transcripts, grades, diplomas and credentials. Currently, these forms of documentation in Thailand are very slow and laborious and unreliable because much of it is done by hand and rarely verified. I am certain you have copied and signed forms in triplicate many times!

Blockchain will allow all student and faculty and institutional records to be instantly available, completely verifiable, immutable and private. No additional verifications would be necessary as any record on the chain can be completely trusted. Everyone will have access to their own records at all times. There will be no need to request records from a third party or middleman.

It will still be possible, at this time, for forged diplomas to be passed on to employers. The use of blockchain is not yet ubiquitous, so there must be a way for schools to verify diplomas from applicants to teaching positions. Perhaps, when blockchain is in wider use, there will be more time for training about transcripts, diplomas and how to verify them and school employees will improve their practices. Sony Global Education has developed an application for transcripts: <https://www.sonyged.com/2017/12/14/news/blockchain-site-launch/>

The same digital document services also apply to identity management. The student ID will be unforgettable

and 100% reliable. There are many congruent applications in activities such as alumni associations and networks, services and privileges extended to alumni such as tickets, library use, database access and campus events. These are easily managed with blockchain applications many of which are already developed and in use now.

The consensual nature of the blockchain can also be applied to translating services. English language translation is an enormous industry in country and not always reliable. Certified translations are often not as helpful as we hope, but we are stuck with the legal reality. Blockchain apps could allow documents that need translation to be submitted to all nodes. Smart contracts could be set up for translators or editors to earn tokens or coins for contributing to translations. The key change: incentives to consistently improve the accuracy of translations will improve their reliability. Many editors improves the authority of a translation. The best version will always be the longest chain.

Collaboration will improve when published research is stored on blockchain systems. There will be no need to stumble through complicated, publisher's access points. Scholarly communication can improve with more detailed or prolonged peer-review processes. One can even imagine a continuous peer review process compared to the static, slow nature of publishing today. The publish or perish paradigm could finally evolve into something new and more dynamic.

Hopefully, just these few opportunities I have described will help you imagine how the blockchain protocol can radically change the education sector. The business development opportunities coincide with 4.0 initiatives supported by the government and our schools desperately need an upgrade. As a result, I doubt anything can stop the blockchain protocol from developing.



# BRIGHTON COLLEGE BANGKOK

## A memorable experience



One of the exciting activities we have offered at Brighton College Bangkok this year has been our Sixth Form visit to our sister school in the UK, Brighton College, England's Independent School of the Year 2019.

January 2020 marked the first international visit of Brighton College Bangkok's Year 12 pupils to their sister school, Brighton College UK. It was especially significant as it was the first international trip for the Sixth Form, which opened last August.

Pupils and staff flew to the UK full of excitement and anticipation, keen to strengthen the close ties between the schools and enable the Bangkok pupils to gain insight into and experience one of the most successful independent schools in the UK.

Attending lessons in their chosen A Level subjects allowed pupils to make connections with their peers and staff in the UK that will last well beyond the duration of the visit, and benefit them as they continue their journey through A Level study. The pupils were particularly fortunate to be able to join an 'Options at 18' event, with a panel of distinguished guest speakers and a dedicated team from the UK school providing invaluable advice and guidance on the university application process.

During the visit to Brighton College UK, our Sixth Form pupils enjoyed a tour of the school with its magnificent blend of traditional buildings and modern, state of the art facilities, including a brand new Sports and Science Centre. They were also active participants in workshops related to Critical Thinking and Presentation Skills.

A visit to the University of Sussex gave our pupils the opportunity to 'get a feel for' a UK university with a tour of the campus, a talk from the head of the international department, and a workshop from one of the professors.

As well as school and university-based activities, the group made the most of their time in Brighton, one of the UK's most dynamic and energetic cities, visiting local attractions such as Brighton Pier and the Royal Pavilion. They also spent a day in London, where destinations included the usual tourist sights plus the Imperial War Museum and famous shopping areas!

Talking about their experience, one Year 12 pupil reflected:



"Some of us have never been to the UK before, so getting to simply experience the weather and culture was eye-opening. Shadowing pupils and participating in the workshops at BCUK was enjoyable and informative, whilst having 'buddies' meant we made new friends along the way. We also got to visit and tour the University of Sussex. The tour was led by three incredibly knowledgeable international pupils (this could be us in the future!) – it gave invaluable insights into university life and the real highlights of their facilities. The best part of our UK trip was getting to spend time with each other. It really gave us a taste of what living with others might be like, whether that is cooking breakfast or organising a dishwashing rota!"

Another said: "The trip was an eye-opening experience for the whole Sixth Form. We got to encounter a way of life that is very different to ours. Living together was a challenge and sharing a space taught us to become independent yet mindful of how our actions affect each other. The trip taught us essential skills we will require when we grow up. We also had the chance to explore Brighton and London. The trip gave us the freedom to explore, to find activities we wanted to do and places we wanted to visit. It really highlighted the unexplored world around us. It was an unforgettable trip that will leave an impression on me for the rest of my life".





Mike Walton, our Head Master, said: "We are grateful to staff and pupils in Brighton for welcoming our group. We are delighted that pupils from both schools had a chance to get to know each other – I know many will keep in touch about shared ideas, plans and opportunities".

Brighton College Bangkok is hosting some special events for prospective pupils and parents later this year, including our A Level Scholarship Day and Open House event. The school welcomes current Year 11 pupils who would like to apply for a scholarship to study A Levels in our Sixth Form. Our Open House for all year groups is on Friday 1st May, from 08:45. Everyone is welcome to meet our pupils, staff and the leadership team, and enjoy a tour of our world-class facilities. Please visit the school website or contact the Admissions Department on 02 136 7898 for more information.

Another Sixth Form pupil said: "The visit to the UK was valuable as it allowed me to experience another culture and what it would be like to live there, away from home and outside my comfort zone. The trip brought all of us, the whole Sixth Form, closer together. Spending time at BCUK enabled us to share experiences and different points of view with pupils the same age who live on the other side of the world".

## About Brighton College Bangkok

Brighton College International School Bangkok opened in September 2016 and is the sister school to Brighton College UK, England's top co-educational school and the Independent School of the Year 2019, as voted by The Sunday Times. The school offers academic excellence with a culture of curiosity, confidence, and kindness. An iconic 20-acre (50 rai) campus is located in Krungthep Kreetha, east of Bangkok. Easily reached from major highways, the school is

a 30-minute drive from downtown Bangkok and a 15-minute drive from Suvarnabhumi Airport. Brighton College Bangkok provides education for children aged 2–18.

Brighton College Bangkok follows the British curriculum, leading to IGCSEs and a choice of 21 different A Level subjects to help children reach the world's best universities. Pupils benefit from outstanding teaching and pastoral care delivered through a traditional House system. They enjoy world-class facilities for Sports

and Performing Arts on a state of the art campus. Above all, Brighton College Bangkok gives all pupils a caring, supportive and tolerant environment in which they can thrive and develop a lifelong passion for learning.

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







# The education to inspire, engage and extend

by Thomas Banyard, Founding Head  
King's College International School Bangkok

**W**e believe that there are three things that every parent should ask a school when they visit it:

**What do you study – i.e. what is your curriculum?**

**How will your teachers teach, i.e. what is your educational philosophy?**

**How have you recruited your teachers to do this, i.e. what are your teachers like?**

These three questions are essential to understand the school you are choosing. At King's College International School Bangkok, we have a clear mission to certainly be one of the best schools in Asia, and indeed the world. To do this we focus on pastoral care (how we look after the physical and emotional wellbeing of our community), co-curricular activities and a strong academic curriculum. These three strands knit together to prepare students for the best universities in the world and success in their working lives. We are also very lucky to have the full support of King's College School, in Wimbledon, England with everything we do. However, to fully understand how this partnership works to help us produce outstanding young men and women we need to answer the three questions above:

## **What do you study – i.e. what is your curriculum?**

King's Wimbledon has been successful for around 200 years. Around 25% of their students attend Oxford or Cambridge each year. Alongside this, students go on to be successful entrepreneurs, actors, writers, artists and so many other things. We are proud that the curriculum allows our children to follow their interests and find the right careers. Partly this is due to a rich and varied curriculum that involves sports, creative and performing arts, languages and a solid base of core subjects: maths, English, science and humanities.

We have worked hand-in-hand with King's Wimbledon to adapt this curriculum to Bangkok. We have lengthened the school day to allow us to include Thai studies, Mandarin and connected learning (a subject where children can complete projects on their personal areas of interest) without taking away from other subjects. We now believe we have the curriculum to inspire, engage and extend our students in many different ways throughout the school day.

## **How will your teachers teach – i.e. what is your educational philosophy?**

Some schools focus on transmission of information and rote learning to pass exams; we do not. We believe that the world is evolving, but that successful adults will always need interpersonal skills, the ability to solve problems, creativity and the confidence to try new things. We also believe that success goes beyond a bank balance or the next promotion; our children will be kind, well mannered and will have the wisdom to make the right decisions for their communities. To do this we teach in a student-centred way with lots of student tasks completed individually or in groups. The students are encouraged to be independent and to solve problems without resorting to asking adults. This means that students make mistakes and learn from them, it means that everyone produces different work and that tasks are differentiated so that all students can feel proud of whatever they achieve. How we teach is just as essential as what we teach.



**How have you recruited your teachers to do this – i.e. what are your teachers like?**

Teachers are the key to any school's success. Helen Searle, the Head of Pre-prep, and myself read every one of the 1,500+ applications we received and we looked for teachers that could deliver the lessons in the way described above. We also looked for good role models of our values as this is the only way to teach children to be kind and well-mannered. After this, senior leaders from King's Wimbledon interviewed every one of our class teachers to ensure that they truly understood 'The King's Way' of



during the week. They were also asked about how they would manage the students' behaviour positively and how they would help to promote student happiness within our community. This commitment to educating the whole child in order to raise caring adults is central to King's Bangkok and the reason why both my daughters will join us when we open in August.

It is usual to try and summarise the article in the final paragraph with a single message. However, if I were to focus on the curriculum, our teachers, the pastoral care or the co-curricular programme it would miss the point. For us, all of these aspects are equally important! If they are to your family, and you like the answers we have to the three questions above please visit our admissions office. We continue to welcome applications for pre-nursery to year 6 and are so excited about welcoming our families in August. We are also holding a 'Meet the Heads' event in June so please keep an eye on our website for more details in the next few months.

<https://www.kingsbangkok.com>

educating students. We are proud to say that we have finished our recruitment for this year unless we have to open new classes. We have some amazing teachers and we are pleased to confirm that James McAuslan and Simon Connolly will be joining directly from King's Wimbledon to help us recreate the King's ethos and to exemplify the strong links between Wimbledon and ourselves.

All of our teachers were asked about how they would contribute to the co-curricular programme and every one of our teachers will lead an extra-curricular activity for the students





# THE BOYS OF SUMMER AND BLUEBIRD DAYS

by Meghan McKenna

**W**e call them ‘the boys of summer.’ They wear shorts and tee shirts and swimming trunks. Hats and sunscreen, sunglasses and flip flops.

*They play in the sand, they run on hot pavements with no shoes and stay up late under warm breezes and wake to sunrises with skies of pink and shades of yellow proclaiming happiness for the day ahead, nearly year round for the last six years.*

In December 2018 we experienced our first Christmas home since we’ve lived abroad. A decision made easy after we signed a new contract to extend our time in Bangkok, and the kids being of a “more manageable” (what does that even mean?) age. The idea of making the three week trip home with the duration of the long flight and time difference possible. It was time to embrace what Home for the Holidays truly means, time to let grandparents and extended family see the magic of Christmas and all its enchantment and joy through our son’s eyes. This also meant it was time to put those swimming trunks away, throw on some cold weather gear and hit the slopes, as they say.

Pete grew up skiing, he was on the slopes at 5 years old



and never stopped shredding. His parents and grandparents, especially his Pup, giving him the gift of the sport they believed would last a lifetime, and one he could pass down to his children. He spent his childhood skiing with his Pup, brother and cousins and as he got older piled in a car with friends and spent weekends living the snowy mountain and lodge life.

For the boys inaugural trip, we set our standards low. Most importantly because Brody, Parker and Cam hadn’t existed in cold temperatures in 4 years. Ryker was 2 and his only feeling of cold was in an air conditioned mall or while travelling on an airplane. What would it be like for them, could they manage the feeling of cold toes? We decided 3 days on the mountain, two days of lessons and most of all the





understanding that it may not be smooth, they may all not enjoy it and we had to be flexible, gentle and understanding of the elements and the experience itself. Fingers, and at that time warm toes crossed, we shook on it and away we went.

I had organised ski suits, boots and jackets alike for months. Friends in Bangkok, family and friends in our hometown's adding to the stockpile of four sizes of every item

and doubles for the 'just in case' moments. I was chanting sizes, and mitten versus glove reviews and left bewildered over the tightness of ski socks and boot sizes being too big or too small depending on the brand. They needed ski goggles and hand warmers and head masks. The last minute shopping which was all easily available in our area shopping centres added no stress but more a part of the fun of the journey ahead.

The car was loaded up, two days after arriving from Bangkok we were jet lagged and full of warm loving relative hugs and slept on fleece blanket covered beds and drank hot cocoa. Yet we were determined to head to Vermont before the school holiday began for the area children and the holiday festivities began with our families. The boys were buckled in, movie playing, the heat was blasting on our two pairs of socks feet and we were off to see snow and what skies felt like.

I sit here today, the current day in Bangkok, February 2020. Our family hit the slopes that first year in 2018 and December 2019 as well.







steps in, whom I barely know albeit trusting them with all I have, looking in their eyes and believing they will teach them and keep them safe the entire day. I snap my last photo and they turn as stiff as anything, boots and skis attached now, scooting to the meeting point, I wave them off with tears and excitement. It isn't until hours later I spot their jacket zipping down the mountain, unable to see their expressions on their faces only their bodies showing me the thrill they are having.

The first and second trip were very similar in that we had a condo that sat on the side of the mountain, one in which you could ski to the lifts to and from. It was our little home with cold, dark quiet mornings (with jet lag I say very early mornings). We cooked all of our meals in the kitchen stocked with pans and coffee filters, winter themed mugs and a refrigerator large enough to fill

The planning shaped the same this past year, with an extra day added in and lessons booked for our hopeful, newest skier Ryker.

It is all a marvel to me. I watch them purchase their lessons, I sign on dotted lines, put on their ski helmets and shyly need assistance in buckling the straps, the instructor



it with enough food that we might not have to shop the entire holiday. Monopoly and playing cards, books and puzzles were left out for days, iPads when it was allowed or they could keep their tired eyes open.

The average bedtime was 6:30pm. While they skied during the day I tended to the house, did the dishes and prepared for the next meal and visitors and little did I know was soon to be named the "Lodge Mom", which I wear as a badge of honour. Grandparents,





outsider with a birds eye view, it is magnificent and precious.

*Which is why, these few but robust 6 days in total have filled us with gratitude, adrenaline and a love for a new sport as a family.*

An adventure led by Pete who guided them and taught them, just as he was and gave them the confidence to get out there and fly. No freezing temperatures, record wind gusts, cold feet (literally and figuratively) fear or worry could stop them from embracing every single minute of those Bluebird Days.

aunties, and uncles, cousins and friends came for visits to either ski or see the delight for themselves, adding to the richness of the occasion.

I was on standby, ready and waiting for a call to rescue a cold, tired boy, it never came.

The buzz on my phone alerting me of photos sent by Pete as he spent the day skiing and “bumping into” the boys were nothing but rosy cheeked and chapped lipped smiles.

My emotions for the boys and this trip was nothing compared to what Pete was feeling and experiencing. He had memories thick in the trees and the trails that ran through that very mountain. His grandfather had taught him, showed him and in the in between moments on the chairlifts, the ride to the resort and warm cocoa conversations were deep and are deep inside Pete’s heart and the very fibre of who he is. Pup was a man taken from earth at a young age of 62 when Pete was 18 years old, the year before he and I even met. Yet in that short time he made a lasting impression on a little boy who took up skiing and golf due to his influence and encouragement. I have always admired that gift from his Pup and seeing the impact it has had on his life, as an







## 10 reasons why parents trust DBS Denla British School

“A good education is a precious gift that parents choose for their children, because knowledge and skills will always be a child's most important acquisition.”

**D**BS Denla British School implements an enhanced British Curriculum from the best practices of UK independent schools. Here are 10 reasons why parents would want their children to study at DBS.

**1. DBS uses today's best educational platform:** The enhanced British Curriculum is the perfect platform to allow students to achieve their potential. This curriculum has been implemented in world-renowned independent schools where students are challenged, and later they are successful in their careers.

**2. The Personalised Learning method** is intrinsic to the enhanced British Curriculum: DBS Teachers don't believe in 'One Size Fits All' and focus on Personalised Learning, based on a deep understanding of the child, by concentrating on each student according to their skills and preferences.

**3. The Extended Day system** – a key to success: An additional learning period for students to spend time studying and engaging in activities. At DBS, students will have 1 hour per day more school time than students in other schools, adding up to 5 hours per week. At DBS, we offer intense Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) from over 60 courses and activities.

**4. Learning many subjects:** Beside the initial core of English, Maths and Science, the enhanced British Curriculum offers Computing, Geography, History, Music, Art, Drama, PE, Wellbeing and languages for students to learn too, like Mandarin.

**5. Concrete assessment:** Other than daily, termly, and annual internal assessments, there are assessments for English, Maths, and Science called GL Assessments to measure against the world's average. These results help teachers to accurately plan for each student's academic excellence.

**6. Our classrooms facilities are world-class:** They are 50% larger than normal international schools. The 40 facilities







located throughout the school include, a FIFA standard artificial grass football pitch, a world standard running track, a large indoor swimming pool (salt water), tennis courts, a golf pitch, music rooms, an art studio, exhibition halls etc.

**7. House System as in UK Schools** – a strong foundation of relationship and networking: DBS implements the uniqueness of the UK ‘House System’ very strongly. There are 4 houses at DBS; Buckingham, Sandringham, Windsor, and Balmoral. All students stay in each House, and know other students from different years and classes. That’s why students at DBS have many friends from within their class and beyond.

#### **8. Pastoral Care as in UK schools:**

Class Teachers, and Form Tutors for the older students, look after the individual students in their class or form. The role of these teachers is to nurture and guide. They are a vital link with parents, too. Other than the Class Teachers and Form Tutors, all teachers and Learning Assistants work together to create a nurturing team of carers.



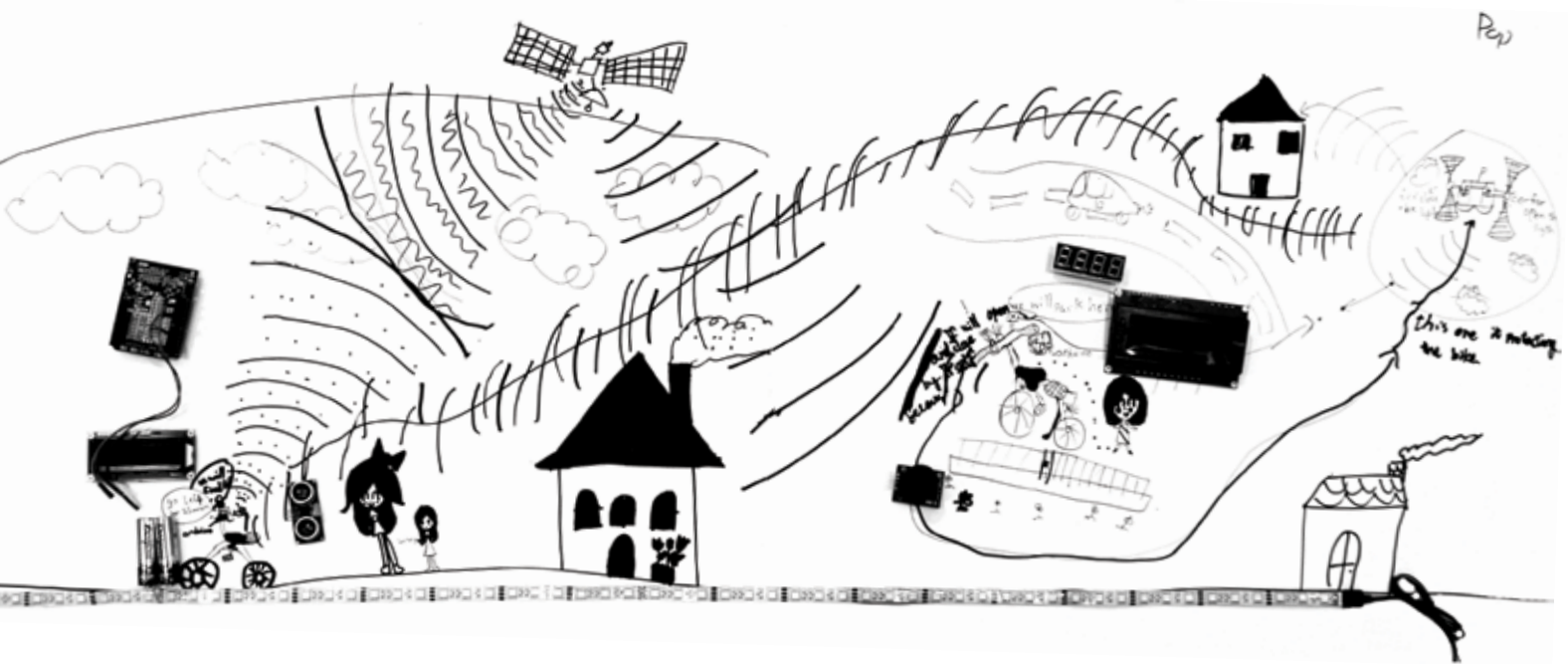
**9. Apple Distinguished School:** DBS uses the best technology for education, and looks to the future. The school has laid excellent and efficient foundations for IT, using Apple products for teaching and learning. DBS has a Mac Lab and Maker Space rooms, so that students can use the technology to create innovations



**10. Guaranteed by world-class standards** from ISAT and CIS, which are the leading institutions that assess the quality and certification of educational standards of international schools globally. CIS praised DBS in a huge number of areas, including the quality of the teaching, the facilities comparable to leading British independent schools, and relationships that are well-developed between teachers and parents.

DBS is reputed to be a leading international school that prepares students fully for the future, which is in line with the school's vision: *“Nurturing Global Leaders.”*





## 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**  
Ages 3-11 years

Area: Thonglor  
18 Soi Sukhumvit 49/4  
Bangkok 10110

+66 (0)2 381 2919  
info@elc.ac.th

**The Purple Elephant 39**  
Ages 18 – 36 months

Area: Phrom Phong  
61 Soi Phrom Mit  
Bangkok 10110

+66 (0)2 662 4570  
purpleelephant@elc.ac.th

**The Purple Elephant 49**  
Ages 18 – 36 months

Area: Phrom Phong  
99 Soi Sukhumvit 49/13  
Bangkok 10110

+66 (0)2 392 3190  
purpleelephant@elc.ac.th

**The Purple Elephant 55**  
Ages 18 – 36 months

Area: Thonglor  
79 Soi Thong Lo 8  
Bangkok 10110

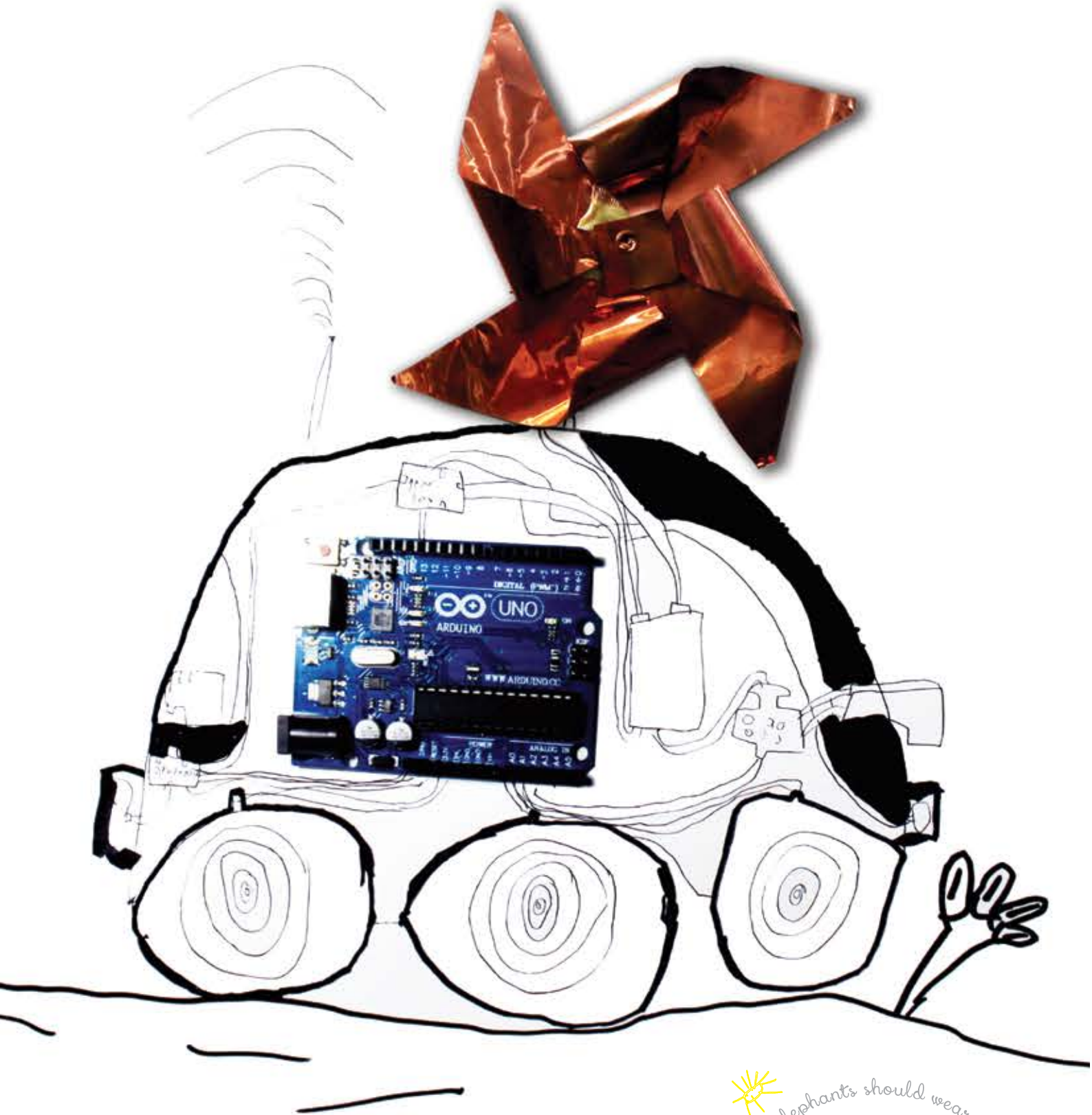
+66 (0)2 116 2394  
purpleelephant@elc.ac.th

**The Country School**  
Ages 18 months - 5 yrs

Area: Nonthaburi  
44 Soi Samakkee 20  
Nonthaburi 11000

+66 (0)2 588 1063  
countryschool@elc.ac.th









# Cam Ranh and Nha Trang

by Neil Brook

When the French ruled Indochina, they found the perfect spot for a seaside retreat, stringing a handful of small villages together to form Nha Trang. On the South coast of Vietnam this city on the bay has been luring beach lovers from all over the world for years. While you won't find the same density of French colonial architecture that forms the patchwork of Hanoi here, there are

plenty of interesting remnants and so much more to Nha Trang than meets the eye. The city is just the beginning. Head out to the countryside and some of the best Vietnam has to offer will have you entranced.

Nha Trang is served by the airport at Cam Ranh which is a forty-five minute drive along the coast. There are two stunning bays, one at Cam Ranh the other in Nha Trang. The stretch of beach as you leave the airport heading to the city is one of the rare places in the world that is beautiful and unspoilt. However as with all hidden treasures this coast will be unrecognisable over the coming months. Developers from all major hotel brands have snapped up prime beachside locations and are building at an alarming rate. Think Cancun and you get the idea. This



will be the place for those who enjoy all inclusive resorts where the sand is white and the water is blue and clear. The Anam has been established here for some time and is the pick for pool villas with private pools opening onto lush gardens rolling down to the sea.

Every time I return I'm astounded by the sheer rapid rate of development both in Cam Ranh and Nha Trang. There are literally thousands of new hotel rooms flooding the market on a monthly basis. The upside it there is no shortage of choice. The place to stay in the city is the InterContinental Hotel. It's the only five star property right on the beach where rooms command sweeping views of the city, mountains and bay. Their happy hour in the elegant lobby lounge is the perfect way to end the day. The







seafood buffet is legendary.

As you arrive into Nha Trang you can't miss the beach where the waves lap seductively at the shore along five kilometres of white sand that curves gently around a wide bay. Cocooned by islands (there are nineteen of them) close by to the east and mountains to the west, this touch of paradise is protected from the severe weather that torments other parts of SE Asia. It's the perfect location for a beach vacation with restaurants, nightclubs and bars at your doorstep.

Nha Trang has the reputation of Vietnam's party playground. However the choice is yours. While hitting the dance floor on the roof of the Havana Hotel or climbing aboard an all inclusive 'booze cruise' may be your thing, the beach is sure to entice you to relax more often than not. Nha Trang is not all about the beach, Tran Phu, however it's a major part of the appeal. It's truly stunning. It comes alive in the late afternoon. Locals descend with food, set up camp and dive into the sea fully clothed. You won't find any locals baking in the midday sun. However for beach lovers, a couple of bucks and you can enjoy the comfort and shade at the Blue Sea Beach & Bar. Hang around as the thatched roof bar becomes a cool spot to enjoy a sundowner. As the afternoon progresses the sun dips behind the buildings lining the beach so shade is easy to find. And that's free!



Nha Trang is famous for fresh seafood and you can watch the fishing boats head out to sea, returning to stock tanks on display at restaurants lining the boardwalk. It's particularly cool in squid season to see the bright lights bobbing around the bay at night. There are lots of places lining the beachfront. My favourite is Thuy 66 on Trần Phú Street. It's a small, unassuming place with welcoming staff and great food. The grill is set up on the footpath under the breeze of an electric fan and burning embers. Sea snails may sound unappealing, however when steamed with lemongrass, chilli and ginger they are sensational. There's a keg of local beer pouring out glass after glass to wash it all down.

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century the region around modern Nha Trang was known as Kauthara, and was part of the Champa Kingdom. All that remains from the period are the stunning Po Nagar towers. Believed to have been constructed sometime before 781AD, the complex gives you a glimpse of a rich historical heritage. They're located on Mount Cu Lau, where

the Cai River meets the sea, so you'll get a 360 degree view of the beautiful landscape around Nha Trang. The Po Nagar Cham Towers are a defining feature of Nha Trang and there were originally ten buildings dedicated to Hindu deities. The four remaining towers, built in honour of local Goddess Po Nagar, Cri Cambhu, Sanhaka, and Ganeca, are still used today as places of worship for the Cham people. They're found within a 10 minute stroll from Tran Phu Beach.







Allow one of the resident monks to guide you to the tombs at the top of an almost hidden side stairway. At the top a stunning twenty four metre tall white Buddha glows in the sun as it sits watching over the city. Clamber down the 152 stone steps on the other side, stopping to admire the reclining Buddha halfway down. Note that the main building and some other areas are closed between 11.30am

A great way to kick off the day is to head down to the organic juice bar at the Sailing Club which offers innovative juices and smoothies to compliment their perfect Eggs Benedict. Keep up with 'The Kardashians' – mint, celery and cucumber. You can easily settle in here for the day and one day you should. As the sun sets on weekdays, bean bags are scattered on the sand and kerosene lamps give a bedouin feel. Saturdays, the Sailing Club's beach party is the place to be and on Sunday afternoon resident DJs spin the discs accompanied by a live saxophonist which is chilled out and very cool.

The best way to explore Nha Trang is on foot, by cycle or motorbike. It's possible to hire a motorbike but check your travel insurance policy to make sure you're covered. You can pick them up from guys on the street however the prices may reflect the lack of insurance and you'd be better off using a reputable supplier. You won't find Avis, Budget or any international hire companies here so do some legwork first. Cyclos (a seat on the front of a push bike) allow someone else to do the legwork and are also a great way to get around. Set the price before you jump in and plan your own itinerary. A short trip or a tour are all negotiable.

Long Son Pagoda is the largest Buddhist pagoda in Nha Trang. Founded in the late 19th Century it was built to honour six monks and nuns who died in self-immolation protesting against the Diem government, and its entrance and roof are covered in mosaic dragons of glass and ceramic.

and 1pm. Each local chef closely guards their recipe for Phở (pronounced 'fur') the quintessential Vietnamese noodle soup. Add your own touches with sprouts, chilli and herbs. The cafe at the Long Son Pagoda serves one of the best and cheapest in town.

From Long Son Pagoda you can walk back to the beach via Nha Trang Cathedral, where everyone is welcome at morning or afternoon mass (Vietnam is home to the second largest Catholic community in SE Asia). The Cathedral, set atop a hill that overlooks the train station, is widely known as the largest church in the city. It was constructed in provincial French Gothic style during the early 19th Century, featuring beautiful stained glass windows and a square clock tower surmounted by a large crucifix. Its three cathedral bells, which were cast in France in 1789, still ring out over the city. There are also 4,000 tombstones mounted on the sides of the cathedral, which were placed here after the neighbouring cemetery was levelled in 1988 to extend the city train station. Mass is held at 5am and 18:30pm on a daily basis.

If you like the idea of climbing more stairs then head out to Suoi Do Pagoda a 50 year old temple that was built in honour of Quan Am, the Goddess of Mercy. It is believed that a young girl claimed to have seen the Goddess while playing with her friends at the nearby stream. It takes about 200 steps to reach the pagoda,







where you'll be greeted with panoramic views of paddy fields, banana plantations, and the neighbouring hills. The pagoda is a 30 minute drive from Nha Trang.

If you've ever submerged yourself in a mud bath you'll no doubt be singing its virtues. Tháp Bà Spa offers private pools, worth the splurge to avoid uncomfortable moments with strangers. Locals believe that the mud has healing powers due to its composition of rocks and volcanic ash and that the natural hot mineral springs help detoxify and soothe fatigued muscles, remove dead skin cells and supply minerals to the body. Make up your own mind however trust me, you will feel younger and your skin will feel soft afterwards. It can get busy here so go around midday for a less adventure park feel.

As an Aussie I've been spoilt. We have a vibrant Vietnamese community in Australia and as a result I would argue combining our ingredients to produce the best Vietnamese food in the world. Unless you've been to Vietnam. One of my first visions as I wandered the streets was of a boa and crocodile spinning on the spit outside Veranda Restaurant. It's a buffet restaurant with the usual and 'unusual' offerings. Yes it's commercial, however everyone should try snake and croc at least once in their life?

A cooking class is the ideal way to immerse yourself into the local culture and learn how to produce yummy food at home. Many local restaurants and five star hotels in Nha Trang can help. An experienced chef will guide you on selecting fresh herbs, spices, and meats at the local market



before heading back to prepare lunch. Lanterns Vietnamese Restaurant's classes are a fun way to learn about Vietnamese cuisine. The owner does a great deal for the local community so it's worth supporting this business.

Of course you'll want to try Banh Mi (Vietnamese baguettes). They are delicious with sliced meat and any number of accompaniments. You get them on the street. Steamed rice pancakes with minced pork and fresh rice paper rolls are not to be missed. However sometimes comfort food is a requirement. Livin Collective serves up BBQ American Style and the beef brisket is incredible. Sakura Sushi serves excellent Japanese food and amazing Sashimi and Sushi. Wednesdays it's 20% off! You don't have to eat Vietnamese every day?

Vietnamese coffee is fragrant and delicious and the cafe culture in Nha Trang is as vibrant as it is all over Vietnam. Served in individual drip filters, hot water oozes through freshly ground coffee to form the perfect espresso. Forget non fat cappuccinos and lattes. Add sweetened condensed milk or leave it black before pouring over ice. SV Cafe is very local and sits opposite the beach in a courtyard under the trees and umbrellas.







The coffee is excellent and you can buy the beans freshly ground on site. In most cafes here it's perfectly acceptable to bring some snacks and linger over coffee with friends. Drop into Breadtalk and grab some pastries and sandwiches to create your own high tea. Weasel Coffee is the most expensive in the world. The beans are roasted after passing through the civet cat's digestive system. If that hasn't turned you off completely, you can buy the beans at supermarkets to see what all the fuss is about.

It's difficult to find better places to shop than Bangkok however there are some things that are unique to Vietnam.

Amber and sandalwood made into chunky jewellery will add a touch of Vietnamese style to your collection. Buy amber stones in shades from yellow to gold and create your own personal statement piece. Ostrich and crocodile are farmed in Vietnam for their meat and leather, and provide a sustainable industry. The leather quality is excellent and Việt Thành is a great place to shop.

Dam Market is the biggest in town and sells pretty much everything. They have added a new more modern section that takes a little away from the local experience however if your interested in trying to bargain for a deal on designer fakes, yes they've found their way here too, although they are not yet up to the quality of those you'd find in other Asian cities, then this is the place to go. Otherwise you can get fresh fruits and



flowers and everything you'd expect at a local market. You'll have to drive a hard bargain to get the prices down. Bangkok locals should be used to this!

Nha Trang is Vietnam's premier diving destination and Sailing Club Divers will kit you out. Mun Island is a protected marine environment and a great place to learn to dive in the relatively shallow waters. If you prefer to snorkel you'll be richly rewarded if you fork out the extra cash to join a diving boat trip, rather than a local snorkelling trip to the islands close by. Snorkelling and diving are probably the most popular things to do in Nha Trang thanks to its affordability and abundant marine life. If you prefer to stay landside, The National Oceanographic Museum of Vietnam offers interesting exhibits of local marine life, including over 20,000 live and preserved marine specimens. Established in 1922, the institute sponsors ongoing research and community projects, such as captive breeding programmes, preservation and regeneration of local coral reefs. Did I mention the 18 metre long whale skeleton? The kids will love this place.

There's a surprising amount of history to discover here. The Alexandre Yersin Museum commemorates the late French bacteriologist with exhibits of his personal belongings and laboratory equipment, as well as original letters and photographs from his travels around Vietnam. Dr. Yersin came to Vietnam in the late 19th Century and some of his contributions to Vietnam include the founding of Dalat, discovery of a vital plague-causing bacterium, and research on agricultural methods and meteorological forecasting. In addition to the displayed artefacts, visitors can also view a short film about Yersin's life at the museum. The museum offers guided tours in French, English and Vietnamese.

For adrenaline junkies Nha Trang has so much to offer. Shamrock Adventures will take you into the mountains to ride the white water rapids of the Cai River. Jeep It Up puts the pedal to the metal with excursions to the countryside and beaches in vintage war-era jeeps. Sailing is a good opportunity to see the different islands off the mainland. Trips usually include snorkelling, plus plenty of food and alcohol. However, these tours are generally aimed towards the 18 to 30 crowd who like to party.

Vinpearl Amusement Park offers fun-filled





activities for travelling families, with unique waterslides, a wave pool, amphitheatre, shopping mall, and a variety of rides. Situated on Hon Tre Island, the theme park is connected to the mainland of Nha Trang via the longest overwater cable car in the world, at 3,320 metres. Vinpearl Amusement Park's Underwater World Aquarium houses over 300 species of marine life. You can't miss the *Hollywoodesque sign* stamped onto the hillside on the island. Golfers will delight at the stunning course with ocean views from every hole.

Nha Trang is ideal for golfing. There are two other courses. Diamond Bay Golf and Villas and KN golf links

Cam Ranh which was designed by Greg Norman. Both courses hug the coast providing stunning backdrops.

While you could quite easily settle into the beach at Nha Trang for days, for a slightly more serene scene, head out of town. Doc Let Beach is easily accessible on local buses – they'll get you there in air-conditioned comfort for a little over a dollar. Dai Lanh Beach is about as remote as you can get. Here the mountains kiss the sea and women in their *nón lá* (conical hats) prepare the freshest of seafood. It'll be difficult to drag yourself away – so don't! You can stay in basic cabins on the beach for a bargain. Bai Dai Beach (Long Beach) which stretches for 10 kilometres of gorgeous white sand is a relaxed option to escape the city with little cafes and restaurants to keep you refreshed and fed.

About an hours drive from Nha Trang are the Hon Khoi Salt Fields. Here female workers harvest mounds of natural salt from shallow fields between the months of January and June. They make for a perfect iconic Vietnamese photo stop on the way to Doc Let Beach. Thanks to Vietnam's extensive coastline, salt production is a thriving industry in Nha Trang, generating about 737,000 tonnes every year.

Ba Ho Waterfalls is comprised of three natural waterfalls that end with a clear lake surrounded by a dense rainforest, offering a peaceful

retreat for swimming and picnics. The waterfalls have been left in their natural state, although some steps have been added to help in the more challenging areas. It's a 40 minute drive from Nha Trang City along beautiful stretches of coastline. Hire a motorbike and zoom up with the freedom to stay and enjoy at your leisure. You can include this in an organised day trip.

For me, bicycle tours are among the best ways to explore Nha Trang's beautiful countryside, passing vast rice fields, pristine waterfalls, rural villages and mountain ranges. Vietnam Active is a great choice and also offers yoga, rafting and kayaking. Who said it was all about the beach!?

With non stop flights from Bangkok with Bangkok Airways now is the time to take advantage of great flight deals and enjoy the area before it gets overdeveloped. There are still areas of serenity and beaches where you'll be the only people. Coupled with an amazing choice for food, fascinating hinterland and near perfect weather all year round, get here before the rest of the world beats you to it.







# Hanoi - Halong Bay Unmasked

by Kay Natesan

When you are repeatedly told to not go somewhere, because of an outbreak of a virulent virus around, your heart rebels; you want to prove the world wrong, perhaps with an even stronger intent and purpose. We went right ahead, like two petulant kids who would do as they please.

With a mere four days in which to discover a new country – essentially its capital city Hanoi and a legendary bay (Halong), declared a World Heritage Site, we succeeded in squeezing every hour of its capacity and gifted ourselves what we needed, including a stupendous hour in a large souvenir shop near the St. Joseph's Cathedral.

We had booked a small hotel in the middle of the old quarter, and a very busy area it was. It so reminded me of home - of the old city of Delhi, where foreign tourists abound, little shops display a delicious array of wares, small and big eateries thrive, as do a variety of street vendors of all sorts. Two-wheelers ruled the roost and we really had to watch our step, missing pavements notwithstanding. The honking was familiar yet unpleasant. The weather, that was a pleasant surprise - it was around 16C and we were unprepared for the chill in the air, especially after Bangkok. In a few hours after our early arrival, we wrapped up nicely and headed out to get a feel of the place, as it were. A fog laden water body, the lake Hoàn Kiếm, welcomed us in all its tranquil beauty. We hung around its coffee shops and gazed at the myriad tourists that





had been conjured up from all parts of the world. Vietnamese coffee is distinct and savouring it became part of my journey's ritual.

For the entire length of our stay, it stayed cloudy and an occasional rain reminded us to carry umbrellas. It wasn't what I would have preferred weather-wise, but it was what it was and we made the best of it.

## What we loved about Hanoi

### Its people

A gentle and courteous lot. We sauntered on our first day, discovering the city of our own accord. We explored unguided and unfettered, like two curious tourists. It was exciting to have finally made it to a country I'd been longing to visit for as long as I can remember.

We often discovered that our route wasn't the one we'd set out on, that too despite a map in the man's able hands. At every wrong turn, we'd ask around and people spoke not a word of English but were still able to guide us with gestures and intelligible sounds. Communication was never a problem. We were already made comfortable in our new surroundings. We couldn't wait to go further out on the following bus tour we'd booked.

### Its trees

The city is lush with gigantic trees on elegant streets – all sorts of trees, sweeping the city, one that's awash with the whispers



of leaves, rustling with the wind. I couldn't get enough of these natural beacons. The bus ride we undertook – as is our ritual, a hop-on hop-off city bus to get an idea of where we would wish to return to further explore. It has always worked for us. It was no different on this tour of Hanoi. We set off at 10am and got back to the starting point within 3 hours. The Red River is a sight to behold – its expanse is breathtaking. The Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum is another structure you stare at, bewitched, even as the bus speeds past.

The city had many other touristic delights, and waterways, iconic buildings and some very fascinating tree-lined avenues regaled us. Hanoi is called the city of lakes, and it sure is.

### Its buildings

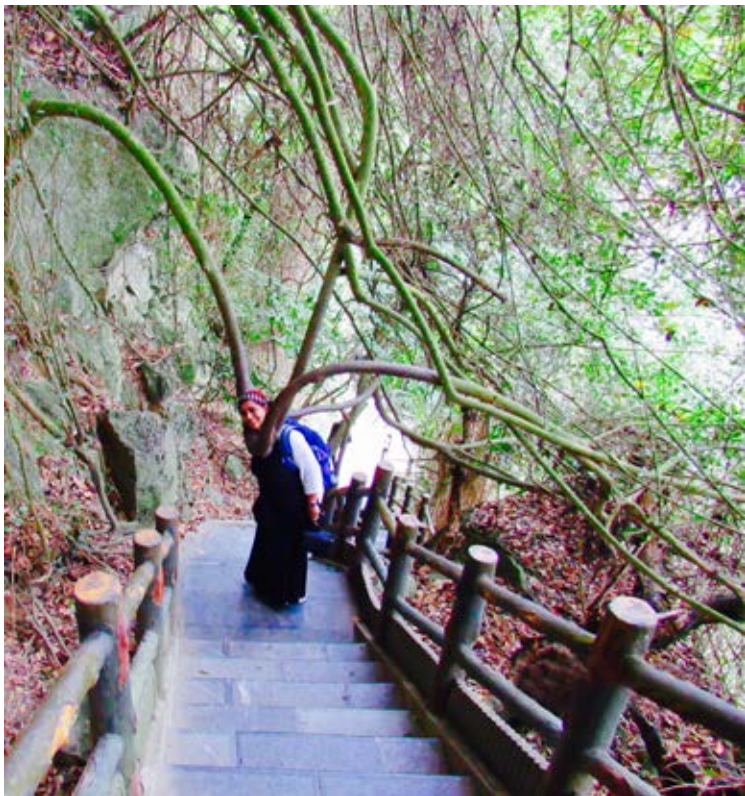
Clearly the French have left their mark here. I grew up in Pondicherry, which has also been a French colony. I observed and was consistently reminded of the French footprints of my childhood - the French windows and the typical design and architecture that they seem to thrive on. It has done no harm, if anything it adds to the charm and allure that is Hanoi; the Vietnamese women's museum, for example is a regal structure, and we revisited it. It had an exhibition of Vietnamese fashion going on, which was very exciting to me. The Opera House displays a certain charm, as well as some of the hotels that thrive on ingenuity married to beauty. There is now a quiet march of modern buildings, we noted, coming along haltingly and making their place in Hanoi, in a bid to keep up with the rest of the world. It's okay, not as disturbing to the ambience of this quaint city as one might imagine.

### Its food

Although the Vietnamese eat a lot of rice-based vermicelli and noodles, it is of a distinct flavour and taste – and not at all like Thai food, which is far spicier. The gentle appeal on the tastebuds was very pleasant. We had to have one Vietnamese meal a day, and very quickly Pho became a favourite along with the delicious rice spring rolls, both fried and steamed.







We were in a hurry to sample what they called their iconic sandwich – ‘Paperman’. Our last meal was the sandwich - the bread roll contains what you pick to stuff it with and is chewy in texture, toasted it turned delicious, as the filling oozes into your mouth in a perfect blend of flavours bursting to please. It was nothing like a subway, although that’s the closest culinary technique one can think of, if one must compare. It was outstanding! Other than that, the ordinary fare of pastas and burgers are all there to be had.

## Halong Bay

The bay is exactly as one has seen in pictures – beatific, surreal and tranquil. On a cloudy day, it presents an otherworldly feel. Our boat was modern and comfortable, with a terrace deck, and while the winds that caught our hair, was chilly, we were well-clad leaving us to embrace its serenity. There were many other boats sliding along the bay at a distance, which served and nourished the requisites needed to stay awestruck. The guide was humorous but never did he interfere with our joys, discreet when the passage needed him to be so.

Caves housing ancient stalactites on one of the myriad islands, bedazzled us. Trinh Nu (Virgin) cave was one of the caves we visited. Me Cunk (maze) cave was another, and the Surprise cave, each with a distinct character. These

were dimly lit and had us gaping, and wonderstruck.

We strolled through, stopping every now and then to photograph hungrily, even as our vision took it all in. At once meditative and inspired, we listened to the guide, as he pointed out some salient rock formations, likening them to Queen Victoria, or a toad and such like. Fortunately, all of us travellers were united in our need of the same quietude that must permeate such a passage.

The highlight of this visit to the bay was the stop to mount kayaks in twos - from our boat we kayaked for 30 minutes, each way, to an island, where we climbed a stairway only to descend onto an uninhabited beach. What a surprise that was – a hidden gem, invisible from the waters where we had left our kayaks: a white and wide beach with gentle waters lapping the sands. Internally, we were all very stimulated, excited at having this piece of sandy beach all to ourselves for an hour.

Typical Vietnamese fare was served at lunch, on the boat, and was fit for royalty – the courses were endless, and by the end of it, we were satiated. It was all absolutely delicious! Imagine feasting on a boat with views that make you feel you’ve died and are ensconced in a better place than you could ever imagine. We thanked the Gods as we partook of every course, with great gusto.

A trip such as this, ending in a warm bed, in a quaint little hotel – does make you feel nourished despite masked tourists and locals alike. Although four days seemed too short when we set off on this momentous journey, we did come away two satisfied souls, realising that Vietnam had truly given us all we needed: a foray into a country of this beauty and cultural ethos, one we carried back with us as an eternal gift. Time had expanded to allow us to receive what we needed to.

We are certain we’ll return to other places in Vietnam in a different era, when we are not repeatedly discouraged to travel to this part of the world.





# Did you know that an immune booster can help prevent diseases, infections and cancer?

by Dr. Thisara Weerasamai



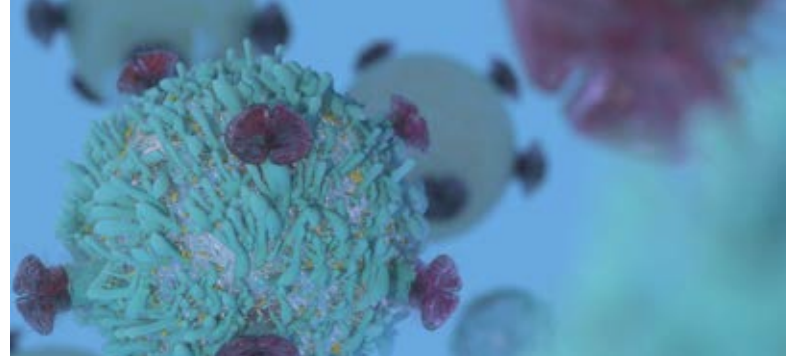
**A**merican Board of Anti-ageing Medicine; Head of Anti-ageing Medicine and Happy Life Centre Phyathai-1 Hospital

The immune system is the body's natural defence system that comprises of many biological structures. It will help protect the body against diseases, infections

and even cancer. This system will work much the same way as an army would protect you from the invaders to maintain your health in a good condition in conjunction with the lymphatic system, where it generates white blood cells like B lymphocytes, T lymphocytes and the NK cells.

NK cells or Natural Killer Cells are considered as lymphocytes or a type of white blood cells that the body uses as a shield to resist various bacteria and virus infections that will try to enter the body including the process of mutated cells or cancer cells elimination. Mutated cells can occur in the body at any time. The higher the NK cell activity will lower the rate of tumor aggression or growth.

In a normal time, there are approximately 2/5,000 million NK cells in your body. When foreign cells invade your body, NK cells will detect them immediately and, like defending soldiers, move to confront these cells within 24 hours together with the releasing of cytokines, as a messenger that call upon the immune system to kill the foreign cells. According to medical research, we can assess the function of the immune system by measuring the NK cells activity. With 1 millilitre of blood test, no fasting required, and results can be received within 3 working days.



**At our Anti-Ageing Center, we provide the following courses:**

- Personalised Physical Activity and Personalised Nutritional Meal plan to enhance the immune system and to strengthen the NK Cell function
- Personalised Immune Booster and Personalised Supplements
- “Highly Active NK Cell Therapy” (Osaki Method) is the one and only innovation from Japan by Dr. Junichi Masuyama , M.D., Ph.D. – Board of Immunology (Boston) & Dr. Sanehiko Fujita , M.D., Ph.D. - Board of GI & Herpetology, which the process uses just 40cc of blood from the patient to produce and grow activated NK cells up to 5,000 cells within 14 days. More importantly, these NK cells that have been increased are highly selective. They are the strongest cells and the largest number in stimulation to be highly ready to kill foreign cells such as cancer cells, viruses and bacterial infected cells. Moreover, they do not cause reaction, resistance, or danger because they are cells from the patient.

## Who is the test for?

- People with chronic fatigue syndrome, stress, anxiety, and suffering from insufficient sleep
- People with a family history of cancer
- People who have or are prone and frequently get infections or those that travel frequently
- Healthy people who want to monitor the function of their innate non-specific immunity, especially in the outbreak crisis of a virus

Nowadays, proactive self-care and preventive care is the best healthcare trend and vital part in protecting and strengthening the immune system. Having a strong defence or immune system makes you more likely to be well protected and equipped to fight against infections, other diseases and cancer. It is time to take care of our immune system.







## Coffee culture in Vietnam

by Jasmin Knight

*Dark, rich, thick and creamy with a heavy, deep chocolate aroma, hot or iced.*

Vietnamese coffee culture has been around for decades. In most of the cities here in Vietnam, you're never more than a block away from a street coffee seller, and it's more than likely that they are selling from the front room or garden of their homes. Although most street sellers won't be selling any fancy, skinny caramel mocha-Frappuccino's, vanilla macchiatos or affogatos, the Vietnamese have been enjoying and perfecting, coffee good enough to compete against these Western favourites since the French colonisation in the late 19th Century. Since then, the economic growth thanks to the coffee grown here, means that Vietnam is now one of the world's largest coffee exporters. Now famous for its coffee culture, Vietnam grows many types of coffee from the bold Robusta to the aromatic Arabica and along with the mass coffee farming, there is an abundance of coffee shops, cafes and workspaces sprouting up across the country.

If you're looking for reviews on large, fancypants, franchised coffee chains in the same wheelhouse as Highlands Coffee and Cộng Cà Phê then stop reading now, this piece isn't for you. However, if you want proper Vietnamese hot drinks made with love, then stick with me and I'll reveal the treats of the Vietnamese coffee culture and the most tantalising places to try them here in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital.

There's more than just your traditional Vietnamese coffee to try, with coffee for all moods, meetings and weather types. So, prepare to be indulged in the wonderful world of Vietnamese coffee.

### Traditional Vietnamese coffee

These are no normal coffees, so prepare to feel supercharged. But as with most, you can order them hot or iced. These outrageously strong coffees will have you feeling pumped and ready to go. Perfect for a catch up with friends or to begin working on that personal project you've been putting off for months!

For the real experience, hot concentrated coffee is tantalisingly dripped through a 'Phin' and into a small glass with condensed milk waiting at the bottom, creating a fine balance between sharp bitterness and a soothing sweetness. Phin's are a special Vietnamese filter, usually made of metal and with no need for filter papers, they're much more environmentally-friendly and cost-effective – what V5?

After meeting a friend recently, who had enjoyed two coffees before we met, she was shaking, which is not an unusual side effect of this energising elixir. Use with caution!

The most popular, traditional Vietnamese coffees created through this Phin drip method that you will come





across are Bạc Xỉu and Cà Phê Sữa Đá.

**Cà Phê Sữa Đá** – A glass of mighty strong, dark roasted coffee with condensed milk. Served on the smaller side when compared to your typical Americano. Small, but mighty. Let the bitterness dry your mouth and the condensed milk coat it with sweetness. This type of coffee is a hit when you need that instantaneous energy boost. Can be served hot or dripped onto ice.

Enjoy these at roadside street vendors. Exhausted from seeing the sights and shopping? Take a break amidst the hussle and bussle of the crowded streets of Hanoi and immerse yourself in the coffee culture Vietnamese style. Alternatively, another serene place to enjoy a Sua Da is Ta Ca Phe. Located at the end of an already quiet street in a small cove, nestled amongst a collection of small independent businesses, Ta's is a great place for getting work done. With its simplistic, yet pleasing interior design and open outdoor area; sip your coffee, focus your mind and power on.

**Name:** Ta Ca Phe

**Location:** 41 Tay Ho Street, Quang An

**Price:** \$\$

**Bạc Xỉu** – Sweet dreams are made of these. A little less coffee than the Cà Phê Sữa Đá but instead with a more generous amount of condensed milk, usually enjoyed in a taller glass with a lot of ice. Less concentrated with more milk; coffee without the intensity. Similar to that of a sweet latte to the Europeans. As with the Cà Phê Sữa Đás, you can enjoy these from any street vendor. However, Tapies, a hidden coffee den is where you can really appreciate these. Duck behind its

wonderfully green hanging plants and enter their cosy coffee haven. Their welcoming service and unique, handmade metal furniture give it a feel like no other. The coffee is smooth and aromatic, made perfectly every time.

**Name:** Tapies

**Location:** 111A Xuan Dieu, Tay Ho

**Price:** \$

#### Coconut Coffee (Cà Phê Cốt Dừa)

Everywhere you go in Vietnam you'll find coconuts. Used for a wide range of products from kitchenware and cooking ingredients to beauty products and gardening. The world's gone wild for coconuts!





Coconut coffees can be found in most places across Vietnam but are particularly popular in Hanoi and Saigon, the finish, however, ranges by place and request. The sweetness of the condensed milk and the velvety coconut milk used softens the intense bitterness of Vietnamese coffee. Usually, they're made with blended ice, sweetened creamy coconut milk and topped with a shot of coffee. However, if you're lucky, you may stumble upon a coconut coffee, sprinkled with crunchy coconut chips. To treat yourself or for weekend vibes, enjoy them drizzled with a shot of Whisky or Baileys! Alternatively, you may happen upon one of the few cafes which also offer a hot coconut coffee, delightfully different in flavour to the iced version but much more soul-soothing on a cold or misty day.

For hands-down, the best iced-coconut coffee in Hanoi, you must try Cafe Mia's. Located on the quiet peninsula of Lang Yen Phu, Mia's has uninterrupted views of some of Hanoi's most famous lakeside landmarks such as the Tran Quoc Pagoda and Truc Bac. Set back from the busier southern aspect of the lake, you're free to enjoy the view and relax. With authentic Vietnamese seating, it's the perfect place to relax away from the hustle and madness of the fast-paced northern capital. At only 40K for an iced-coconut coffee and lovingly prepared with those irresistible coconut chips, it's hard not to have a few, not to mention the rest of their wonderfully handcrafted menu!

**Name:** Mia Coffee

& Cocktail

**Location:** 53 Láng Yên Phú

**Price:** \$



For a hot take on the coconut coffee, Galeria is the one to beat, with just the right amount of sweetness.

The venue itself is filled with different types of art, from their signature Kim meets Trump oil painting displayed out the front, to cultural Vietnamese moments captured in watercolour. Most of these unique pieces are available to purchase, with prices that won't break the bank. They're perfect for souvenirs or lasting memories of your visit. Not only is it super cosy on the inside, but you can also enjoy your coffee in the beautiful terraced garden out back, situated above a traditional Vietnamese communal courtyard.

**Name:** Galeria

**Location:** 172 Quan Thanh

**Price:** \$\$

### Egg coffee

Surely not egg and coffee together? Sounds strange but give it a chance. Frothed, heated and sweetened egg yolks over a shot of espresso, mix well and it's practically a dessert. You can

even find certain egg coffee cafes serving an egg-beer or even egg-rum. Well, when in Rome...

The best and oldest egg-coffee places can be found in the old quarter of Hanoi. Find them down tight little alleyways, which feel like you've just walked into someone's family living room or back to the 1950s, these are the best places for a traditional and brewed egg-coffee. For a delicious egg coffee made fresh, served hot, on a tealight stand, it has to be Cafe Nang.

**Name:** Cafe Nang

**Location:** 45 Nguyễn Hữu Huân, Old Quarter

**Price:** \$

### Cafes worth a mention and coffees definitely worth a try!

Another treasure located along the bank of Hanoi's West Lake is PingPong. Not only can you enjoy a delicious caramel macchiato here whilst admiring the misty views of the lake, but you can also browse around upstairs in their unique and tastefully modern independent furniture shop.

**Name:** Ping Pong

**Location:** 148 Tu Hoa, Quang An

**Price:** \$\$\$

If you fancy being a tourist without funding multinational coffee chains, then The Note Coffee is the perfect place to stop! Wallpapered from top to bottom in a rainbow of sticky notes with personalised messages from coffee customers past. Order a drink and receive a fortune-cookie type note attached, what's even better is you can write a note of your own and stick it, well, wherever!

**Name:** The Note Coffee

**Location:** 64 Luong Van Can Street, Old Quarter

**Price:** \$\$





The next choice is yours, add a shot of Baileys or Whisky to add some summer vibes to your coconut delight or skip the shot and keep it straight-edged.

This one (in our opinion) is mandatory; sugary coconut chips. Sprinkle generously on top.

Finally, as Cuong always says: “mix well” and enjoy!

### More than just coffee.

During the Vietnamese winter, when the rain is pouring, your feet are wrinkled, slipping around in your flip-flops and the prospect of developing trench foot feels like a very real concern. It can all feel a bit gloomy, but, worry no more. Taking a sip on these rich hot cocoas will brighten your day.

Good chocolate is a rarity in Vietnam, it's mostly just chocolate flavoured candy, and if you've been spoilt with the deliciousness of real chocolate such as Cadburys, Galaxy or Kinder you know exactly what we're talking about. So, having hot chocolates here is an indulgent affair.

*These little delights are made with real cocoa powder, thick, rich and dark, not too sweet, yet not too bitter. It'll chase those rainy-day blues away in a sip.*

Ready to feel refreshed without the caffeine induced need to climb the walls exorcist style? Then why not try my Cuong's (of Cafe Mia's) fabulous iced coconut coffee recipe:

### Ingredients:

An espresso sized shot of Vietnamese (or your favourite) coffee  
 ½ cup coconut milk  
 ½ tsp Condensed milk (organic brown sugar – V)  
 A heap of ice  
 Sugared coconut chips (to sprinkle)  
 A glug of Whisky or Baileys

### Other utensils:

Metal straw  
 Blender  
 Spoon  
 Your most beachside feel glass

### Method:

To execute this delight in the most traditional Vietnamese way, you'll need to drip-filter the coffee using a Phin, but if you don't have one to hand, a shot of your favourite strong-brew coffee will do just fine.

Whilst the coffee's brewing, blend up your ice with the coconut and condensed milk, to create an ice-cream like mixture. For a vegan or dairy-free option you can substitute the condensed milk with some organic brown sugar for that caramelised sweetness.

First, add the shot of coffee followed by the ice mixture.

**Name:** Doppio

**Location:** 52 Tu Ngoc Van

**Price:** \$\$





# TEVAR TECHNOLOGY

A ground-breaking  
and minimally-  
invasive treatment  
for aortic aneurysms

**A**s an individual's age increases, so does the likelihood of problems. One such problem is an aortic aneurysm (the unnatural enlargement of the aorta). Although this is not a condition that affects everyone, when it does occur, treatment must be timely or the consequences can be fatal.

Dr. Chad Wanishawad, a cardiologist at Sukumvit Hospital offers his expertise on how to take precaution. As the condition's symptoms are complex, the timeliness of treatment greatly impacts its effectiveness. If the aneurysm is detected early, and trained doctors work to their fullest capabilities, an individual can expect to make a full recovery.



Recently, a patient flew in to receive treatment at Sukumvit Hospital because he was suffering from severe influenza, which came with symptoms like fatigue, high fever, loss of appetite, body pain, etc. Additionally, he was experiencing septicaemia as a result of a bacterial infection of the bloodstream, on top of congestive heart failure.

Dr. Chad began his diagnosis of the patient using a computerised X-ray of the lungs and heart because he suspected that the septicaemia complication was a result of pneumonia. Once the results were analysed, it was concluded that the patient was not suffering from pneumonia, so he continued searching for the cause of infection.

He explained, "When we diagnosed the patient with influenza, we found that he was also suffering from an aortic aneurysm. When he arrived at the hospital, he was admitted immediately because he was elderly,

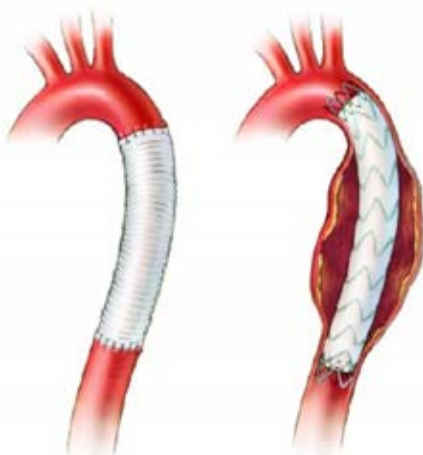
83 years old, with heavy symptoms. After five days of consecutive X-rays, we found that the aorta was enlarging quickly."

After the evaluation, Dr. Chad consulted with a team of doctors, including Dr. Kittichai Luengtaviboon, a cardiothoracic surgeon (specialist in heart and lung surgery). The team concluded that the aneurysm had contracted an infection that resulted in septicaemia, so they began treating the patient immediately.

## The advantages of TEVAR technology:

Dr. Kittichai, explained that the aorta is the route that oxygenated blood is pumped out of the heart's lower left ventricle to the rest of the body. If it degenerates, it can leak or burst like a water pipe. The word 'aneurysm' describes an aorta that gradually enlarges. If it reaches 5.5cm, there is a high chance that the aorta will rupture,

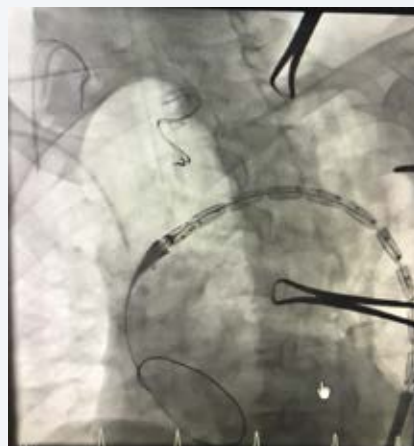
## Aneurysm Repair



With Open Surgery

With Stent

©2008 Loyola University Health System







Dr. Chad Wanishawad,  
FACC



Dr. Kittichai Luengtaviboon,  
cardiothoracic surgeon

leaving the patient with only 50% chance of surviving.

In this case, the **Thoracic Endovascular Aortic Repair (TEVAR)** was then applied. This minimally-invasive procedure involves making a small incision near the groin, after which a sheath (a small straw tube approximately 7-8mm in size that allows safe access to the vessels) is inserted alongside guidewires and catheters.

A contrast dye is then injected so the area can be seen under fluoroscopy, which uses X-rays to display real-time moving images. After this, the stent is guided over the wires to its correct location, and then it expands to seal the aneurysm. After the treatment, the patient's symptoms subsided, including high blood pressure and wheezing noises caused by the aneurysm pressing on the lungs.

TEVAR has many advantages. Not only is the procedure quick, but it poses minimal risk, and patients will make a fast recovery. Moreover, the long-term forecast is good, although it is necessary to get yearly scans using computer tomography (CT) for the rest of a patient's life.

#### Prevention is key:

In order to reduce the chance of developing this problem, Dr. Chad emphasises that prevention is key. Smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol can cause the deterioration of blood vessels. To minimise this, reduce the above factors by focusing on

#### 4 healthy approaches:

1. Exercise regularly (minimum of 150 minutes per week)
2. Do not smoke
3. Control your weight so it does not exceed 30 on the Body Mass Index (BMI) (BMI=weight in kilograms / height in m<sup>2</sup>)
4. Limit meat consumption and eat foods that are high in fibre such as beans, vegetables, and seeds. These will reduce fats in the body and aid the digestive system.

Throughout history, certain people have lived longer than the general population. Despite coming from different regions in Asia, Europe and the Americas, they all share things in common:

They are physically active, safe from toxic substances, maintain a healthy weight, have a balanced diet without processed food, are not stressed, and have strong family bonds. Examples include the Okinawa and Hunza tribes, and the inhabitants of Sardinia in Italy, Loma Linda California, and the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica.

To conclude, Dr. Chad reiterated that there is no special elixir that prolongs life, we must put our health first and always be wary of the warning signs.



**Sukumvit Hospital** began operations in 1977, recently completed a major makeover. Not only have they built a new building, but the entire team of doctors, specialists, nurses and assistants have all been trained with the singular aim of helping their patients maintain optimum health. Then there are the equipment, state-of-the-art MRIs, Cath labs and myriad of others, so that their specialists have the best available tools for diagnosis and treatment. Conveniently located on Sukhumvit Road with English speaking staff, Sukumvit Hospital is now ready for any emergencies or treatments.

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# Brain healthy food

## (part two)

*by Karla Walter*

In part one we discussed many different foods that can be included in your diet for brain function and memory improvement. Along with food, there are also activities, that you can do that will help your brain and memory abilities.

**I**n California at UCLA Longevity Centre, participants take part in a programme designed to help find a baseline memory score. From that score they can determine how your memory and brain function are performing. Once they have evaluated your situation a 2 week programme is developed for your needs. They have worked with over 18,000 participants and the results are very encouraging.

Not only do they advise of a healthy diet, but also other activities such as memory games and puzzles to challenge the brain. The importance of learning or stimulating our

brain with new information is so important. The old saying, “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks”, is wrong. You also don’t have to be elderly to learn new information. Learning is all ages and is important. Recent research is showing that memory loss is now prevalent in 40 year old men and women. Dr. Gary Small who heads up the programme at UCLA has written a book on hoping to increase memory called *2 Weeks to a Younger Brain*. The book focuses mainly on research mainly, however there are exercises in the back of the book that are very helpful for helping your memory.







In our technological world and also the world of printed material anyone can find puzzles, crosswords, jigsaw puzzles, number games, word games that will help in keeping ones memory active. Many specialists in Alzheimer's and Dementia encourage people with the conditions and those without to help improve or in some cases prevent the onset of these diseases. It doesn't matter your level of skill set when it comes to problem solving with puzzles.

The famous Mensa quiz is well known around the world. You can go online and take short test of questions to see how you fair. This prestigious organisation has on its website, a short 30 minute test. Mensa was founded in 1946 by Roland Berrill, a barrister and Dr. Lance Ware a scientist and lawyer in England. Their goal which continues to this day is the following: "Mensa states its purpose as, "to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity, to encourage research in the nature, characteristics and uses of intelligence, and to promote stimulating intellectual and social opportunities for its members."

Mensa has members in 100 countries, in 7 continents. Their ages range from 3 to 103. They are from all walks of life and educational levels and include janitors, doctors, scientists, artists, actors, carpenters, chemists, politicians, farmers, computer programmers, authors, police officers, hermits, firemen, musicians, the long-term unemployed, educators, millionaires, firefighters, bankers and bus drivers.

*Members tend to be curious and have widely varying interests. They are quick to grasp concepts. They are often humorous, talkative, quirky, but the only characteristic they share across the board is a high IQ."*

[www.mensa.org](http://www.mensa.org)

#### **How else can you help your brain health and start the journey to improve your memory?**

Herbs and spices have also played an important role in brain health.

**Sage** – this wonderful herb comes fresh, dry or drops. Small studies have shown that it has improved memory in low doses and elevated mood in larger doses. It's high in anti oxidants and not only supports brain function, it lowers blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

**Turmeric** – this spice contains curcumin which has an anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. Used for thousands of years in Ayurveda, we now can understand its ability to stop nerve cells in the brain from breaking down. This wonderful spice can be found in curry powder or added to soups, casseroles etc.,

**Ginkgo Biloba** – used in Chinese medicine for improving memory. It helps to stimulate blood flow to the brain, which may help with cognitive function.



**Ashwagandha** – another Ayurvedic herb, which has shown benefits on the brain reducing oxidative stress.

**Ginseng** – a popular Chinese herb used now by some Alzheimers patients as it may reduce beta-amyloid in the brain. Beta amyloid is a protein fragment snipped from an amyloid precursor protein (APP). Amyloid plaques are hard, insoluble accumulations of beta amyloid proteins that clump together between the nerve cells (neurones) in the brains of Alzheimer's disease patients.

**Lemon balm** – used to ease anxiety and insomnia has also been found to improve cognitive function. Study published in the Journal of Neurology, 2003.

**Bacon monnieri** – used by Ayurvedic practitioners for improving memory, reducing anxiety and treating epilepsy. For example, bacosides, the main active compounds in Bacopa monnieri, have been shown to neutralise free radicals and prevent fat molecules from reacting with free radicals. When fat molecules react with free radicals, they undergo a process called lipid per-oxidation. Lipid per-oxidation is linked to several conditions, such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other neurodegenerative disorders



These are some herbs and spices that may help to improve brain function, memory, cognitive function etc., As always these are not the only items to concentrate on. A healthy diet overall and moving the body with plenty of exercise is such an important role in mental health. Harvard Medical School is publishing papers on research being conducted of 150 minutes of exercise a week that is contributing to the health of the brain and mental function. Is it one type of exercise? The answer is no. Aerobic exercise helps blood flow to the brain, however we see improved brain function with those in gentler forms of exercise such as Tai Chi which is about mind body exercise.

*Find something that you enjoy and get moving, that is the first step. Keep up your nutrition health and may you remain mentally sharp.*

*Brain: an apparatus with which we think we think,*  
by Ambrose Bierce

Health and Happiness  
Karla Walter  
[karla@5seasonsliving.com](mailto:karla@5seasonsliving.com)  
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# DR.TATTOF

## Medical laser solutions

Dr. Nattapong Jirurawong is a classically trained and qualified dermatologist that perfected his art in the United States of America. Like his father before him he is a perfectionist with non invasive laser treatments which can sculpt the body and remove scars, assist you in creating a better body shape, removing excess fat and or just feeling happier within your own skin.

Both men and women have benefited from Dr. Nattapong and his team who can create a new you. They have 6 separate branches in Thailand in and around Bangkok and in Pattaya: Silom Complex, Central Plaza Lardprao, Central Marina Pattaya, Eight Thonglor, Future Park Rangsit and Central Plaza Pinklao.

We all go to the dentist and or doctor to improve our general appearance. We try and eat healthier foods, exercise and hydrate but sometimes we all need a little help to achieve our objectives.

Nowadays men and women live active lifestyles and your physique and structure are under constant attack from sitting in cars or in the office for long periods. Our bodies seem to take their own route sometimes and that is where Dr. Nattapong can help.

Using the latest technology and equipment on the market from the US FDA approved in America and Thailand (PicoWay Laser, PicoWay Resolve Laser, Sculpsure, Gentle YAG Pro-U and Ulthera) all of his treatments are non surgical, there is no recovery or

rehabilitation necessary and with most procedures he can complete in under 30 minutes and you can complete the rest of your day.

Sculpsure is a diode laser which targets stubborn fat in problem areas such as the stomach or arms. Women in particular are overly aware and see it every time they look in the mirror but he can remove up to 24% with each treatment and create a better you in a course of 12 weeks.

For women between 30-40 the most popular procedures are after childbirth where pregnancy has stretched and scarred the skin by rapid stretching. He can transform your profile and give you your old shape back.

I recently attended a hospital to get lumps and bumps removed on my face, head, torso back and front and I feel so much more confident and it has lit the fire within me to lose weight exercise more and control my diet.

## Unwanted memories

Dr. Tattof is the one and only tattoo removal clinic in Thailand.

Sometimes what seemed a good idea many years before is now an embarrassment or has lost its appeal.



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# HOW IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD?



by Saree Jittakornchaichot

**I**t sounds like a silly question – how can you have a relationship with food. But what if I told you that the reason you've been trying for the past year to lose weight or go on a fad diet, but it didn't work.

*Maybe it's not the exercise itself, perhaps it's not an actual diet, but it's your relationship with food.*

Most people think if you want to lose weight you have to eat very little and workout more. So, most girls ended up killing themselves at the gym and starving themselves. For sure you'll lose weight but once you start eating normal again your weight will bounce back. This is not a healthy lifestyle in the long term. If a trainer promises you that this diet will make you lose 20 pounds without doing any exercise, I want you to run as fast as you can! When it comes to diet there's no one size fits all, what works best for her might not work for you.

I have one client who said to me I have been doing IF (Intermittent fasting) for months. It worked at the beginning but now I have stopped losing weight. Then I asked her 'what did you have for lunch and dinner' and she said 'well I have a bit of noodle and chicken, in the afternoon I get hungry again so it could be an apple, then for dinner, I have a bit of rice and fish. Can you see why she lost weight? I mean first of

all; I have nothing against any diet, but most people think this is the right diet for them. She lost at the beginning because she stopped having breakfast and when you eat less and workout more, of course, you're going to lose weight. She loves this diet because she said it's a good excuse for her not to have breakfast because she doesn't have time in the morning. Don't get me wrong it works for many people, but you need to make sure that you have enough nutrients. She's only had a bit of protein, carbs for lunch and dinner, not to mention not enough good fats for her hormones to function well.

Another girl told me the other day. 'I have lost a lot of weight on a Keto diet'

but she said she feels very tired every day and has started to lose her hair. I mean with Keto you eat very little carbs and high fat. Well, when you don't eat carbs and workout a lot yes you will lose weight. Again some people only eat less carb but because the percentage of the fat is too high for Keto, they didn't hit the macro ratio (will explain more about macro later in the article) so they ended up losing weight but had no energy and this might mess with their hormones.

There is no good food and bad food. Chocolate cake isn't the enemy for your belly. 'Does it mean I can eat as much cake as I want'? Well If you want to eat as much cake as you want. I want to ask you 'why do you want to eat that much in the first place'? I mean you can still eat cake but if you feel guilty after you eat it, then maybe it's not the cake itself that's bad but it is your emotional baggage that we have to work on. That used to be me... when I was angry, sad or even bored. I turned to food because it gives me comfort but when I started to gain weight, I blame it on food that's making me fat and unhealthy. I blame that fried chicken for dinner and chips late last night. Then it got to the point that I couldn't live like this anymore. I want to be able to enjoy my food and not to have to feel bad after I eat ice cream. I have started to write down if I find myself feeling guilty after I eat.

- Where are you? (location, places).
- What happened before you reach out for the food? (A fight with your lover? Negative thoughts in your head?)
- Who are you with? (Be very specific.)



- What do you feel before and directly after you eat? (Tired? Angry or sad?)

The more I write on my food journal the more I started to see patterns. That someday if I am in a good mood after I have had a piece of cake, I feel fine – no blaming or guilt. But when I have a bad day or get in a fight, I always feel bad after I eat. Another example; I find out that when I feel guilty after chips and soda because most of the time, I feel like I am not good enough. Then what's the point of trying, I might just as well just eat this "bad food" or someday in my journal I write insecurity and reach out for a tub of ice cream or stuff myself with a whole box of pizza to numb the feelings. Then again, I blame it on the food.

Then I shift my mindset and tell myself that there is no good or bad food if you love yourself. You just need to take care of your body, nourish it with good nutrients. I dig deep into the source of my problems instead of suppressing them. I have started to meditate and journal. Bit by bit I start to feel better with myself, I have control over my food because I have control over my emotions.

I mean those feelings and emotions will come and you cannot stop or force them but what you can do is let them come and go, observe it but you don't have to hurt yourself by consuming too much food. These days I still have a slice of cake and enjoy it because I know that I put good nutrients in my body as well. It is not the end of the world that you have a doughnut. It is all about balance you should be able to enjoy life too. My trick is I think of food as fuel for my body, and if that day I eat a bit too much that is ok. I can lift heavier weights the next day. Or downsize my food for dinner.

## To give you an idea of good nutrients and what is macro?

### Food consists of three macro nutrients

- Proteins
- Carbs
- Fats

### Micronutrients

Our body needs vitamins and minerals to function well.

### Proteins

Your body, after water, is mostly made of protein. You require protein every day, it performs literally thousands of functions in the body. It does this in the form of different combinations of amino acids, the "building blocks" of protein. If your goal is to lose fat or gain muscle, you need to add protein in every meal!

### Protein choices:

- Lean red meat
- Chicken (no skin)
- Turkey
- Fish
- Low-fat dairy – except for eggs

Don't be afraid to eat whole eggs as most of the nutrients are in the yolk. Avoid processed meats, high fat meats and full fat dairy products.







## Carbohydrates

The preferred form of fuel for the body's energy needs. Simple or sugary carbs have their place but for the most part you should eat complex or slow burning carbs. An important point about carbs and where the average person makes their mistake is that after you supply your energy needs, any excess carbs will be stored as fat.

Think of this as similar to filling your car's gas tank – once the tank is full, if you keep pumping, you will have a lot of excess gas spilling out all over the place. Once your energy needs are met and you keep eating high carb meals, the excess "spills out" and you get fatter.

### Carb choices:

- Sweet potatoes
- Yams
- Beans
- Corn
- Brown rice
- Oatmeal
- Whole grain products
- Veggies (these are fibrous carbs) and fruits such as strawberries
- Bananas
- Pears
- Grapefruit
- Apples

## Fats

It might surprise you to hear that to lose fat you have to eat fat, but it's true! The right kind of fats, known as essential fatty acids (EFAs), help to boost metabolism, aid brain and nerve function, balance hormones and even improve your skin, hair

and nails. There are three types of EFAs: Omega 3, 6 and 9.

To make it super easy for you, make sure you get a variety of fats. You should get 35% of monounsaturated fat, 35% of polyunsaturated fat and 30% of saturated fat.

### Monounsaturated fats include:

- Nuts
- Avocado
- Canola oil
- Olive oil
- Safflower oil (high oleic)
- Sunflower oil
- Peanut oil and butter
- Sesame oil

### Polyunsaturated fats include:

- Walnuts
- Sunflower seeds
- Flax seeds or flax oil
- Fish, such as salmon, mackerel, herring, albacore tuna, and trout
- Corn oil
- Soybean oil
- Safflower oil

### Saturated fats in include:

- Dairy foods – such as butter, cream, ghee, regular-fat milk and cheese
- Meat – such as fatty cuts of beef, pork and lamb, processed meats like salami, sausages and the skin on chicken
- Lard



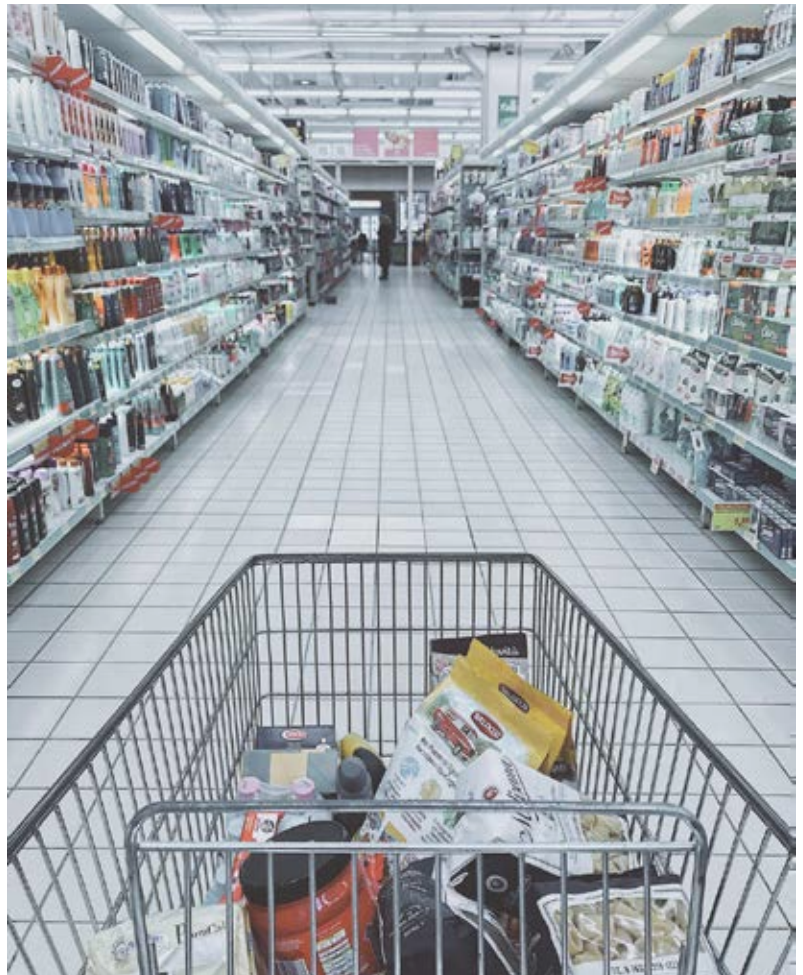
Aim to have protein in every meal (size of your palm), carbs (1 hand cupped), fat (size of your thumb), and veggies (a fist). If you can have this in every meal, you should get enough good nutrients for your body.

Remember everything that I do it comes from the place of love not punishment. I understand that as a human being I will not be perfect every day. But even though I do not quite live up to my exacting standards it is just another practice at me developing self-love and being kind to myself. Once you fix your relationship with food you will enjoy it even more, even on the bad days and you should have no guilt or shame afterwards.

**About the author: Saree Jitta** is a Certified Personal Trainer and Nutrition. She's been helping hundreds of women gain confidence back, get stronger mentally and physically. Through her coaching service, you'll be transformed to have the discipline for exercise with a balanced diet, to live a happier and healthier life.



Follow her inspiration on Instagram @sareejitta  
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# Tangled in Time

## ñ The women of Papua New Guinea

by Dafna Nevo

My book written '*Tangled in Time*' is emphasising the element of time I felt whilst there.

**A dancer from the Trobriand**

**P**apua New Guinea (PNG) is not the mainstream. Travelling around PNG means exploring a kaleidoscope of cultural and natural diversity, making this off-the-radar island truly one of a kind.

PNG is the second largest island in the world. Although it is roughly the size of California, it is one of the most rural countries on the planet and only 18% of its six million inhabitants live in urban areas. Incredibly, over 800 indigenous languages are spoken in PNG: a statistic that accounts for 1/5 of the world's total.

Just as PNG is linguistically diverse it is also an ecological, geographical and cultural wonder.

PNG is famous for its unique cultures (over 800 different tribal groups) and is a kind of paradise to reveal with many layers beneath the surface.

A country, remote and undiscovered, reflects the ancient times in which the modern world is only recently creeping into the everyday life. A place in which the traditions are still vivid and are practiced.

These tribes' traditions that they still practice today were created by the forefathers of all of humanity, and the chance to explore their music, language, traditional garments and ancient cultural ceremonies gives us a rare glimpse into our collective history and shared origins.

A mesmerising country which is one of the world's last frontiers. It is like we are standing in front of a closed door to be opened by us and testing us to try to endeavour the deep meaning of our existence, of our humanity roots, the origin of what we are all. A constant intrinsic dilemma of past, present and future. The confusing meaning of the term of time.

### The women of Papua – A tough place to be a woman

Travelling in PNG one doesn't have to spend a long time to realise that many of the roads lead to a place where luck seems to have run out. Walking in the markets and villages or in the streets of the urban slum called Eight Mile in Port Moresby, women are caring for their children and fighting off a range of illnesses from malaria to skin rashes.

Sitting on the floor in the markets chatting, in words as well as in body language, there was always one young lady that speaks some English and is volunteering to ease the conversation. She is curious with me, the strange woman sitting there with them in their local place. Our talk is centred on the life of a woman in the village: birth giving, birth control, children, husbands, family – you know – womens talk.

I listen to the women of the village – old, young, some wearing poor weary cloth, some are more coquettish, some are shy and others are anxious to be part of the conversation.





Amazing.

Some of them tell me they will give birth only in the hospital. One is telling that she believes in doctors and would like her husband to be present in the labour room to share the moment with her. Another nice young lady had a few natural miscarriages, so she realises it's better for her to give birth in the hospital. Probably she had a wise decision since PNG has the highest maternal death rate in the Pacific. More than 2,000 women die during childbirth in PNG every year.

### A woman of the Sepik

Undoubtedly some of them are more open minded to modernity while others are sticking more to their traditional way.

My English volunteer translator, dressed in a nice yellow dress, her hair combed nicely and looks quite modern. Regardless of her modern appearance however, she says she gave birth at home with her mother and family women and that she will keep doing it in the traditional way.

Another is complaining – 'I have been married for 10 years already and 3 kids and he hasn't paid for the pigs for me yet'!

Big families are common in PNG and children are perceived as important to ease the work of the family. Add to that that most of PNG has a strong patriarchal culture and some often must get permission from their husbands to go on birth control programme. As one said: 'whatever the men say, the women have to follow'. I was told about a woman that was forced to drop out of university when she became pregnant.

'The man decides how many children he wants to have



and if the woman doesn't want them, he tells her 'I paid the bride price and you are to have kids as many as I like' Ms. Tukne explained.

### A woman with facial tattoos

Women can also face pressure from their own extended family and community about having children. 'She can't run away anywhere because if she goes back to her people, they'll say, 'we got big money and pigs for you, you have to go back and submit to your husband', said Ms. Tukne.

In this strongly Christian society, religion can also be a deterrent, with some churches preaching against contraception and some pastors claiming, the implants in particular, were the work of devil.

Despite advances achieved in the empowerment of women and the reduction of gender-based violence, as Human Rights Watch put it in a 2016 report, 'Papua New Guinea is one of the most dangerous places in the world to

be a woman, with the majority of women experiencing rape or assault in their lifetime and women facing systemic discrimination'. It is also says that more than two-thirds of women in the country have experienced gender-based violence. The violence was perpetrated by their husbands, involves barbaric acts and are done repeatedly.

On 4th of March 2019, The Guardian reported and showed a picture of a woman, whose said her husband cut her arm with a large metal knife. She holds her heavily bandaged hand at a women's centre in Wewek East Sepik.

However, I have a reason for some hope in Papua New Guinea.







wearing facial tattoo. The belief is that the ritual originated 'when heaven and earth appeared', a mythical time when the people of the area emerged from the ground.

As the young Korafe tribesman, with his toothy smile stained by the blood-red betel nut, said: 'I love a woman with a good tattoo. You know, there are 'boobs men,' 'legs men,' but me – I'm a tattoo man'.

The facial tattoos is a rite of passage solely reserved for adolescent girls, between 14 and 18 years old. The painful custom is believed to be as old as the local creation myth and is related to the mating rituals of the bird of paradise.

These permanent markings aren't meant to embellish any female attributes in the name of sex appeal. They are perceived as ornamentation, as beautification.

This women's rite of passage is shrouded in mystery and performed with great secrecy inside the tattoo maven's hut so that the rite bearers can hide there, as they are forbidden to be seen by others until the artwork is complete.

Most designs are painted with bits of finely burned vegetable charcoal or squid ink. And then the 'tapping' process begins.

The tattoo designs are usually abstract motifs of nature subjects and those of falling objects (stars), flying birds or other creatures associated with movement. However, it was believed to repel evil spirits and to represent the complex life experience in the natural and spiritual worlds of the tribal coast life of PNG.

While I was in the Korafe village sharing a tattoo celebration with the people we saw the zigzag motif. This motif is related to the spinal column of a particular local fish. Throughout Polynesia and the Pacific, spinal or zigzag motifs are symbolic of genealogical relationships likened to a "family tree" of ancestors.

The traditional form of tattooing is called 'tapping' because of the rat-rat-rat action that takes place when the



Series of legal reforms have changed the penalties for domestic violence and victims say the police are now taking it more seriously. There are signs that political parties are also taking women's role more seriously too.

### **A hard days work**

On International Women's Day in March 2019, former Prime Minister Peter O'Neill proposed a women's parliamentary quota system for its 111 seat legislature which shows that PNG is trying to struggle and overcome its international reputation as "the worst place in the world to be a woman". But, this is still a land in which the international call for #MeToo does not exist.

### **Beauty and tattooed**

On the largest island of PNG, in Tufi region, the face tattooing was performed and used as a rite reserved only for women. We could see around ladies, age forty and above,





artist literally taps the charcoal design into the face of the young woman with a sharp thorn dipped in a variety of ceremonial antiseptics.

We met few of the tattooed elder women. One of them told me that beyond the mental acuity needed for her to focus through the pain, she had also abide by a strict diet during the unpleasant sessions of the 'tapping'. She said it was very painful, but nobody could then refuse of doing it 'not like now with the new generation'. It was a tradition that no body then could skip. They had to accept the clan and family tradition.

A ceremony, in the end of the healing period, is marking her transition into true womanhood. The girls appear in a procession through the village to publicly display their newly transformed bodies. Unmarried young men would show their admiration by throwing betel nut skins at the women.

Thirty years ago, 'Adult women without tattoos were considered used up' according to the old wise man of the tribe. Today, however, with Western influence, most girls are not performing these rites anymore. Talking with the young women of the Korafe – they don't want to do it. There were a group of teenagers that unanimously said out loud that they will not do it ever. They think it is damaging their faces, too painful, old fashioned and not reversible.

It is clear that this tradition becomes a forgotten code and is no longer relevant to the young generation of the Korafe tribe of Tufi, PNG.

### Future PNG

Despite Papua New Guinea's economic boom led by extractive industries, almost 40 percent of the country's population lives in poverty. The government has not taken sufficient steps to address gender inequality, violence, corruption, or excessive use of force by police.

A country where the modern world is only just creeping into everyday life and where traditions are still cherished and practiced in everyday life. A forgotten land far from the eyes and far from the heart of the world.

Franz Kafka in his 'letters to Milna', says: 'I am in Vienna reading a book about Tibet. I wonder is Tibet is so far from Vienna... but – is it really so far'?

Same question I often ask myself while in PNG and while researching this extreme country. I think the answer is yes... PNG is here but it is also so far back in time that maybe it is not so close here.

This place is like the end of the world but also the creation of the world – together.

Absurd as it can be...

**About the author: Dafna Nevo (Shtelzer)**

A sociologist, anthropologist and keen photographer. Motivated by curiosity and scholarship, she has connected with the colourful conundrum that is today's Papua New Guinea.

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# Amsterdam

by Nick Harris

Some tourists think Amsterdam is a city of sin, but in truth it is a city of freedom. And in freedom, most people find sin." – John Green.

This week through call of business I find myself in the capital of Holland a country with 17 million people sandwiched between Belgium and Germany.

Arriving from Thailand last Saturday evening it's cold! 15/17C so coming from 30C plus that is one of the first things to strike me.

I am rather enamoured with the place apart from that. It's pretty clean, the place all seems to function pretty well. The people are quite orderly and dress sensibly to keep out the cold. They all seem to ride bicycles, of all shapes and sizes. I particularly like the long ones that look like a two-wheeled wheelbarrow, where parents carry their children, shopping, dogs and indeed anything else that they wish to transport across the city.

As I write sitting in my first floor Hyatt hotel bedroom overlooking a busy street on the East of the city the electric blue and white trams rumble by on an almost constant basis. We are situated opposite one of the many buildings of the University of Amsterdam and so there is plenty going on. An ever moving vista...

From top down, left to right: Grachtengordel, canal in the Centrum borough, Royal Concertgebouw and The Martelaarsgracht

The day after I arrived in a bid to get some fresh air, such a relief after the heat and smog of Bangkok, I walked to the metro. Paid 8 Euros and bought a day ticket and caught a train 3 stops to Central Station. When I emerged into the sunlight the sheer number of people, cyclists, tourists, overwhelmed me for a minute. I guess that I was stood in the busiest part of the city.

There were runners and cyclists everywhere and talking to someone later she told me that 45,000 people had embarked on this run/walk. I have no idea how many cyclists that there were as everyone in Holland seems to ride a bicycle but when I got to Dam Square there was the event finish there and there were thousands all in their gaily coloured lycra shorts and T-shirts.

I wandered through the streets people watching amazed at the sights of so many strangely dressed people – perhaps they thought the same about me but my attire was boring in the extreme to the tourists from every corner of the world in family groups and the residents of Amsterdam.

Every corner I turned the acrid smell of cannabis wafted through the air. Either people were smoking it on the street and or the coffee shops which are tucked away it seems on every street. It is the weirdest feeling having grown up in the UK where smoking drugs is so frowned upon by society in general to suddenly be in Amsterdam where you are almost out of step or the odd one out to be straight and not stoned.

I did walk into a couple of what they call 'head shops' that sell drug paraphernalia and was absolutely amazed and what I saw on the shelves and behind the glass cases. Of course I had seen it all before but I am sure that it was more 'in your face' then I ever remembered it in my younger days.

Strangely though in the almost week that I was in Holland I didn't see any aggression or fights on the street as you so often see in the UK – perhaps they are all so chilled that no one bothers. That was quite good to see. There was a constant visible police presence and talking to a couple of policemen later in the week they said that they are allowed to 'deal with matters quite forcibly if necessary'.

You certainly have to keep your wits about you in the streets of Amsterdam central though as the traffic, particularly bicycles, comes from all directions and they seem to have the right of way over cars and pedestrians.

Amsterdam is the capital and most populous city of the Netherlands, with a population of 866,737 within the city proper, 1,380,872 in the urban area, and 2,410,960 in the metropolitan area. Amsterdam is in the province of North





Holland. Amsterdam is colloquially referred to as the "Venice of the North" due to its large number of canals which are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Amsterdam's name derives from Amstelredamme, indicative of the city's origin around a dam in the river Amstel. Originating as a small fishing village in the late 12th Century, Amsterdam became one of the most important ports in the world in the Dutch Golden Age of the 17th Century and became the leading centre for finance and trade. In the 19th and 20th Centuries, the city expanded, and many new neighbourhoods and suburbs were planned and built. The 17th Century canals of Amsterdam and the 19-20th Century Defence Line of Amsterdam are on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Sloten, annexed in 1921 by the municipality of Amsterdam, is the oldest part of the city, dating to the 9th Century.

As the commercial capital of the Netherlands and one of the top financial centres in Europe, Amsterdam is considered an alpha-world city by the Globalisation and

World Cities (GaWC) study group. The city is also the cultural capital of the Netherlands. Many large Dutch institutions have their headquarters there, including Philips, AkzoNobel, TomTom and ING. Also, many of the world's largest companies are based in Amsterdam or established their European headquarters in the city, such as leading technology companies Uber, Netflix and Tesla.

In 2012, Amsterdam was ranked the second best city to live in by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and 12th globally on quality of living for environment and infrastructure by Mercer. The city was ranked 4th place globally as top tech hub in the Savills Tech Cities 2019 report (2nd in Europe), and 3rd in innovation by Australian innovation agency 2thinknow in their Innovation Cities Index 2009. The Port of Amsterdam is the fifth largest in Europe. Famous Amsterdam residents include the diarist Anne Frank, artists Rembrandt and Van Gogh, and philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

The Amsterdam Stock Exchange is the oldest stock exchange in the world. Amsterdam's main attractions include its historic canals, the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum, the Stedelijk Museum, Hermitage Amsterdam, the Concertgebouw, Anne Frank's House, the Scheepvaartmuseum, the Amsterdam Museum, the Heineken Experience, the Royal Palace of Amsterdam, Natura Artis Magistra, Hortus Botanicus Amsterdam, NEMO, the red-light district and many, many cannabis coffee shops. They draw more than 5 million international visitors annually.

The city is also well known for its nightlife and festival activity; several of its nightclubs (Melkweg, Paradiso) are among the world's most famous. It is also one of the world's most multicultural cities, with at least 177 nationalities represented.







# 72 HOURS IN DOHA: SUN, SAND AND SKYSCRAPERS

by Tina Haskins Chadha

It would have been easy to let the 4,000USD salon bill ruin my good time in Doha. It was admittedly a quick vanity stop at the local salon to get a wash and blowout after two days of travelling left me feeling a bit tattered. Later that day, we had a holiday lunch to attend with old friends, and who was I to turn down the chance for a little “sprucing” and polishing up? Thirty minutes later, I felt refreshed, ready to see dear friends after a long time and extra pumped up to explore Qatar’s desert capital city, a modern metropolis of sparkling new and inventively designed skyscrapers. Why hadn’t we thought of visiting Qatar sooner, I wondered. Located on the NE coast of the Arabian Peninsula, it was a prime “midway station” on our annual migration from SE Asia to North America. It’s also a pretty cool place as it turns out – modern, cultural tuned-in and super clean, plus beautiful beaches, and a far less flashy vibe than Dubai. The extra bonus was it purportedly had great shopping – not of the Louis Vuitton kind (they had that too, it’s in the hub of the oil-rich Middle East after all!), but shopping of the Souq and handicrafts variety. This was going to be my kind of place!

So, in an effort to preserve my Qatari rials as “market money”, I happily accepted the offer to put my \$25 (about 800B) salon charge on good old Visa. When I looked to sign

the bill, the charged amount had many, many more zeros than expected, even given the 1 Rial to 8.5 Thai Baht exchange rate! The salon manager feigned an innocent input error, and then claimed to not know how to void the transaction. Hmmmm. Strangely she instead offered to refund me what amounted 4,000USD in cash! The whole affair smelled highly suspect. After 30 minutes of confusion and frantic calls for help culminating in the manager of the adjacent shop who came to the rescue, we sorted it out and I walked out feeling slightly less “Pantene fabulous” but still improved.

This bizarre incident on that first day didn’t cloud my experience with Doha, a chic and really kind of groovy Arabian city. We arrived at the ultra-organised and luxe Hamad International Airport with a gigantic 23 foot bronze teddy bear sculpture titled “Untitled (Lamp/Bear)” by Swiss artist Urs Fischer as its centrepiece. This giant teddy has a lampshade coming from his head and the lamp base coming from his tush – I knew right then Doha had personality. This piece I learned later had last been seen in my native city, New York, where it was on display in front of the Seagram Building. Several years later, it was auctioned by Sotheby’s for







World Cup with sports stadiums in various stages of completion. This future event is often on the minds and lips of everyone from hotel workers to shop girls to taxi drivers.

**We discovered, there is a fair amount to do in Doha, other than chilling on the beach. When in Doha, why don't you:**

**Time Travel: Katara Cultural Village straddles heritage and modern culture**

over 6.8 million – next stop Doha's posh terminal.

As Qatar's capital, Doha is also its most populated city with just under a million residents, the vast majority of them foreigners. Qatar's overall population, estimated to be a mere 2.6 million, is made up of over a hundred different nationalities, Qataris comprising a mere 10%. Founded in the 1820s as an offshoot of the Peninsula's older Al Bidda settlement, Doha's history goes back centuries as a trading port and epicentre of the pearl industry. It was only as recent as 1971 that the country was formally declared an independent nation.

From the 1950s to 1970s the population of Doha grew from just over 10,000 to more than 80,000. In the 1940s oil was discovered in Qatar and the small country joined the Middle East oil club, thus radically changing its trajectory from a small, sleepy fishing and trading port to immense wealth and influence. Qatar is the richest country on Earth with the highest per capita income in the world. The UN regards it as the most advanced Arab state for human development – and it shows in the enthusiasm Qatar has taken to supporting the worlds of culture, art and entertainment. Doha is becoming known as the art capital of the Middle East with public art installations, independent galleries and major museums featuring Islamic and major European and North American artists. Also, evident everywhere is how the city is gearing up for the 2022 FIFA

When the sun sets venture to the Katara Cultural Village, a sprawling area located on the Eastern coast between West Bay neighbourhood and the Pearl with eateries, art spaces and music venues. Its maze of cobbled alleys was designed to evoke the Arabian-inspired architecture of years past. It's home to everything artistic and musical: The Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, Qatar Fine Arts Society, Qatar Music Academy and Theatre Society. There's even the Doha Film Institute (DFI), a not-for-profit cultural organisation located in Katara Cultural Village, with the mission to oversee film initiatives and help develop a sustainable film industry in Qatar. In recent years, the DFI hosted the Doha edition of the famed Tribeca Film Festival. While there find the time for a delicious meal. Reserve a table at Boho Social, a chic restaurant in the Katara Beach Club complex. The terrace seating is best for the spectacular views of the Arabian Peninsula and the Pearl.

#### **Get your art on**

There is no shortage of museums, but my favourite is the newly opened National Museum of Qatar. Actually, it was our taxi driver who sealed our fate to pass on a visit to the Museum of Islamic Art and go directly to the newer National Museum of Qatar. He insisted, "No Ma'am, skip this one!"



All the good art has moved to there!” Completed and opened in March 2019, the National Museum of Qatar tells the story of how the country and region evolved through time from a geological and biological perspective, and from the standpoint of human history. The museum’s exterior design, created by renowned architect Jean Nouvel, of interlocking discs gives the feeling of simultaneously being ready to fall down and being placed at totally odd and random angles. It turns out the placement of the discs supports the weight evenly and offers some shade.

The design was inspired by the desert rose, a crystallised mineral formation found in salt basins. The effect is very sci-fi and ‘space-agey’! Once inside the building design has visitors making an elliptical circuit through time from Qatar’s earliest eras and culminating at the Amiri Palace, the historical palace of Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar during the first part of the 20th century.

### Shop, Shop, Shop!

Doha is not a walking city. Given the extreme heat much of the year, this would disappoint few. In addition to the Katara Cultural Village, Souq Waqif is a place one can enjoy meandering through alleys browsing, people watching and generally taking in pretty incredible ambiance. The site of the Souq Waqif dates back well over 100 years as a traditional trading post for Bedouin people. It was rebuilt in 2006 after a major fire and today somehow manages to be charming, inspired “near-authentic” and pretty well organised. This open-air street market is the best place to shop for an incredible array of items – pashmina, Bedouin weaving, carpets, shisha, incense, gold, pearls, falcons, and more. Visit in the evening from 19:00 - 23:00.

Directly next to Souq Waqif can be found the “sister”, highly specialised souqs: The Gold Souq and the Falcon Souq, my personal favourite spot on our adventure in Doha. And you guessed it, it is here that one can shop for gold and live falcons respectively. The Falcon Souq is dedicated to all things related to these majestic hunting birds: Sale

of actual birds – with many leather hooded falcons on display at various shops, falcon gear and accessories (yes this is a major retail category!), falcon training equipment and anything the experienced or aspiring falconer could want or need. It turns out that falcons are a serious investment. The going rate for a falcon can start at a reasonable 3,000USD up to 1 million USD. It’s important to remember, traditional hunting with falcons has a long, long history in the region. The first known reference to falconry appears in the ruins of Nineveh under the Assyrians in an engraving dated to 750BC, in current-day Iraq.

Next to the Falcon Souq is the Falcon Hospital a multi-floor, state of the art facility where owners can bring their falcons in for top notch care. The hospital treats every and any condition from surgeries on injured birds to Xrays, incubators and general maintenance grooming of feathers and nails.

### Have a desert sand dune adventure

Sadly, we didn’t have time for this on our trip, but it is top on my list for our return visit.

The sand dunes are said to be high and steep making dune bashing as it is known an extreme sport. You can even spend a night in a luxury Arabian tent, eat like a local and sleep under the stars. Don’t expect to see Qatar’s large desert mammals though – the Arabian oryx and Arabian gazelle are protected animals and held in nature reserves. With some luck, perhaps one can spot the Arabian Sand Cat!

### Chill on the beach

Doha’s position on the coast of the Persian Gulf means there is no shortage of coastline, gorgeous beaches and



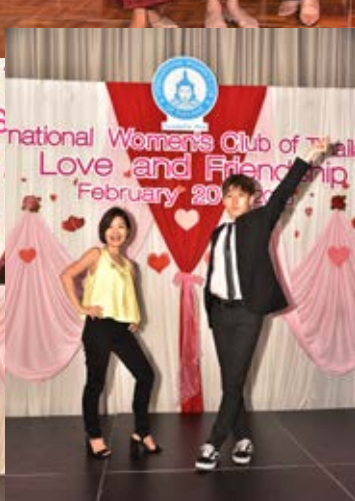
turquoise water. Venture from the big resorts and check out a local public beach. There are many to choose from: Fuwairit Beach is one of the most popular beaches with pristine white sand. Located north of Doha, this amazing beach is also home to the Hawksbill turtle.

Or try: Zekreet Beach, Simaisma Beach, Sealine Beach, Katara Beach or Khor Al Udeid Beach. Remember to follow local rules on the public beaches – no bikinis allowed.





IWC "Love & Friendship" celebration event



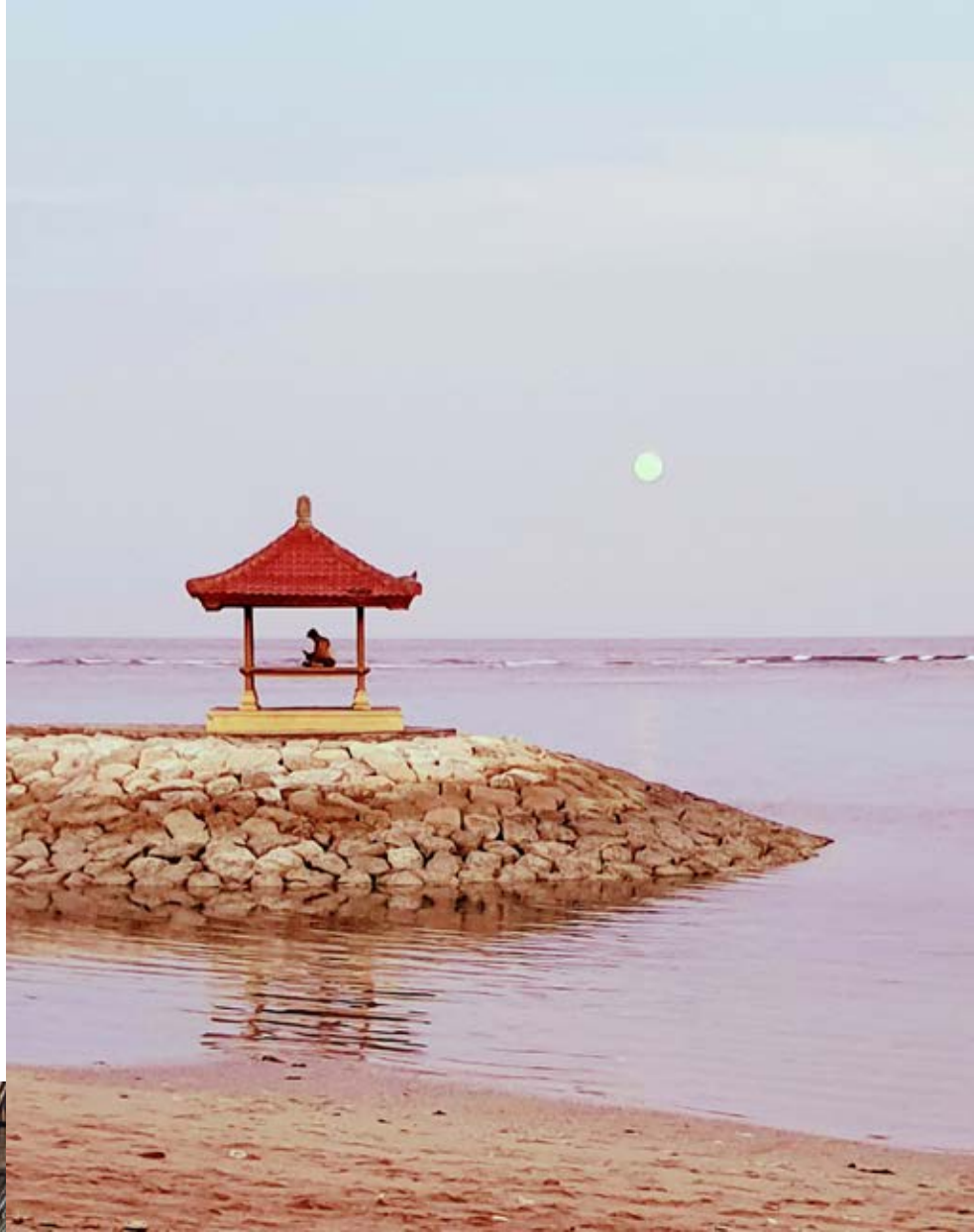


# Laid back in Bali

by Neil Brooks

I've been coming to Bali for over 30 years. On my first trip I remember a few hotels dotted along the beach mostly designed in a local, bungalow style circling a pool with intermittent air conditioning and more local food than western favourites. This trip was also my first and only encounter with Bali Belly.

Something happens when you step off the plane here. It's hard to describe the sense of calm and comfort



that welcomes you with open arms that gently guide you to a place of inner peace and enlightenment. The smells, the sights, the sounds... the Balinese are friendly. Their smiles are infectious. Their hospitality is legendary.

As the years have flown by I've been back more times that I can count and we now see Bali as akin to our second home. I've witnessed the gradual creep of massive hotels along the beach and the once deserted roads now stuffed with shops, bars and restaurants from Kuta to Legian and Seminyak and which now threaten the tranquility of surfers enjoying the waves in Canggu. I've been a fan of Seminyak with its endless choice of amazing restaurants, beach

bars and boutiques preferring to hire a private villa nestled in the back streets within walking distance of my favourite haunts. I was there again last month and while I remember the traffic being bad and the restaurants being busy I didn't appreciate the agony of relying on taxis to get from place to place if you decided to venture a little further for dinner or a long leisurely lunch. The traffic jams now make walking a viable alternative even in the heat.

Something happened this time. A yearning for the old Bali away from the nightclubs and crowds. A desire for peace and quiet where others were looking for the same thing.

My brother has been visiting Sanur and singing it's virtue for years. I don't know why but I've been hesitant. Perhaps lured by familiarity and the anticipation of my favourite meal at one of my favourite restaurants. Oh and those perfect sunsets as the sun





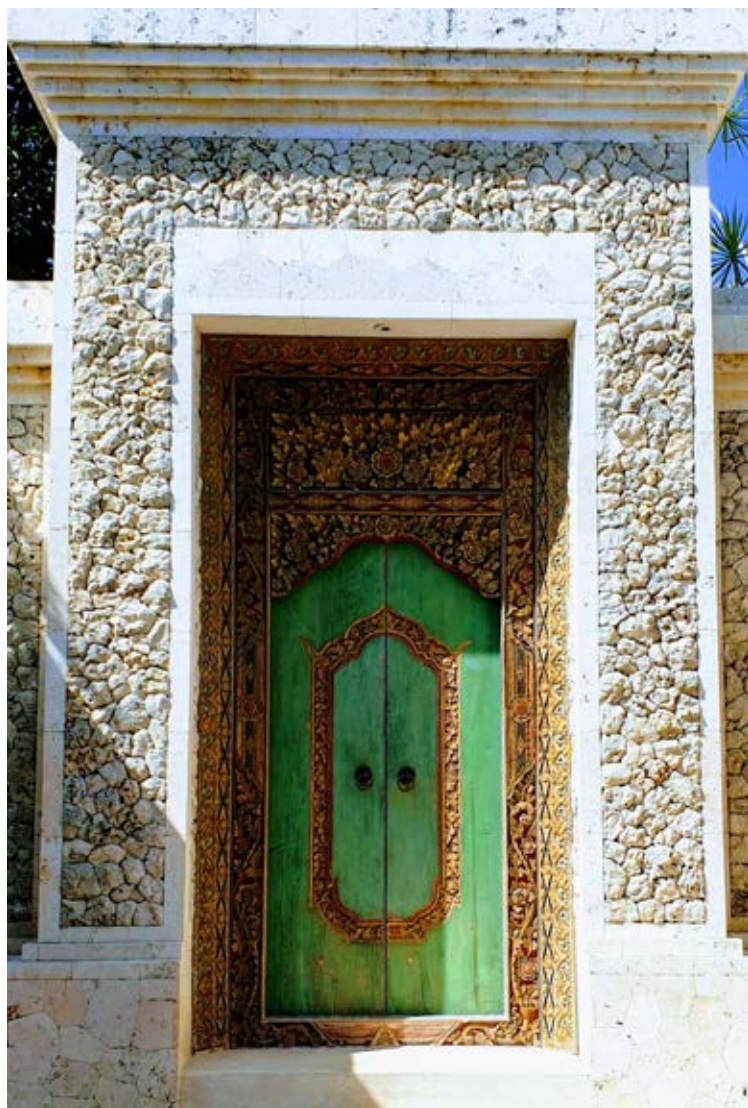
After checking in we take a stroll to the beach. Along quiet lanes and alleys past tucked away cafes and courtyard restaurants. Intimate massage parlours where those sitting outside engage in conversation rather than calling out across the street. A refreshing change as we book in for an hour and a half of pampering. As we continue to the beach we hit the main road that winds through Sanur. Here there are a scattering of boutiques, a few of the usual Balinese style souvenir shops with batik spilling out onto the footpath and cool cafes and eateries. The traffic is sparse and crossing the road is a simple process rather than putting your life on the line as you dodge and weave, hoping cars will slow and motorbikes will not surprise you by creeping up on both sides of the oncoming traffic. The road leading to the ocean is lined with beautiful homes protected by high walls where ornate doors open onto lush gardens. We find the villa for our next stay where the housekeeper and gardener have been tending to guests and manicuring lawns for over 50 years. Heaven surrounded by lily ponds and tranquility.

At the end of the road a handful of shops greet you and are a perfect place to grab a sarong, hat and anything else you may have forgotten. We pack lightly when travelling here and purchase some essentials to sustain our trip, putting money into the local community in what can be a competitive business and after the usual negotiation and bargaining that make shopping here fun.

Here the sea is calm and clear. A reef breaks off shore

sinks below the horizon throwing reds, crimsons and pinks into the sky. Sanur is on the east coast so sunlight creeps across the ocean as the sun turns night into day giving rise to magnificent sunrises. We decided to give Sanur a try.

We booked a villa with private pool and our host gives us a synopsis of the area. She describes a more local neighbourhood feel, quiet and something perhaps people of our age would appreciate! No offence taken and she was right. We are at the age where pumping music billowing out of bars and crowds of twenty somethings enjoying happy hour are, let's say, not for us. Our days staggering out of a bar at sunrise looking for a recovery party hold wonderful memories that are just that. Memories that create a patchwork of life where we are now putting together the next part.







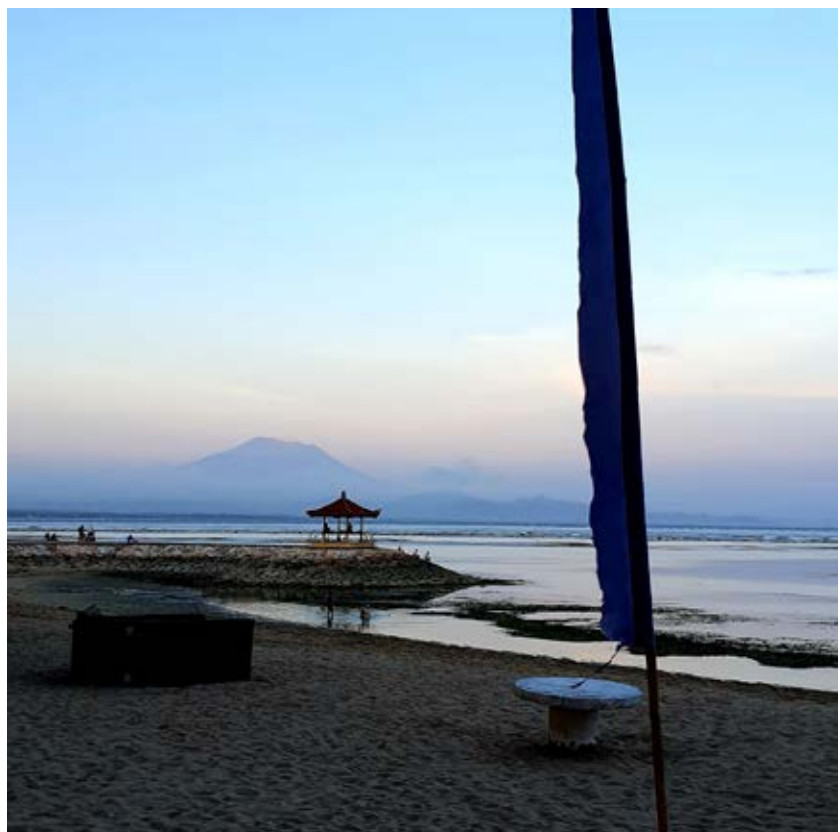
dulling the swell so there are no surfers here.

The tide goes out quite far and when it does reveals reeds and rock pools. When it returns the reeds sway in the current and the water is perfect for snorkelling, where visibility seems endless or jet skiing as you zoom over the coral and zig zag over a patchwork of greens and blues, circling atolls and underwater forests.

The boardwalk is lined with bungalow style hotels their pools almost touching the sand. There are height restrictions here so towering hotel blocks on the beach are relegated to other places. Restaurants and beach bars invite you to linger. We discover a gem with tables on the sand sitting in a quiet spot on a small almost private part of the beach. It becomes our hangout for breakfast and lunch and dinner (some days). Nothing says vacation quite like having your toes in the sand eating freshly grilled seafood whilst washing it down with an icy cold beer or cocktail flavoured with local fruit. It's a full moon so the temple on the beach is hosting a celebration, Balinese style. Offerings are taken to the shores and feasts prevail.

Life here is laid back. Start the day with a free yoga class down by the beach and take it from there. A path curves along the shore making exploration on foot or bike easy. Stumbling across rest and refreshment spots is more rewarding than Googling every possible place in order to make a decision. Isn't that how people discover the next 'new' best place? Sanur isn't new. It's been here for ages however somehow it's kept the Balinese charm that entices visitors to this Indonesian Island.

There's something to be said for the nightlife and abundant choice on the West coast. Once you're done with that, head East. You won't be disappointed.







CLB Luncheon,  
January 2020







for the Russian salad. They served saucy food and all the servers were amused while watching us probably because we were all scrutinising the dishes. After the three hour boat ride, we felt really exhausted, we were all taken back to the van to head towards the hotel. We got to our hotel around eight in the evening completely fatigued. That was our first day.

The following day, as early as eight we were picked up by Daria to go to Tretyakov Gallery. Although still sleepy and a bit tired, I

# FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

*by Arlene Rafiq*

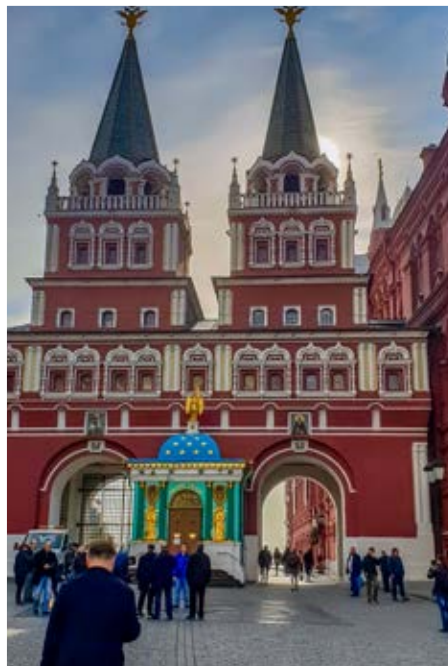
**W**hen I hear Russia, what comes to mind is that of apprehension maybe because of its history. But I am not covering its history but what it is today. I am curious about this country after friends visited and how much they had enjoyed their Russian escapade.

It was seven degrees when we arrived in Moscow... all excited but in spite of the tiresome journey and lack of sleep, we proceeded to start our excursion. Our local guide, Daria took us around Moscow as a familiarisation tour of the city followed by a three hour cruise on Moskva River appreciating the beautiful ancient buildings in Moscow along the river banks. The city looks ancient and the style of the buildings complements the ambiance. To me, it was interesting and had me envisioned the life in Russia then. Lunch was served while cruising and we were all relaxing comfortably inside the boat savouring the dishes that were served to us. Nothing was familiar except

was looking forward to the gallery visit as I've read a story about this man, Pavel Mikhailovich Tretyakov who collected works of famous Russian artists known all over the world with the aim of creating a collection for posterity. The gallery is impressive, well preserved with thousands of works of art done by famous Russian artists. Well, today not only did Mr. Tretyakov leave his collection to the Russian people but to the world. The day went by quickly. Traffic in Moscow, despite the six lane road, was I thought worse than Bangkok. As a result we did not get the chance to change for dinner at the posh Dr. Zhivago restaurant which served us up a wonderful set meal. We all felt underdressed and obviously not very happy. But we had good meal though so that made up for our frustrations. We all went back to our hotel with full stomachs, experiencing for the first time, Russian food.









I came to Russia primarily to see Red Square and the Kremlin. Red Square had so much history that it was first on my list of places to visit in Moscow. Stepping on the ground that used to be a huge marketplace, a place to stroll and kill time and the venue for making public announcements was awesome. In 1919 the first Red Army parade was held here with Vladimir Lenin, its new leader who spoke to the nation. 'A lie told often enough becomes the truth' the great man said. From the entrance, looking towards the right is an old imposing building called the GUM. There is a touch of class as you enter the department store. The décor, quality of merchandise, layout and products on sale looks expensive. The merchandiser surely had thought of everything to make it look inviting, exciting and interesting. I was not planning to purchase anything but due to the beautiful display of products, the browsing ended up into buying. What a relief when it was time to meet up with the rest of the group to enter the Kremlin and also visit the iconic St. Basil Cathedral, otherwise it would have been a disaster financially.

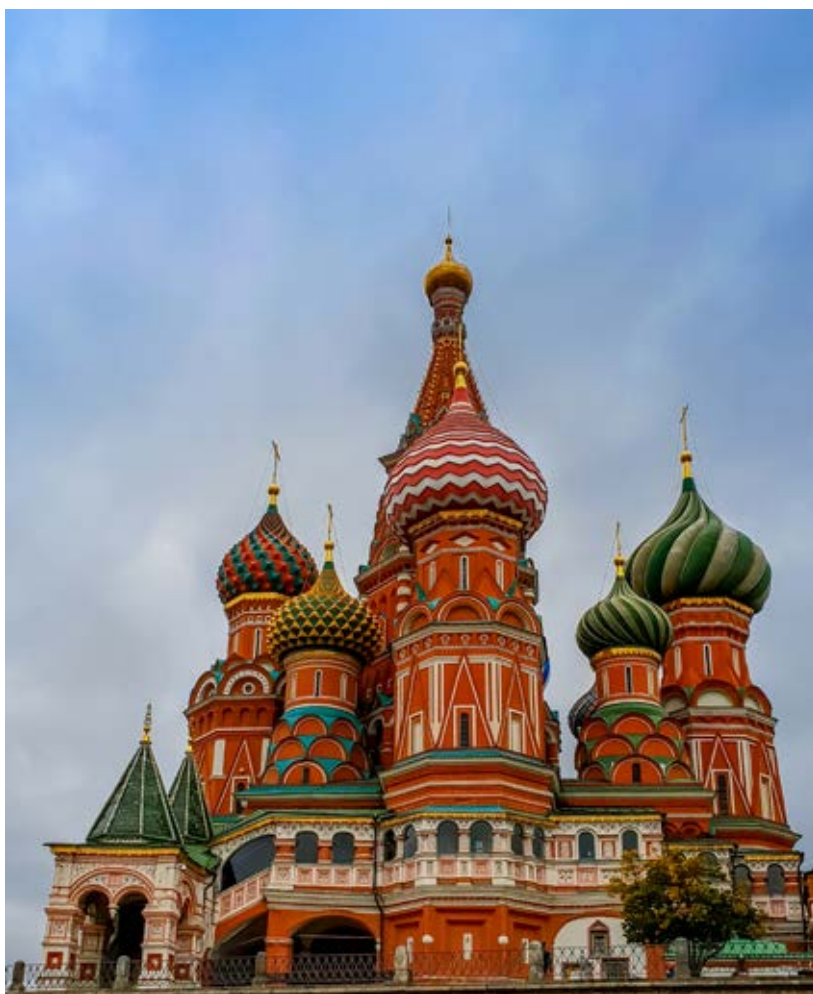
Kremlin's history is the drive for people to go there for sure. As you enter, the left side is full of ancient, small and big cannons all lined up as a testament to the Russians winning the war against the French. The small cannons were confiscated from the French army and the big cannons side by side with the small ones are the Russian's. One could readily see the pride over winning against the French. The office building of the president on the right side as one enters is under renovation to our disappointment. Apparently, it's called the senate building where the president holds his meetings.

About five hundred metres from the senate building is the St. Basil Cathedral also known as the Cathedral of the Intercession of the Virgin which is an Orthodox church and the symbol of the city of Moscow. It is a most imposing building that if you had been to Russia but have not been to St. Basil Cathedral, it is like not visiting Russia at all. It is the most recognisable building in Russia built in the 16th century by order of Ivan the Terrible.

So much to see in so little time. It seems that we haven't

really scratched the surface and we have to go for another train ride to St. Petersburg. Our guide, Daria picked us up so early in the morning to catch the early train to St. Petersburg. We had breakfast packed for us by the hotel only to find that breakfast was served on the train. After four hours, we arrived in St. Petersburg but had to walk miles to reach our van. Sleepy, tired body and soul, we went on our scheduled journey. Our English speaking guide took us to Hermitage Museum, where the largest collections of European and Western arts in the world are. It was a feast to the eye as beautiful paintings and works of art are on display. Our time inside was limited, as hundreds of people are waiting to enter the museum, so it's a sneak preview like in the movies.

Our next stop is Catherine's Palace. I thought, I have seen this type of interior all over Europe. Exquisite furniture and decorative objects, a unique collection of porcelain and the famous Amber Room, an entire room made of amber panels, mirror and gold leaf with a fascinating history. We drove back to St. Petersburg for dinner at the Nicholas Palace. This was grand and very memorable for me as it was my birthday. However, we were all disappointed to dine in a palace where all the waiters and attendants were in period costume reminiscent of the past. We also had the chance to feel Russian during the evening watching a folkloric show experiencing the history, spirit and

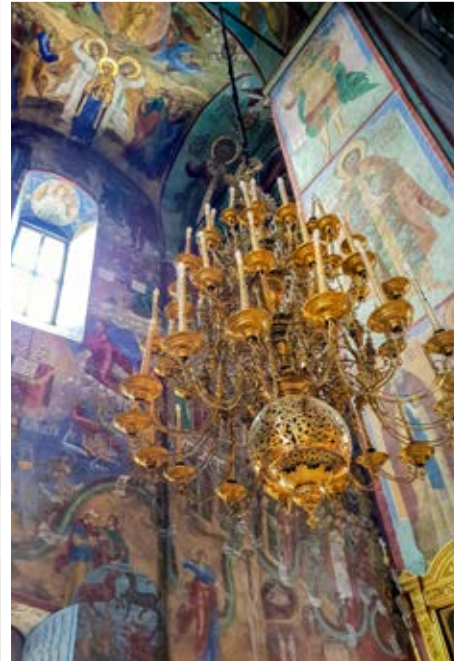
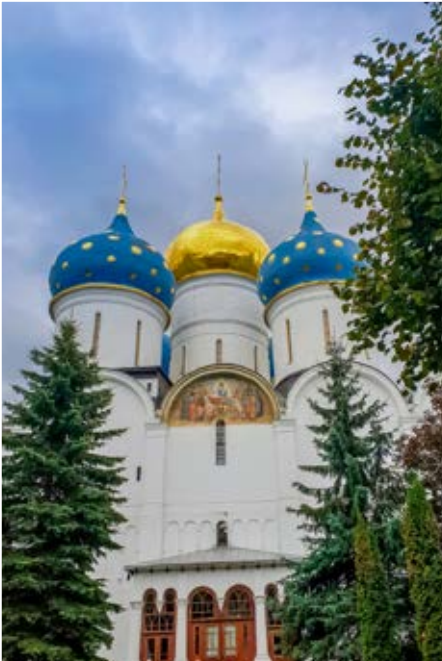


tradition of the Russians. It is a must see show. We were all treated like royals in a most delightful evening.

The following day, most of us were totally exhausted so we have decided not to join the day's tour and just kick back at the hotel for much needed relaxation. With a friend, I went on a shopping spree and arrived back to our hotel feeling refreshed and rejuvenated ready to face another challenging day.

On our last day in St. Petersburg, we were driven to Peterhof for an excursion of the summer palace. If you have been to Versailles in France, Hermitage Museum and Catherine's Palace, entering Peterhof's Palace is almost the same as the other three I've mentioned.





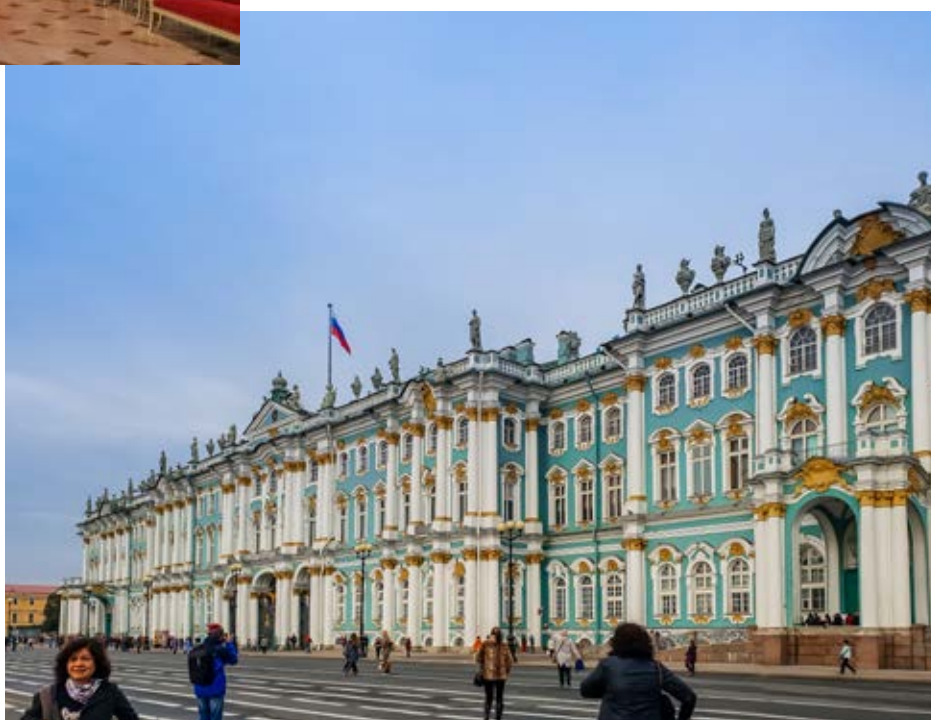


Peter the Great visited Versailles and when he got home, he had ideas for his summer palace which was under construction and renovation that time. It was well worth the visit as the beautiful palace, park and fountains are breathtakingly beautiful.

Our tour to Russia is nearing its end. Again, we woke up early to catch the train to Moscow. We got to Moscow in the afternoon and part of the tour was the visit to Bolshoi Theatre. We tried to get tickets to watch the ballet but it was all sold out. We did not anticipate that we would be getting a much better deal. The manager of the theatre is a friend of our guide so we were allowed to enter the premises with an official guide and lucky to have watched the rehearsal of the show for that night and appreciate the grandeur of the Bolshoi Theatre. That to me was a real treat.

The day has come that we had to leave Russia. Despite the strenuous trip, we had good and fun memories of the country. We have seen famous landmarks and works of art that we may never see again.

До свидания и спасибо россия!  
Goodbye and thank you, Russia!









# Amazing West Sumatra: *Fascinating natural charms of Indonesia*

*by Kathleen Pokrud and Eka R Setiawan  
President of Hong Kong Ladies' Group in Thailand and Past  
President of International Women Club of Thailand  
DWP Executive board member of the Indonesian Embassy  
in Bangkok – & Exc. bm of International Women Club of  
Thailand 2019 and Lecturer in Indonesia*

Some friendships do not need a lifetime to build. Our kindred-ship, Kathleen from Hong Kong and Eka from Indonesia met in November 2017 and spanned like decades of bonding. In March 2018, under the flagship of International Women's Club of Thailand, supported by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Bangkok organised a wonderful trip to Indonesia. Our second sequel to "Amazing Indonesia" resulted in new exploration of the natural wonder of West Sumatra.

The Hong Kong Ladies' Group initiated the official trip to West Sumatra with full participation from members and international friends in August 2019. Again, we were blessed with the support from Madame Anita Rusdi and H.E. Ambassador Ahmad Rusdi. The trip was organised for an educational experience that we could learn together about West Sumatra. To further promote global friendship, we greatly appreciated the overwhelming response from the members of the Indonesian Women's Association to accompany us.

The astounding success of the trip could not be achieved without the backing of Mrs. Nevi Zuairina Irwan Prayitno, Spouse of the West Sumatra Province Governor, Dr. H. Irwan Prayitno. The warm and genuine hospitality everyone felt



for a fully loaded schedule for the entire province with six districts and three cities, from our first arrival to the final farewell official dinner.

## **Beyond the mainstream**

West Sumatra holds many native charms that you cannot find anywhere else. Volcanoes and lakes surround the province. The abundance of landscape and eye-fetching green scenery offers visitors excitement beyond the mainstream. Outshined by the more popular tourist destinations like Jakarta, Bali and Java, the magical charm of West Sumatra is often overlooked. The province is abundant in history, customs and culture that are different, even to other parts of Indonesia. After our visit, the compliments we received from the participants were "amazing", "priceless", "fascinating", "exciting"...

## **Minangkabau heritage**

West Sumatra is often known by the name of "Minangkabau" as it is the native homeland of the indigenous ethnic group of the Minangkabau people who lived on the highlands. The term Minangkabau comes from the phrase "Manang kabau" as "victors of the buffalo".

The culture of the Minangkabau has been the subject of intensive study by modern anthropologists. Its culture is distinct. The Minangs are the world's largest matrilineal society, which distinguish from rest of the island of Sumatra. Properties such as land and houses are inherited through

female lineage, with a complex social structure based on matrilineal clans. In Minang households, boys as young age as seven are to leave home and study in community centres. Teenagers are encouraged to pursue further education in schools. This tradition result in Minang communities mushrooming in many Indonesian cities and towns, but still have close tie to







their homeland. Due to the historical emphasis in education, the Minangs are renowned as merchants, traders, scholars, and well represented in the public circle of Indonesia.

The west Sumatrans are predominantly Muslim and the region is considered as one of the strongholds of Islam in Indonesia. The province has historically played the important role within the religious Muslim community in the country. During the Indonesian struggle for independence, the politically savvy Minang intellectuals proven to be one of the major powerhouse. With the strong culture and religion based, the philosophy of the minang lives therefore majority based on the values of Islam.

### Scenic beauty

Active volcanoes and rainforests dominate West Sumatra. We love the rustic and tropical charms of the small towns



during our hopping around the districts within the province. Blessed with fine weather, we devoured the breathtaking sites from land to sea.

Nagari Pariangan village was nominated as “The most beautiful village in the world” in 2012 from Budget Travel Magazine New York. Pariangan is the oldest village in Minangkabau and its valley is located right on the slopes of Mount Merapi. We were treated to the alluring scenery on the hills. Landie River Village was another picturesque attraction we were treated to. Lush green paddy fields stretched around the village. One can

imagine how the now green fields would turn yellow when the paddy in the fields is ready to harvest. An outstanding mosque with its red painted domes stood prominently among the other houses in the village.

Our drive from Padang, the coastal capital of West Sumatra to the city of Bukit Tinggi passed the famous Anai Waterfall Valley. The Highland Park offered a panoramic view of the Maninjau Lake, the heart-stopping feeling of standing amongst the clouds. On the drive from Bukit Tinggi to Payakumbuh, we passed along the locals famously referred as “Nine Sharp Turns” or Kelok Sembilan. The road stretches through Jorong Aie Putiah, Nagari Sarilamak, Harau subdistrict of Lima Puluh Kota Regency. The road has a sharp bend, bordering on a ravine and flanked by two hills between two nature reserves: The White-River Reservation and the Harau Natural Reserve. We explored the caves extend deep into the mountainside. The domains of thousands of bats, which we could not see, but heard and sensed that they flew close over our heads. The coolness and damp air inside gave us a refreshing breeze from the tropical heat outside.

### Distinctive architecture

The unique buffalo-horned roof architecture is the distinctive feature that makes the preserved traditional houses very charming. These local houses of the indigenous Minangkabau tribe are called Rumah Gadang, which are famous for their pointy roofs, which resemble a bull's horn.





people, and also generally refers as Padang food after the capital city. The Padang food has been one of the most popular cuisine in Indonesia as you can find in other provinces. Padang food is commonly eaten with one's hands. A bowl of tap water with a slice of lime is provided for the fresh scent. This water is used to wash the hands before and after eating. A traditional meal in Padang is called Makan Bajamba, which is served in a communal house or Rumah Gadang as the community leaders eat together. It is an old way of Minangkabau people to eat when there is a formal ceremony. Food is served with dozens of small dishes filled with highly

flavoured dishes such as beef rendang, curried fish and beef liver, stewed greens, chilli eggplant, fried chicken, and the popular Indonesian sambal sauce. The best-known Padang dish is rendang, a spicy stew. As Minang people are devout Muslims, the halal dietary rules are followed rigorously.

The most famous is the Pagaruyung Palace (Minangkabau: Istana Basa Pagaruyung) is the Royal Palace (Istano) of the former Parauyung, located near Batusangkar town, Tanah Datar Regency. It was built in the traditional Minangkabau Rumah Gadang vernacular architectural style, but had a number of typical elements including a three-storey structure and a larger dimension in comparison to common Rumah Gadang.

### The art of weaving

The famous clothing from West Sumatra called Songket, the weaving product along with other kind of hand

made beauty clothing to match the Songket are inherently Minang culture although the interests of the younger generation are diminishing. To preserve this proud asset of Indonesian national culture, Mrs. Mufidah Jusuf Kalla initiated the Weaving Training Centre, and the Kriya Minang Foundation was subsequently established in 2018. The foundation aims to preserve, and develop a culture-based community economy with harmonious cooperation.

### Minangkabau cuisine

The Minang food is the cuisine of the Minangkabau







We would like to take this opportunity to offer our deepest appreciation to few individuals to make this amazing journey possible along with the on tour as our local guidance.

Spouse of Governor of West Sumatra  
Mrs. Nevi Zuairina Irwan Prayitno

Mayor of Payakumbuh and Spouse  
H. Riza Flefi and Dr. Hj. Henni Falefi

Regent of Tanah Datar and Spouse  
Drs. H. Irdinansyah Tarmizi and  
Mrs. Emi Irdinansyah Tarmizi

Regent of Pesir Selatan  
Mr. Hendrajoni, S.H., M.H. and  
Mrs. Lisda Hendrajoni S.E. MM. Tr

Head of Tourism Department of Pariaman  
Mr. Alfian S. Sos.

The family of Previous Vice President Spouse  
Mrs. Mufida Jusuf Kalla and Prof. Dr. Fasli Jalal,  
The Chairperson of Yayasan Tenun Kriya Minangkabau

Regent of Solok  
H. Gusmal, MM and Mrs. Desnadefi Gusmal

Founder of The Batik House of Minang, Nagari Panyakalan  
Mrs. Lisa Mustafa



## Heartfelt appreciation

Our trip to West Sumatra was met with warmest hospitality and genuine friendship from all the VIP hosts and local authorities. The initial discussion to visit West Sumatra sprung up during the first visit of the delegation led by Mrs. Nevi to promote the province at the Embassy of Indonesia with the support from H.E. Ambassador and Madame Rusdi in October 2018. The idea subsequently consolidated when Mrs. Nevi visited Bangkok the second time to participate at the Red Cross Diplomatic Fair in February 2019 with her full delegation to promote exquisite Indonesian products from West Sumatra with Eka always there to support and organise with detail and local.







# PHANG NGA BAY 'UNBONDED'

*by Scott and Nori Brixen*

There are over 100,000 photos tagged #jamesbondisland on Instagram. Guys with six pack abs, women testing the limits of their bikinis, Muslim ladies in swimming hijabs, kids doing the 'happy beach leap' – all posing in the same spot with that famous limestone spike behind them. They look happy. It's all good fun.

What these images don't capture is the long line of people waiting for their chance to be shot, the mob of insistent souvenir sellers crammed on the narrow isthmus or the jumble of boats waiting to zip the tourists back to Phuket. In the high season, dozens of boats daily make the trip to Thailand's extraordinary Phang Nga Bay and James Bond Island is a highlight.

Thailand will receive 39 million international visitors this year, with approximately 5 million visiting Phuket, the Kingdom's largest island. In 2016, a major expansion saw Phuket International Airport's capacity double to 12.5 million passengers a year. Phuket is already a world famous resort island – in the same league as Bali or Oahu – and it's only going to get busier. Was it still possible, we wondered, to find empty beaches and unfrequented islets?

When in Phuket, we usually base ourselves in the

Northwest (Bang Tao and Mai Khao beaches). The area is only 10/20 minutes' drive from the airport and is less developed than the grungy/glamorous beaches of the Southwest. We're fans of the Anantara hotel chain and their Vacation Club Mai Khao property has spacious 2 bedroom family suites that were perfect for us. The hotel is designed for families. The Turtle Bay shopping centre is across the street. And a very long, effectively private beach is just a short walk (or cycle) away.

With over 40 islands strewn across 400sqkm of the Andaman Sea, Phang Nga Bay is big enough for everyone. But most tourists will visit the same ten islands on US\$40-50 tours that vary only on the type of boat and the order in which the islands are visited. We had given the Anantara's activity manager what I thought might be an unachievable assignment: deliver an adventurous and exclusive feeling visit to Phang Nga Bay, one of Phuket's (and indeed Thailand's) most popular excursions.

Most tours to Phang Nga Bay leave from Ao Po Pier, located on the Northeast of Phuket. Our boat was instead departing from Boon Chu Pier in Phang Nga, the mainland province just across the Sarasin Bridge. I couldn't locate the place on Google Maps, which I interpreted as a good sign. After forty minutes of country driving, we crossed a small bridge over a muddy river and saw the sign: Boon Chu Pier Long Tail Boat Service.

First impressions weren't positive. The reception hut was an authentic backwater construction, the kind of place where guys named Duffy hunt gators and drink Bud.



There were angry looking red ants on the wooden walkways and trash stuck in the mudflats below. But this was Thailand and you can't judge a boat by its pier. Our jovial guide, Mr. Wittoon, had been well-briefed by the hotel.

"I understand," he smiled, "that you want to go to different places, right?"

"Yes."

"You don't want to be around lots of other boats?"

"Yes! No! I mean, we prefer to be on our own. And we're happy to hike, climb, swim, whatever."

"No problem," he said with confidence.

Our boat was a wider version of the classic Thai long tail, with a tarp canopy that shaded six rows of bench seating. It could have carried 30 people; instead it was just the six of us, Wittoon and the captain. We had a cooler box full of bottled water and some pineapples and watermelon for slicing later.

For an hour, we motored along the curving, vein-like waterways of the estuary. First, along the narrow Klong Tha Yu and then into the main Klong Bang Lam channel. We passed several villages with whole neighbourhoods built out over the water, the simple wooden homes raised up on rickety stilts. In each, the tallest (and most colourful) building was the village mosque.

As we approached Phang Nga Bay, the horizontal monotony of the calm brown river and the flat-topped mangrove forest was disrupted by towering ridges that thrust straight out of the depths. These jagged karst islands ranged across the water like a naval fleet, imposing grey hulls rising high above the waterline. The island ahead of us was a wall, and we were heading straight for it.

Then I spied it: a keyhole in the rock, white light spilling through from the other side. As we neared the cleft,



it expanded to a roughly rectangular passage dripping with contorted stalactites. Just tall and wide enough for our boat to pass through. But then I saw a path leading up from the tunnel.

"Sure! You can walk up there if you want to. There is a very nice cave. But it's steep so the boys may be too scared," our guide warned.

A short climb brought us to the mouth of a large, white cavern illuminated by two openings from above. One by one, the boys ascended using fixed ropes and steps cut into the slippery cave wall. We emerged to an incredible sight: a stalactite-framed window on Phang Nga Bay. Far across the water, we could see two large, yellow boats zooming towards the same destination: James Bond Island.

"Actually, they have something like 500 boats," our guide claimed. "All those yellow boats are owned by Chinese through a nominee structure. All the Chinese tour groups use these boats. They pay their Thai guides and captains poorly. I didn't want to be a part of that. So when my relative decided to start a local tour company, I was very happy."







Our next destination was a little island with a pretty beach not far from James Bond Island. In general, Phang Nga Bay isn't a snorkelling spot; the water is turbid and the currents can be surprisingly strong when the tide is running. And while the islands have a million promising cliff-jumping locations, the shallow water and lack of visibility makes it suicidal. While the boys "painted" the side of our boat with wet sand, I followed Witoon to a well incongruously filled with cool, fresh water. I dumped a few bucketfuls over my head and groaned with relief.

Our final planned destination was Hong Island, a very popular stop on the Phang Nga Bay day tours. We expected crowds, and we got them: an unbroken loop of tourists in inflatable kayaks being paddled around by wise-cracking local

Later, we circumnavigated James Bond Island, pausing to take photos from the water. (Apologies to whoever we photobombed.) It was certainly an unusual and film-worthy formation – though hardly large enough for a proper evil lair. From this angle, things looked orderly on shore. However, as we continued around the island, the chaos became clear.

guides. In Thai, horng mean 'room'. The island is famous for a hidden lagoon that is only accessible at low tide.

But it wasn't low tide. We had to lean back like limbo participants to clear the narrow cave opening. Colliding with other kayaks was unavoidable. When we reached the end of





the tunnel, I could see a bit of light bouncing off the cave bottom. Our guide started to u-turn.

"Wait a moment! Can we swim under?" I asked in Thai.

"Dai krup," he replied, "no problem!"

"Boys, stay in the kayaks!" I shouted as I rolled off into the water.

I took a deep breath and submerged. Light was streaming into the water just a few metres ahead; it looked easy enough. A few strokes later I surfaced in a truly magical spot: a placid, milky blue pool circumscribed by high, jungle-draped cliffs. I floated on my back and soaked up the tranquility. It seemed impossible to believe that on the other side of that wall, fifty kayaks and a hundred tourists were jostling for photo opportunities.

"Daddy! Daddy!"

So much for tranquility. First Logan, and then the rest of the boys and Nori popped up. Our guide had shown them an easier way in. My initial anger at their not obeying was quickly replaced by pride: what brave little boys!

On way back to Boonchu Pier, Witoon asked me if we'd like to visit another cave. Of course! The captain navigated towards an unremarkable recess in the cliff face. I never would have seen it.

"We just discovered this place a few months ago!" he said. Given the nature of karst formations, there must be hundreds of caves and grottoes in Phang Nga Bay that have never been explored by humans.

The first room of the cave had some beautiful flowstone terraces and pools, thick columns and an alcove that looked like an open mouth, complete with dangling epiglottis. We had to turn our headlamps on and crawl through the narrow entrance to the second, larger room, where the boys' constant chatter reverberated into a kind of parental hell.

We had a very late lunch at Ruean Phae Che Son ("Jason's Houseboat"), a floating restaurant on the Klong Bang Lam. While the boys scampered about observing the fish in the holding pools, I finished the last of the Tom yum goong and thought about the incredible adventure we'd had. Apart from the James Bond sail-by and the visit to Hong Island, we'd been completely on our own.

We had explored two caves, swam on an empty beach and even had a hidden lagoon to ourselves. The islands of Phang Nga Bay are so beautiful that even the most mass-market tour offers fantastic views. But if your family is into adventure, a private boat with a knowledgeable guide is well worth the extra expense.



#### About the author: Two Twins Twavel

Scott and 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 twin boys, Tai, Logan, Drake and Kiva. Follow their travels at:

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



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# Pink Polo

by Jocelyn Pollak

*There are no better words to describe my afternoon at the Queen's Cup Pink Polo match at Thai Polo and Equestrian Club than simply 'lovely'.*

*I have lived in Thailand for over 7 years and I would go so far as to say this was probably the loveliest afternoon I've ever had here.*

**A** bold statement to be sure, but after reflecting on my time there, I'm not shy to say it. On top of that, the whole thing was a fundraiser for the Queen Sirikit Breast Cancer Research Foundation. I would like to recount my experience in a hopefully entertaining article, but before getting to it, I'd like to let everyone know that the next major Polo Event is April 18 in Hua Hin, so mark your calendars as it's open to the public.



I was graciously invited to the tournament by the Thai Polo and Equestrian Club's co-owner, Mrs. Nunthinee Tanner who is widely regarded as Thailand's first female polo player. Now retired from the sport, she has redirected her efforts towards putting Thailand on the map as a major player in the equestrian world. Pink Polo is a women's only tournament which, under Khun Nunthinee's leadership, has grown to be one of the most prestigious women's Polo events in the world. Before going, I knew that I was in for something special, but since I have never been to a polo match, I really didn't know what to expect. Having attended this event, I'm pretty confident that I will be hard pressed to find another polo event with such a wonderful atmosphere; that is, unless Khun Nunthinee is in charge.

I am not a fashionista by any stretch of the imagination. Two solid colours, one of which is neutral, and some earrings is about as crazy as I get. When I think of polo spectators, I think of fancy hats, beautiful dresses and sharp linen suits. There was certainly no shortage of any of these, but I managed to find, what I considered to be a beautifully patterned floral dress to fit in with the pink theme. The \$6 market dress flowed beautifully all the way down to my feet and I felt like some kind of ethereal being... for a moment, until the gentle breeze that blew across the polo field all day nearly turned me into something X-rated. Limitation of the dress, noted. On the plus side, the weather was spectacular. The crystal-clear blue sky against the pink shades of the guests, white sponsor tent village and the vibrant green of the field was a visual treat.

Upon arrival, there were two McLaren cars parked near the path draped with women, in much more fashionable dresses than mine,







taking photos. Just across the entry path from the cars were all the horses waiting for their time to shine. Something about the juxtaposition of the supercars against the graceful yet powerful creatures appealed to me. I contributed my donation at the registration booth in order to enter the grounds and I got a couple of Pink Polo souvenirs right off the bat.

The first event of the day was a buffet lunch served from 12-2. When I think of buffet lunch for a large event, I don't expect much but as soon as I smelled the aromas wafting from the food tent, I knew I was wrong. My first stop was to the Thammachart Seafood table. I had the pleasure of interviewing the CEO of the company a few months back for Expat Life so it was nice to see a familiar face. The attention to detail of his display made me want to eat everything, but I knew I had to save room to try a little bit of all the delicacies on offer. I felt like a bee hopping around all the stations taking a little of this and a little of that. I finally made it to my table and on top of the mouthwatering food I had collected, I had fantastic company. I can't say I added much to the conversation at first because I had so many foods to try, but my table mates were quite interesting: a British UK representative to the UN and his writer wife, the Editor at Large for Expat Life, a Thai professor at Chula and her restaurateur husband and me, a teacher cum writer cum business owner cum risky dress wearer. We certainly came from a diverse background.

After lunch I did some exploring of the club grounds

and wandered around the sponsorship tent village. The grounds at Thai Polo and Equestrian Club are immaculately kept. The sponsorship tents were all welcoming and offered all sorts of free samples and enthusiastic explanations of what they had to offer. I didn't buy a yacht that day, but I did sign up for a great money transfer app called DeeMoney, drank some wine and got a magnet made at the photo booth.

It seemed as though the event had reached critical mass just in time for the entertainment festivities to start. First was a local bagpipe marching band.

Who knew there was a Thai youth bagpipe band? It was a nice treat and reminded me of home (no I'm not Scottish but we Americans do enjoy a good bagpipe band). Next was possibly the most comical event of the day. The Thai Yorkshire Terrier Club parade. I got a real kick out of this, something about those little dogs makes me laugh every time. I hope I'm not offending any Yorkie fans, but I just think they are the funniest looking little mops. Everyone had a great time watching these glossy pups strut their stuff down the grass runway with their owners. Even the other co-owner of the Club, Mr. Harald Link, joined in on the fun. Next was the fashion show on horseback. I think I've been to maybe one fashion show in my life and it was certainly not on horseback.







Khun Nunthinee joined in on this one and led the parade of beautiful women and beautiful horses.

Then it was finally time for the main event! The ladies had been competing for a couple days prior in order to seed them for Saturday's final event. The first game was Thai Polo against Ethiopian Airlines for third and fourth place. I have never seen any kind of equestrian event so I was really clueless about what would ensue. I could surmise that the teams have to hit the ball into the goal to score points but that's about as far as I could guess. Luckily for me, Daryl Yeap from Malaysia (playing for Ethiopian Airlines) cheerfully explained the basics to me. I must admit, even for not knowing what was going on, it's an exciting sport to watch. When the players really get on a breakaway, it's pretty exciting. One thing I found particularly interesting is that every 3.5 minutes (which is actually drawn out to be longer than that), they switched their horses. This is unique in Thailand because of the hot weather; the horses need more rest. It was a really close game with Thai Polo emerging victorious and taking third place overall. Ethiopian Airlines put up a good fight to make for a nail-biter of a match and finished fourth overall.

While waiting for the championship match, more food! Afternoon tea was served as the finals kicked off. All sorts of pink treats and mini sandwiches were up for grabs. Strawberries, red velvet cupcakes, pink Thai desserts, pink cakes and cookies were what kids dream of. Oh, who am I kidding, it's also what I dream of. They were small, it's ok, I can have 6. The competition for the Queen's Cup was between La Familia and Marengo. The competition was heated with lots of exciting breakaways and even a fall but in the end, La Familia took home the cup.

*The ladies were all smiles at the prizegiving and the biggest success of all was the record-breaking sum of money that was raised for women's health.*



I left the event just thinking to myself, wow what a truly lovely afternoon. There's just no better way to describe it. And the good news is, as I mentioned, the next event will be the Thai polo season championships, Beach Polo, held April 18 in Hua Hin. It's open to the public and supports another worthy cause, education. I can't wait, but I'll be sure to do some more strategic dress shopping in preparation for the season closer.

*About the author: Jocelyn has lived in Bangkok for 8 years and primarily focuses on Education. She is a teacher and owns a company that trains/certifies new people to teach English abroad (TEFLPros). Her writing focuses on high profile interviews but she also writes informally about her own experiences living abroad.*











HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendira Debyavati, the Princess Rajasarinisiribajra

# 11<sup>th</sup> PRINCESS PA'S CUP BEACH POLO 2020 *FOR NABHA FOUNDATION*

HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha believes that all people should have the opportunity to choose how they live, no matter the circumstances of their birth. This is the guiding principle which led her to establish The Nabha Foundation. The foundation seeks to provide opportunity and education to the disadvantaged as well as to female prison inmates so that they may start new lives upon their release. The foundation supports giving second chances to deserving women who are working to make better lives for themselves. Classes in craftsmanship help the inmates build self-respect and develop a skill set that they can put to use immediately when they return to their communities so that they can make a living for themselves.



Dr. Harald Link, Caroline Link

## PROGRAMME

- 12:30 pm Pick Up Gifts  
Welcome Drink & Lunch  
Shopping, Games & Activities
- 2:00 pm *Grand Parade*
- 2:30 pm Opening Ceremony
- 2:45 pm Equestrian Activities
- 3:00 pm Fashion Show on Horseback
- 3:30 pm Horse Racing
- 4:00 pm **Final** *Beach Polo*
- 5:30 pm Cup Presentation
- 6:30 pm Dinner Party

Dress Code: "Anything Blue"

*Gift*

## RSVP

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Beach Polo Final





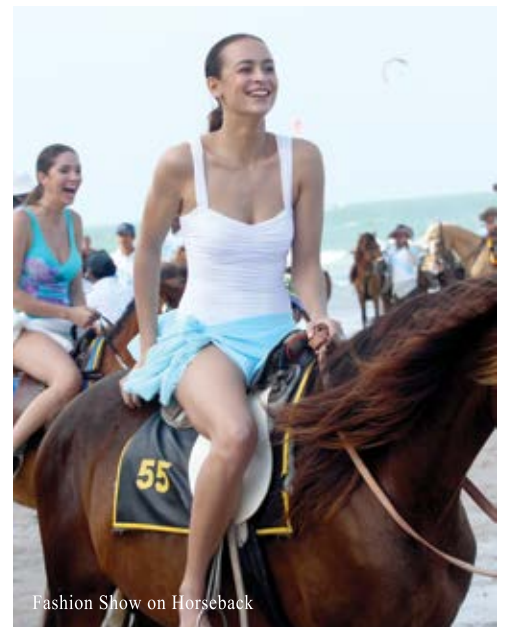
Dr. Harald Link , Khun Nunthinee Tanner, Khun Suwat Liptapanlop

The 2020 Beach Polo Championship sponsored by B.Grimm and InterContinental Hua Hin Resort is shaping up to be one for the record books. This year is the 11th anniversary of the prestigious event which will be held on Saturday, April 18 on the pristine stretch of sand in front of the InterContinental Resort in Hua Hin. Polo played on sand offers a very different challenge for the players and is quite exciting for spectators.

The event starts at 12:30 with a delicious lunch for attendees. Throughout the day, there are plenty of enjoyable activities organized for adults and children alike including a market, games, a fashion show on horseback featuring a number of stars modelling the latest collections, and horse racing. Toward the end of the day, spectators can look forward to the thrilling finals of the Beach Polo as well as a dinner party with live music and a charity auction. The competition, attractions, meals and auction are all designed to raise awareness and funds for the Nabha Foundation under HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendira Debyavati, The Princess Rajasarinisiribajra. A donation of 1,500 baht includes access to all the day has to offer.



Caroline Link,  
Thanpuying Sumalee Chartikavanij



Fashion Show on Horseback



Dr. Chitralada Supachaimongkol



Pasu Liptapanlop, Proudpuh Liptapanlop



Doreen Schmidt





# An unexpected home: Moving from Asia to Europe

by Georgia Knapp

**W**hen I left Bangkok at the beginning of 2019, I was ready to leave. After a lung infection, a disastrous relationship, and an exhausting job, I was practically giddy at the thought of watching the smog and sprawl of the city disappear during take-off. What I never expected was that when I landed in my new home, I missed that smog and sprawl. Desperately.

A large part of my life has been spent as an expat (and, I'd argue, that growing up as an agnostic in the Deep South made me a permanent expat, but that's another story). My parents' jobs with the US military allowed me to spend my childhood in England, Cuba, and Germany before finally settling in the US for my teenage years. Throughout middle school, high school, and university, I dreamed of living abroad again someday. The only question: when?

After university, I moved to Chicago. I periodically scrolled through TEFL and CELTA programmes on my lunch breaks, but job opportunities kept me anchored to the Windy City. Then I moved back to the South to enrol in graduate school and be closer to my boyfriend of nearly five years.

Just before graduation, life threw two grenades at me. The first came with the sudden death of my father. A few months later, this was

followed by the equally sudden and unexpected call from my boyfriend saying we were over. Not knowing what else to do other than spiral into a debilitating whirlpool of grief, I packed my things and boarded a one-way flight to Asia. I figured now was as good of a time as any to finally start my new expat experience.

I moved to Thailand because I had never been to Asia before. I planned to use Bangkok as a travel hub for the rest of the continent. I wanted to live and work there for two years, before heading to my ultimate expat destination: Europe.

A lot of expats, especially American expats, dream about settling in Europe. Maybe it's a siren call from our ancestral home or maybe too many movies have romanticised the idea of living in Paris, Tuscany, or Barcelona. I'd lived in Europe twice before: in Germany as a child, and in Scotland for a semester abroad in uni. Whenever I envisioned my future, settled down life, it was always in Europe – walking along the Seine, taking tea near Hyde Park, or eating bratwurst at a Biergarten. I couldn't wait to live in a quintessential European city, walking on cobblestone and surrounded by buildings older than the US.

My life in Thailand was that of any expat: an intoxicating cocktail of chaos, beauty, frustration, joy, and sweat – lots and lots of sweat. I travelled to other

Asian countries just as I'd hoped: Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, and India. I landed a decent job at a prestigious school and started dating a guy. Life seemed nice in Thailand, but not great. The country exhausted me in small, but significant ways. I hated the need to shower twice a day to clean off the sweat and grime, and whatever is in the dirty water that shoots up from Bangkok's loose street tiles. The constant pushing and bumping on crowded roads and the BTS infuriated me. I hated the lack of a quiet, peaceful







spot in the city. By the time I reached my one-year anniversary in Bangkok, I felt anxious to leave, but also unsure where to go.

When a writing job in Portugal seemingly fell into my lap, I jumped up and down in my apartment for a solid 30 minutes. I felt like my life's journey was finally complete: I was moving to Europe. My last two months in Bangkok were spent saying goodbye to friends and enjoying parts of the city (and country) that I hadn't before. With each passing day, I felt a small pang of I shouldn't leave this place, but I chalked it up to the typical jitters before moving to a brand-new country. When my plane took off from Suvarnabhumi Airport, I waved goodbye to the cluster of city lights, not sure if and when I would ever see them again.

As my plane descended into Porto, Portugal, I felt a wave of comfort wash over me. The land surrounding the small city was green and lush. I could almost feel the cool Atlantic Ocean breeze from inside the plane. Orange-tiled rooftops dotted the expanse, and not far away were rolling purple and blue mountains. This was it; this was where I'd always wanted to settle down.

Just before touchdown, another wave crept over me - a subtle wave; similar to the trickle of a stream that slowly pushes at the bank of a river until it cuts straight through the land: did I miss Bangkok?

It took just one month for the longing to really hit. I didn't just miss Bangkok, but I missed Asia, too.







and appreciate it more.

Whilst I was living in Thailand, I didn't love having to cross busy streets where traffic didn't stop, but I liked the confidence I had that drivers and motos would swerve around me as long as I kept walking in my chosen direction. The chaos had worn on me, but I'd taken for granted that with the chaos also came good naturedness. When someone bumped me in the street, it was nearly always followed with an apology. When everyone crammed into a BTS train together, there was an almost palpable sense of, we're all in this together, so make sure no one falls and that everyone gets out at their intended stop. There was also a lot of blind trust in Thailand (and in Asia) that things would eventually work out. That blind trust was right 99% of the time.

I sat at quaint outdoor cafes in Porto drinking cheap, delicious wine, and yet I fantasised about buckets of cold Chang beer. Whiffs of freshly glazed croissants and pastel de natas wafted from bakeries, and I craved the salty tang of meat skewers sizzling from Thai food stalls, and even the stinging cloud of ground chilli pepper that attacked like tear gas. I walked down quiet, empty cobblestone streets, surrounded by buildings from the 1600s, and all I wanted was to sit side-saddle behind an orange jacketed moto driver as he wove between cars and exhaust.

Every day in Portugal I found myself rolling my eyes, sighing, and wishing I were back in Thailand. Then I'd shake my head and wonder what was wrong with me. Asia had never been a long-term goal of mine. If anything, it was supposed to be a paid vacation; a time to reset and recover from two hits of grief. Instead, it had felt like a relentless, stressful business trip.

It wasn't like I didn't like Portugal. I liked the people that I met, the calmer city streets, the food, and, of course, the wine. In many ways, my new European life was exactly as I'd always dreamt it would be. Yet, something about Bangkok and Asia tugged at me in the same way wanting to live abroad had tugged at me for nearly two decades.

As a military brat, I grew up hearing the phrase "distance makes the heart grow fonder." I'd always assumed it meant the distance between people and their fondness of each other once they couldn't get together every day, but as my months in Portugal wore on and my longing for Bangkok grew, I realised the saying could just as easily refer to places. Something about not being in Bangkok made me suddenly miss it

As I now near my one-year anniversary of leaving Bangkok and moving to Portugal, I find myself doing something I never expected back when I waved goodbye to the sprawling mess of the Thai capital's city lights: I'm looking for jobs in Thailand. Whether I will leave Europe is still yet to be determined, but I am open to the possibility. When I first moved to Bangkok, and even when I left, I never expected to feel at home there. Yet, looking back on it, I realise it had become home, just not the home I was expecting.





# DANCE ME TO THE END OF TIME

by Robin Westley Martin

So long, farewell, I'm leaving you... goodbye. In his latest novel Christopher G. Moore brings to an end the travails and adventures of detective extraordinaire Vincent Calvino.

*He has taken a smorgasbord of situations, characters, and locations, and whipped them up into a very palatable crème brulee of exploits and mysteries, set in a place that many readers will recognise, although it is actually a Bangkok that might yet come to be.*

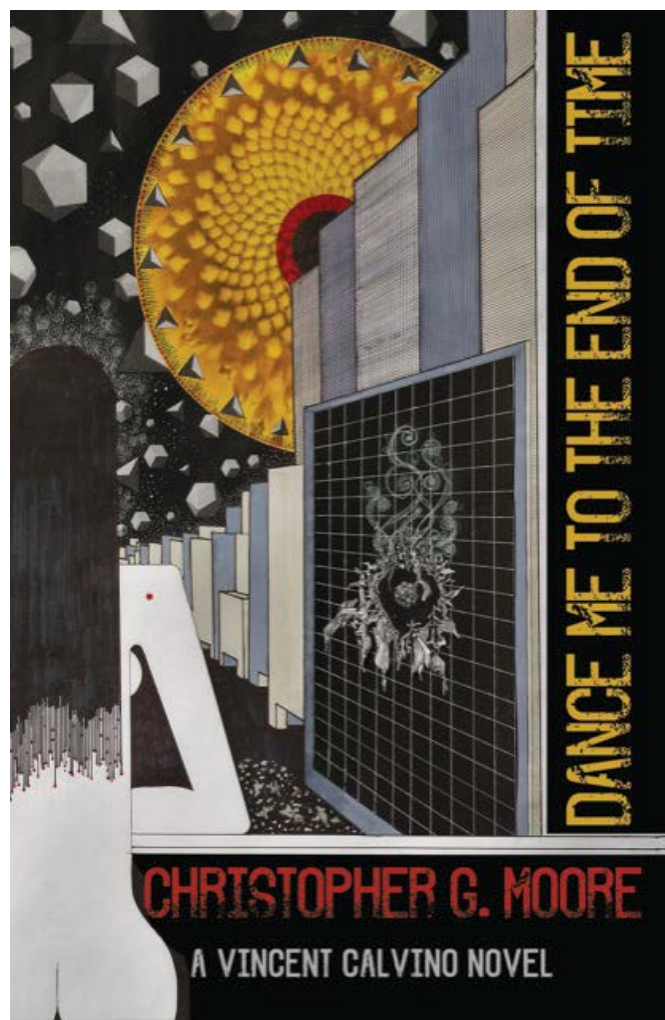
It's a rather different Bangkok from when we first became acquainted with Calvino, 17 novels and thirty long years ago, in Spirit House, which was set in the hedonistic craziness of the late 80's.

With Vincent Calvino Christopher G. Moore created a memorable character, together with his sidekicks, distaff interests, and many other interesting and equally memorable characters. In this finale we are initially introduced to a rather more sedate Calvino, who at first appears to have lost his mojo, and is no longer eager to 'tilt at windmills'. He has been away from Bangkok for a couple of decades, but he soon begins to adapt to a changed Bangkok, a millennial, hot-wired Bangkok.

Amongst the characters we meet a Chinese-controlled Artificial Intelligence (AI), 'mad' scientists, and a cast of people who believe that Bangkok is a haven of existence for them. A strange presumption for some, maybe, but many still actually find it to be so.



The tale includes a hunt for an elusive young boy, delves into what the age of universal connectivity offers, and a Chinese-engineered bacterium even makes an appearance (how relevant is that)! There are close-knit guilds and secret societies that conspire to make Calvino's job a troublesome



one, and along the way there are assassinations, murders, and abductions, all set in a Bangkok that is yet to come. Maybe.

*Dance Me to the End of Time* is an engaging read that transports you to another place, another time... a colourful place a colourful time, with portrayals of people and places that are easy to imagine. The plot is engaging and keeps the reader wanting to know what happens next, right up to the end. I found myself reading more slowly as fewer and fewer pages remained to be read. I did not want my association with Vincent Calvino to come to a close. However, this is a satisfying end to the saga of Vincent Calvino. I am sad to see him exit the stage, but he will dance on, till the end of time.

## About the author:

**Robin Westley Martin**

Robin has been living in Thailand and SE Asia for over 30 years. He first worked as News Editor for *Business in Thailand* magazine, before moving on to edit and write for the *Thai Airways* domestic inflight magazine, and also *Hotel & Travel*, amongst others. He continues to work in SE Asia and Thailand as a freelance writer or editor for several magazines, covering a wide range of genres.

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# TALAR Z. FRONT ROW AND CENTRE AT PARIS FASHION WEEK, 2020

*In January 2020, I was front row and centre at Paris Fashion Week. It was a dream come true. Even the frosty cold weather couldn't put the fire out in me. I was working on pure adrenalin.*

I wore a pink tuxedo jacket with high length boots, coupled with a Dior belt and handbag. My ensemble fit perfectly with the atmosphere in Paris that week. From Place Vendôme, to the Intercontinental Hotel and the Hotel Potocki Paris, I was swept away by how the organisers transformed each venue.

The setting of each fashion show showcased a rich heritage of what Paris Fashion week resonates. A fusion of



cultures merging together to celebrate iconic designers and artists. The essence of the event really is a coming together of like-minded people. It was amazing to watch people from different nations settle into each show, as we were transported into many different worlds. From themes of ancient cultures, to enchanting and magical nuances of being taken into an aquatic world of Atlantis.

Transformation and a truly exotic experience matched with multiculturalism is definitely the way Paris Fashion Week was set up. In essence, this worldwide event allowed designers from a global market to mingle and express themselves through fashion. It almost felt like I was transported into a world that is exclusive. I felt privileged to be part of this event, and will indeed try and make it back every year, to watch iconic designers, as well as up coming artists make themselves known on the fashion runway.

Outstanding designers and guests were from every single nation and country around the world. The melting pot of cultures mixed with the Parisian vibe made me feel connected to my love of fashion. It was non-stop, everyday, making an appearance at fashion shows, participating in photo shoots, interviews on TV and indulging in after parties with the crème de la crème of Paris' and the world's hottest fashion designers and trend leaders. Being in this atmosphere felt like known territory. I can't begin to tell you how comfortable and in my element I felt. Plus, my ability to speak





French fluently definitely made me feel like an insider.

Of course, my three favorite designers were present and I was mesmerised by their new styles for 2020. I am so excited to wear some of these elegant pieces this year. Ziad Nakad, Lebanese designer who has dressed icons over the years, describes his ultimate client: “the Ziad Nakad woman is fresh strong, sensual and positive. When she enters a room, she spreads positive vibes and has a clear vision.” His pieces, flow with absolute sensuality and elegance. This season, he touched on my favourite character, which is the mermaid. The models had slicked back hair and the movement of his gowns were flowy like waves. Each model adorned a belt constructed of metal and Swarovski crystals, which were made to look like fish. The mirrored runway coupled with the pale blue lighting was truly an under-the-sea adventure, at the Intercontinental Hotel, Paris, LeGrand. Everyone was mesmerised by his talent and I was asked in an interview, by FTV (Fashion TV), to speak about his work.

I truly believe that Ziad Nakad has the power to create clothes that fit a woman's body to show off her sensual side. I purchased a dress for a wedding I will be attending in Cairo in February 2020. The purple hues, with the low v-neck lines and long tail, made me feel very fluid when I tried it on. His colour choices of purple, silver and gold shimmered on my body. Nakad's eye for detail in his dress lines, shows classic couture blended into a modern style through fabric, which resonates class and ultimate



sophistication. His dresses are made for the stylish woman, who knows that her body is her temple. His clothes make me feel like a natural woman, because the fabric and design sit on my body with ease.

Believe it or not, I was seated in the front row, at the Nicolas Jebran fashion show, at the Place Vendôme. He has dressed some titans of the celebrity world, including Priyanka Chopra, who wore his gown at the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards celebration this year.







The same feeling was recreated by Jebran this year. He brought me back to an age that was fun, flirty and extravagant like Hollywood.

Zuhair Murad, internationally renowned designer also from Lebanon, invited me as a VIP guest to write about his latest fashion. Murad always wows his audience with spectacular shows, which truly catapults his reputation onto a global scale. His dresses have adorned super stars like JLo, Kate Beckinsale, Kerry Washington, Linda Cardellini and other Hollywood Moghuls, who shine with outstanding glamour. He lights up this season with fabrics made from cerulean silk, tulle and geometric sequin ornaments. At Paris Fashion Week, symmetrical and golden designs with exotic artistry brought his theme of "Egypt" to life. Gold was his obvious choice of colour for this new collection. The explosion of iridescent golden silhouettes with a backdrop of ancient times wowed his audience as celebrities from around the world gazed in amazement. My favourite part of the show was the dramatic finale when Murad revealed bridal wear with a model dressed up like Nefertiti. He transported his audience back in time, when Pharaohs ruled. His regal style never ceases to amaze me. Murad's collections are truly iconic.



For more information, on these exclusive designers, they can be followed on Instagram or connected through their websites:

ZIAD NAKAD: Instagram: Ziad Nakad,  
Website: [www.ziadnakad.com](http://www.ziadnakad.com)

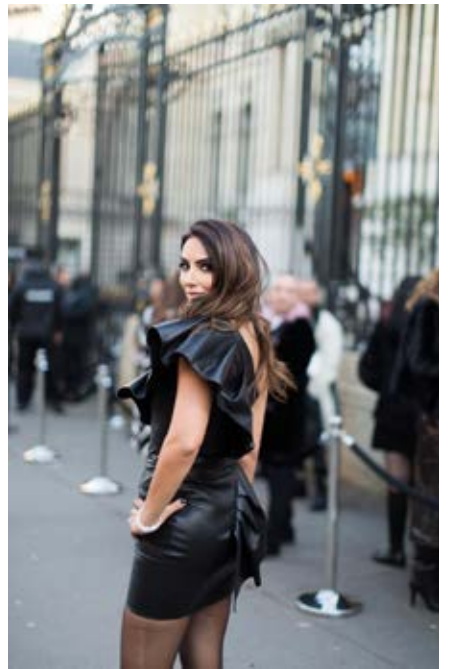
NICOLAS JEBRAN: Instagram: nicolasjebranworld  
Website: [www.nicolasjebran.com](http://www.nicolasjebran.com)

ZUHAIR MURAD: Instagram: zuhairmuradofficial  
Website: [www.zuhairmurad.com](http://www.zuhairmurad.com)

The designer has also created pieces for Assala who is a famous singer in the Arab world. I love his style because it's super sexy and reminds me of couture from Versace's 1990s collection. Versace was one of the most famous designers of the 90s and became internationally renowned for his theatrical style, luxurious classicism and overt sexuality. He was the pioneer of featuring super models such as Naomi Campbell and Lisa Evangelista who cleverly showcased his clothes with immaculate precision.









**Y**ou don't know how to dress? Do you want to know the fashion trends of this season? With these definitive tricks you will become the best dressed in street style. Checked! 2020 will bring us some surprises that we love, and others that will test your style. Learning to dress may be a challenge for everyone, but if you have

in mind the perspective of fashion trends, it is possible to create a look with a lot style for every day. So take the risk of combining these trends and build a perfect outfit for the whole week.

You should not change your entire wardrobe, remember that changes in fashion have never been so exaggerated.



## 1. Colours that undoubtedly mark the street style:

The colours with new spring air express familiarity, lightness, at the same time as uniqueness, modernity and fun. There are recognised and favourite colours mixed with other very unique ones that generate twists that surprise.

We can see garments loaded with neutral colours, beyond what many think, dressing in neutral tones does not mean monotony or boredom. The truth is that the maximum of elegance is to wear this type of colours. They are a great idea, both to go to a meal, to go to work, or even to go out at night.

For many years the favourite colour, wearing black is ideal for its ease of use and combination, this season will not be the exception. Wearing black is a good choice when you want to make an impact, I always recommend having black clothes in your wardrobe, combining them will always be simple.



## 2. Blue colours:

It's a symbol of harmony, balance, peace, and a symbol of great elegance. We have seen women of all time often dressed in blue. It is no accident that blue today,

including all its shades, is the colour that we cannot do without. A fact confirmed by the recent collections shown in the most important fashion weeks in the world. According to Pantone, Classic Blue will be our colour of the year, it's regal, sober and unlimited. But it also gives us that peace and quiet. Personally for me, I feel it conveys elegance, being easy to incorporate in any time.

Now... How should you use it? This blue is much easier to combine and becomes ideal to wear in minimalist and monochromatic looks. It's not an unusual tone, in fact, you are likely to keep more than one garment of this colour in your closet. Get inspired!



### 3. Minimalist and monochromatic:

Simplicity is a great tip to consider if you want to achieve a good monochrome look. Avoid reloaded clothes or with too many details. It's best to choose simple clothes such as a blouse or a crop top and a skirt or pants. It's a look that should look neat and elegant but also natural and effortless. To achieve a good look without looking too simple or boring, the key is to combine different textures to give contrast and a modern touch.



### 4. Prints in trends:

#### Polka Dots:

This classic print has positioned itself as a synonym for femininity over time, this symbolic print has different connotations based on femininity. From the most exclusive brands to the many more accessible stores they have used polka dots in blouses, sweaters, dresses and t-shirts. Easy to combine, polka dots reflected in neutral colours that will go well with all kinds of skin tones. They are a basic garment that we should all have in our wardrobe. It doesn't go out of style and usually adapts to all ages. The important thing about this fashion trend is that you have fun combining them with countless possibilities.



#### There are no springs without flowers:

The trends of the season do not neglect the classic par excellence of the new season and the truth is that for many years we repeat the print, a beautiful floral dress (or skirt) will never be a cliché nor will it ever go out of style.

#### Squares:

Particularly in lower garments such as skirts, pants and joggers, the grid arrives with great force, it is another example of the trip to the past, because in the 90s it also had a lot of weight. Combine them with solid tops, tennis in neutral colours or covered shoes to complement your looks. As with polka dots or flowers, if you choose them in the right size, these types of shapes on clothes are perfect for girls with straight silhouettes who want to gain some volume.

#### Stripes:

The stripes land on our looks and they do it in all its versions, from the finest to the widest, and in every colour imaginable. It doesn't matter how many years go by, the striped pattern is always a safe bet. Shirts with vertical stripes succeed, perhaps because we see them easier to combine, but we can find ideal skirts, dresses, jackets and pants with this black and white print. The truth is that vertical stripes feel great, since they style a lot unlike horizontal ones, which make us wider.



### 5. Transparencies will be used:

The key to this trend (not suitable for shy) as a result of an elegant and feminine outfit, is defined in two important points: choose impeccable and beautiful lingerie, in addition to choosing garments that although made in organza or muslin, have strategic embroideries and applications that rise whole to your decorum. This new trend ensures a sensual aura even in the simplest looks, we will see many semi-transparent garments, such as shirts, pants, or dresses.



## 6. Bermuda shorts have returned:

Are arrived to unseat shorts and bikers in this new season, they are worn below the knee and the possible combinations are endless: with a knitted sweater, with an oversized blazer, with a male shirt and even with feathers. By covering our legs a little more, they stylise a lot, as they hide wide thighs. In addition, they are comfortable and suitable for any occasion.



## 7. Oversized dresses:

Victorian aesthetic or Disney princess, for now we say goodbye to the fitted dresses (and sometimes uncomfortable). All women look spectacular, the point is that you must learn to combine them or add the right accessories. The perfect match is the bohemian style, choose patterns or textures in lines or geometric figures. They are dresses whose goal is to make us feel comfortable with them, there are options for all tastes, even for those who want to take these pieces to the most special events.



## 8. Puffed sleeves:

This original design of dresses, t-shirts, shirts, jackets and sweaters, during the eighties it was very fashionable to wear this clothes, they are characterised by having large volume, either in the shoulder area or in the final half, which reaches the hands. You should know how to combine them properly, since they can make you gain weight or overload a look at extremes if you don't know how to adapt your styling. They can also help you optimally decrease the volume of your hips, don't be to fear the volumes. XXL sleeves have invaded the 'street style' with a lot of glamour and thus are carried to achieve the right balance between elegance and casual.



## 9. Shoe trends:

Combat or military boots:

A style of footwear that is timeless and can always be used, this year they are having a strong revival thanks to the fashionistas who are wearing them with everything. These boots are associated with punk or rock, but the truth is that the stylish girls are combining them with more elegant pieces and the result is surprising. The key is balance and contrast, they give a lot of attitude to the image and are suitable for all adventures.





## Mules:

Mule shoes were the star footwear of the 90s. The characteristics of these shoes is that they cover the front of the foot and leave the heel exposed. They can wear heel, needle or width, or even be flat. They are usually used with formal outfits as they give a touch of elegance creating the illusion of a narrower foot. Bet on this comfortable shoe that will stylise your legs and with which you can walk without pain!



## 11. Vests:

Vests have become the latest fashion trend. With jeans, shorts, dresses and more! They are so versatile that they can be combined with anything. For a day or night look, the available designs and textures offer a lot of variety, from leather to jeans, you can choose the one you like best. The fashion world is always full of alternatives and trends to wear a good vest. Now the question will be how can I combine it? I leave you some ideas.



## 12. Short blazer:

Ideal for marking the waist, the piece allows you to lengthen the figure of ladies who are short stature. Any garment that extends the figure... welcome! The short blazer that falls straight and does not fit at the waist, it just falls, square and a little longer ahead than behind is the one that benefits us the most. It is perfect to raise centimetres without wearing heels, to lengthen the figure in a simple way and in case you do not want one thing or another, simply give an amazing style.

If you dare, fashion can be the most fun game! 2020 has been shouldered by successful fashion months and have offered us a cool mood board for the following seasons. Remember that there are 3 things behind each trend: 1. The story. 2. How to use it correctly or make a trend yours. 3. The thin line between fashion victim and consistent consumer of it. Everything is about attitude, but there will always be textile balance, body language, dress code, styling and everything you need to make your look phenomenal!

Xoxo... Be a Starlette  
Talar Artinian  
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](https://www.instagram.com/talarz_be_a_starlette) or email: [talar.beastarlette@gmail.com](mailto:talar.beastarlette@gmail.com)



# The secrets behind Bangkok's top 10 rooftop bars

by Lori Blackburn

Bangkok, also known as Krung Thep or the City of Angels, offers a dizzying selection of rooftop bars. One is simply spoiled for choice as each rooftop boasts its own unique style, experience, and highlights.

While it's easy to stay grounded in daily life, once you step into the sky, you may wonder why you didn't come up sooner. The sparkling lights. The whispering breeze. The glittering skyline. Oh, that view! Life becomes different where your world is starlight.

In Bangkok you need not be a mere earthbound mortal. Whether you seek a bohemian rooftop for happy hour, an awe-inspiring sky bar to dazzle your date, or a chilled out high-rise terrace to simply escape, Bangkok invites you to soar with its angels. Wings are not required.

## **Vertigo & Moon Bar ([www.banyantree.com](http://www.banyantree.com))**

This is the original, iconic, award-winning rooftop that began Bangkok's sky bar craze. Vertigo & Moon Bar continue to



top international 'Best Bar' lists thanks to sophisticated design and heart-stopping views. Take the elevators up, up, up to the 61st floor then walk two sets of stairs to heaven. A newly renovated rooftop offers upgraded amenities such as an illuminated cocktail bar, re-developed menu, transformed layout, and a hanging glass platform called the Moon Walk. Moon Bar is located alongside fine-dining restaurant, Vertigo, where 360 degree views create one exquisite evening.

**The Vibe** – Stunning views. Standout service. Stellar spot. Meet Bangkok's first sky bar. It is also one of its highest. For such a high-flying place with all the panache of a glam venue, the vibe is refreshingly down-to-earth. You rarely wait for staff to acknowledge you for a table, drink, or nibbler. Guests are greeted like friends by a hospitality team that excels in creating memorable moments.

**The Drink** – Vertigo & Moon Bar procure quality craft cocktails to further elevate you into Bangkok's brilliant nights. Try the aptly named #pictureperfect for a smooth blend

of Bulliet bourbon, Chambord, sweet Vermouth, watermelon, vanilla, lime, and lychee foam. Off the booze? The Horizon delivers a refreshing mocktail of Thai flavours including passion fruit, kaffir lime, butterfly pea, and pandan.

**The Crowd** – Welcome to the party! People are here to have fun. They truly appreciate the views and ambiance. You can expect honeymooners,







couples, business diners, visitors, and celebratory groups.

**The Tip** – Banyan Tree offers several skyline venues to keep you soaring. Saffron, Bangkok's highest outdoor sky garden located on the 51st and 52nd floors, invites you to relax on daybeds while dining on modern Thai Street Food. Signature dishes include Yum Pla Salmon (Seared Tasmanian Salmon, Coriander-Mint Salad, Crisp Pork Crackling, & Spicy Citrus Dressing) and the Yum Hua Plee (Spicy Banana Blossom Salad). For a warming crab curry, order Gaeng Kati Pu Gub Bai Cha Plu.

**The Perks** – If it rains on your parade, then head to sleek Vertigo Too on the 60th floor. The ambient lighting mimics a starry night while oversized windows dramatically frame the city. Cocktails are available from the drink trolley as quality live music ensures that rainy season won't slow you down.

#### **Above Eleven ([www.aboveeleven.com/bangkok/](http://www.aboveeleven.com/bangkok/))**

This energetic rooftop bar provides a lush perch above bustling Soi 11. Follow the hedge maze to where sculpture trees punctuate an urban park design inspired by New York City's Central Park. Kick back on the oversized lounges as a sublime skyline becomes your backdrop. The menu features Peruvian Japanese dishes where sushi, ceviche, seafood, and Latin accents embody the fusion flavours of Nikkei Cuisine. The cosmopolitan views deliver the required wow-factor and a buzzy atmosphere hits like tequila to the senses. The night is yours.

**The Vibe** – Young at any age. Perhaps it's the energy pulsating from boisterous Soi 11, but this rooftop bar above Fraser Suites ignites a vibrantly youthful feel. It's hip, happening, and hot. Above Eleven always has a crowd, so reserve your table ahead. Oh, and be sure to check the bathroom views.

**The Drink** – Pisco Sours, of course! Personalise your Pisco sour or Chilcano cocktail with one of their house-made Pisco Flavours (orange & cinnamon, aji amarillo, or lemon and lime) A full bar menu also

appetites will appreciate empanadas and grilled dishes.

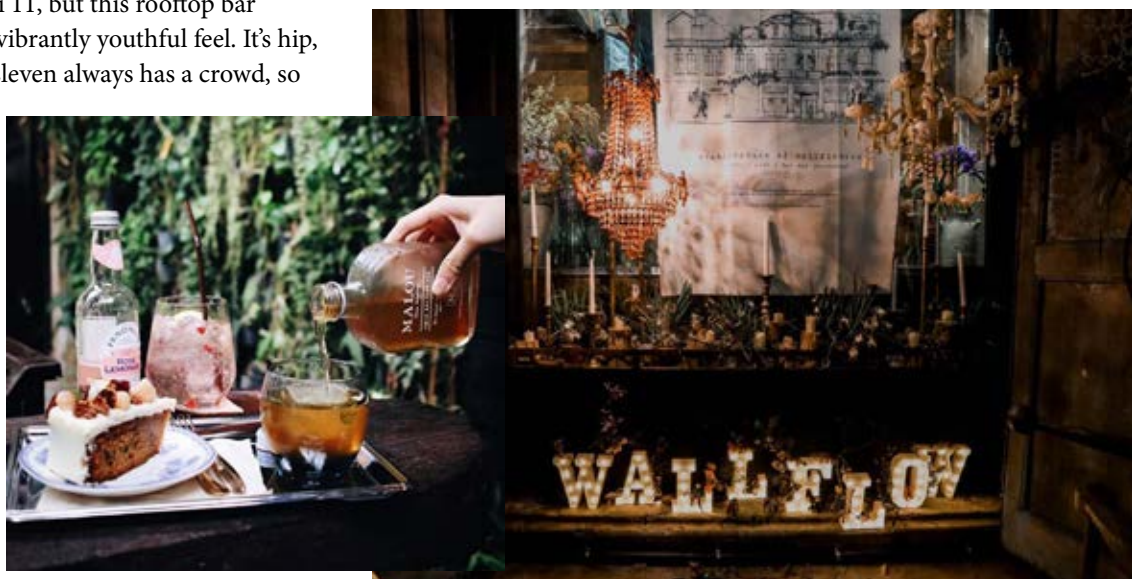
**The Perks** – The location makes it convenient to meet friends before hitting lively Soi 11. Groove to nightly beats ranging from steamy salsa, local DJs, live jazz, and deep house.

#### **Wallflowers Upstairs (Facebook: [wallflowerscafe.th](https://www.facebook.com/wallflowerscafe.th))**

Tucked between street murals and graffiti art in Chinatown's Soi Nana, is One Day Wallflower's rustic wonderland. Climb the winding, wooden staircase past plant-lined walls, gardening bric-a-brac, colourful bottles, and magic. Glass doors open onto a romantic rooftop full of eclectic seating and fairy lights. This rooftop bar oozes character with charming views of Bangkok's Old Town. Sunday nights jam with a jazz band and cool crowd.

**The Vibe** – Secret Garden in Bohemian Chinatown. This historic shophouse serves as a flower shop, café, and cocktail bar. During the day, enjoy coffee and cake within the eclectic rooms, but at night this creative enclave turns 'lounge-y' with flickering candles, live music, and greenhouse-inspired rooftop bar.

**The Drink** – If the Garden of Eden had cocktails, they would serve these flower and herb concoctions. The Rosy Straight Blush is a refreshing blend of Vodka, Aperol, watermelon, passion fruit, yuzu, and vanilla. The Eden features an ethereal mix of Hendrick's Gin, Aperol, elderflower, lychee, and lemon.





**The Crowd** – The Mad Hatter doesn't live here, but artsy characters abound. Hipsters. Creatives. Insiders. Instagrammers. Well-researched tourists. The laid-back lounge crowd.

**The Tip** – Your out-of-town guests will appreciate this heritage property's quirky cool atmosphere. You might hear, "This is Bangkok?" Why, yes, it is! Add it to your Bangkok To Do List, just don't tell everyone.

**The Perks** – Location and personality. No need to run around town for a proper night out. Many hotspots are located here. Your night can go something like this: Wallflowers Upstairs for sunset. Ba Hao for dinner. Tep Bar for music. Asia Today for a nightcap. Want more? Head to Yaowarat Road for street food.

**Spectrum Lounge & Bar ([www.Hyatt.com](http://www.Hyatt.com))**



If upon exiting the elevators onto the 29th floor of the new Hyatt Regency Bangkok Hotel, you felt as if you were stepping into an exclusive party within your very own modern-luxe penthouse, then you would be in the right place. Welcome to the Spectrum Lounge. Make yourself at home. The design was inspired by a jet-setting couple's Thai home where entertaining guests takes centre stage. The Spectrum Lounge & Bar elegantly extends over three levels with nooks that invite you to be in the middle of the scene or to simply retreat and observe it.

**The Vibe** – Sleek, chic, and comfortable. The Spectrum Lounge's multi-level layout provides various opportunities to create your perfect night. The 29th floor indoor lounge embodies a posh living room with artistic décor and show-stopping skyline. Enjoy dinner and drinks at the piano bar or

outside on the landscaped veranda. Afterwards, head upstairs to the 30th floor rooftop to sip and snack to international DJs in cabana-style seating. Million-dollar views await. Treat your table to a heaping platter of bruschetta or Wagyu beef rolls which are grilled over charcoal and served with betel leaf & peanut dip.

**The Drink** – You'll drink in style with delicious libations like The Golden Zen which pairs Umeshu, Ketel One, Falernum (spiced ginger and almond notes), lime and foamy egg whites. Rolling deep? Order the Mango Collins Party which serves 2-4 people with Tanqueray gin, mango puree, lemon, and soda water.

**The Crowd** – Chic locals. Savvy expats. Date night. Birthdays. Business dinners. High class social events.

**The Tips** – Check-in. Stay awhile. The Hyatt Regency Bangkok offers incredible amenities for a staycation. You

can expect stylish rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows, garden infinity pool, world-class dining (the Champagne Sunday Brunch is a kicker!), and a skywalk directly to Nana BTS station. Upgrade to the Regency Club Rooms for high-level views and first-class extras such as premium happy hours.

**The Perks** – Want to throw a party? The sky is the limit. The 31st floor's rooftop bar is a stunning spot to host 50 - 75 of your favourite people with your own private bar, elevator, and VIP level all to yourself.

**Cactus ([www.facebook.com/CactusBangkok](https://www.facebook.com/CactusBangkok))**

This low-rise rooftop brings California's sexy, laidback lifestyle to Bangkok. Hang out in the indoor retro-hip bar area then head outside to kick back amongst firepits and breezy treetops. West Coast vibes are filtered through buttery lighting, warm contemporary design, and a healthy encouragement to get funky. Cactus hosts some pretty cool parties so stay in the loop and let the good times roll.

**The Vibe** – Get stoked. California dreaming. Just like that hottie you might meet in Southern California, Cactus Bar is easy-going, intimate, and sexy. Sleek lines and warm woods mix with leafy landscaping. Of course, there are cactuses everywhere. The mid-century modern décor transports you to drinks in a swanky Santa Monica bungalow or perhaps a Palm Springs hideaway. A giant glass wall blends the indoor and





outdoor spaces so you can connect with nature even when relaxing in the aircon.

**The Drink** – Proper craft cocktails are designed by famed mixologist Joseph Boroski. As their hilarious social media posts share: “Candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker.” That refers to the boozy Mr. Wonka comprised of Southern Comfort, Campari, Dolin Dry, Bénédictine and chocolate bitters. Another winner is the Pop Art which is captioned: “Stop whining about your problems on Facebook, and drink like everyone else.” Haha! In addition to a wicked sense-of-humour, The Pop Art features Havana 3 year old Rum, Plantation Over Proof, fresh pineapple, corn, and chilli. Sarcasm encouraged.

**The Crowd** – Free spirits. The Sathorn crowd. Coachella afterparty. Post-work drinks. The good time gang.

**The Tips** – Check out Cactus’ Facebook page for special events such as supa stylin’ DJ appearances, creative restaurant collaborations (Funky Lam, Aesop’s, & more), family BBQs, and themed parties like their psychedelic 60’s Woodstock party. Groovy man.

**The Perks** – It doesn’t matter that Cactus doesn’t have a kitchen. You can order snacks like charcuterie boards from downstairs Cagette Deli or get northern Thai food delivered from nearby Eats Payao.

**Brewski ([www.radissonblu.com](http://www.radissonblu.com))**

Who says rooftop bars are all about fancy cocktails and Champagne? Come raise a cheeky pint at Brewski. These guys

serve an international selection of beers alongside a seriously special cityscape. Brewski occupies the Radisson Blu’s 29th and 30th floors making it the highest duplex rooftop craft beer bar in Thailand. You can kick back solo or with a group. It’s laidback atmosphere and big city views create the ultimate beer bar experience. We’ll say cheers to that!

**The Vibe** – Casual chillax. It’s always beer o’clock at Brewski. The stylish rooftop is fitted with warm wood tones and industrial accents like plumbing pipe fixtures as décor. Come hang out, watch sports on big screens, and chow down on bar bites which feature riffs on American, Indian, and Thai flavours. Unlike other rooftop bars, Brewski doesn’t enforce a strict dress code, but leave your flip flops at home.

**The Drink** – Brewski serves 100% craft brews and ciders with over eighteen of them on tap. A full bar cranks out cocktails with an attention to details such as freshly squeezed juice.

**The Crowd** – Beer lovers. Backpackers. Regulars. Solo dudes. Sports fans. Expats. Bar hoppers.

**The Tips** – Can’t decide what to try? Opt for a beer tasting flight (4 x 100ml glasses for 300B) to taste your way towards your favourite brew. Beer Buffet, anyone? You heard right. This daily special offers all-you-can-drink local tap beer for only 399B per person daily from 7pm-10pm.

**The Perks** – Since beers and sports go together like sunsets and happy hour, sports lovers can watch full coverage of international sporting events on multiple screens.

**Yào Rooftop Bar ([www.yaobangkok.com](http://www.yaobangkok.com))**



This Shanghaiese-inspired, sky-high dining destination and lounge overlooks Silom-Sathorn offering dazzling 360 degree views. Arrive at Yào Restaurant then take the minimalist elevator up to the 33rd floor where a rooftop terrace extends over two levels. Panoramic views showcase everything from the meandering riverside to the sparkling metropolis. Sip Oriental-influenced cocktails and nibble upon dim sum while gazing at an ombre sunset.





**The Vibe** – Shanghai Chic. Yào Rooftop Bar invokes a modern Chinese style that invites guests to luxuriate in Shanghaiese opulence. Glowing lanterns, garden accents, and inviting lounges set the scene. Its tip top location crowing the Bangkok Marriott Hotel Surawongse lets you float within the sky.

**The Crowd** – Celebratory groups. Sunset chasers. Couples. Executives. Visitors. Pre/post dinner drinks.

**The Drink** – Chinese-inspired cocktails are their specialty. For example, the green Sweet Little Jade blends Midori, lime, kiwi, Vodka, and Prosecco. Another option is the Chinese Highball where mango-infused bourbon is mixed with green tea, honey, and soda water.

**The Tips** – Yao Rooftop Bar is a wonderful spot to come for a pre/post refreshments when attending an evening concert at the historic Neilson Hays Library or party at the British Club.

**The Perks** – Make a night of it. Pair drinks at Yao Rooftop Bar with a gourmet Cantonese dinner at Yao Restaurant where the views continue into the dining room. Chef Bruce Hui showcases Shanghaiese cuisine alongside Cantonese delicacies. Splurge on the lychee wood roasted Peking Duck which is served with creative accoutrements like melon, Caviar, and even lychee butterfly pea jam. Order some hand-pulled noodles to watch noodle master Wang Wen Bin in action.

### **Scarlett Wine Bar & Restaurant** ([www.pullmanbangkokhotelg.com](http://www.pullmanbangkokhotelg.com))

Scarlett is the place to indulge. This dapper wine bistro sits 37 floors above Silom on top of the Pullman Hotel G. It offers trendy yet intimate ambiance where you can dine on quality French cuisine with outstanding riverside views. The helpful staff provide top notch service, so you are pampered with privacy. The rooftop terrace is a sweet spot for romantic dinners or classy, comfortable gatherings.

**The Vibe** – Wine and dine in the sky. Scarlett is the type of place that impresses you while also making you feel at home. Sit outside for the full experience. Warm wood tones and cascading greenery frame the city from a tastefully designed terrace. Seating options include lounge sofas, swish leather seats, communal tables, or bar stools perfect for taking in the primetime skyline.

**The Crowd** – Foodies. Carnivores. Fun group dinners. Date nights. Tourists with swagger. Wine lovers.

**The Drink** – Scarlett specialises in wine, which you'll notice upon entering through the glass hallway which doubles as a wine cellar. It also has one of Bangkok's best wine lists with options for every budget.

**The Tips** – Reserve a table on the terrace to enjoy weekend fireworks over the Chao Phraya River. Come for a long, lazy dinner with friends, business associates, or loved ones.

**The Perks** – Leave the diet at the door. Scarlett's

excellent menu features a wide selection of imported cheese and charcuterie to match the robust wine list. Get your steak fix with premium cuts of Japanese Kobe, Australian Wagyu, Kurobuta pork, and organic lamb chops which are chargrilled to perfection. Dishes such as lobster salad, duck confit, and decadent French desserts make Scarlett a foodie dream.







blended and single malt Scotch, Bourbon, and Cognac.

**Siwilai City Club**  
([www.siwilaiibkk.com](http://www.siwilaiibkk.com))

You don't need to be a member to get into Siwilai City Club. This lifestyle space describes itself as a 'A Thai social club for everyone' and invites city dwellers to enjoy its scenic, sprawling 'Beach in the Sky'. It is comprised of seven areas which include an outdoor lounge complete with wooden stage for

international musicians to perform against a snazzy skyline. Siwilai City Club overlooks the Sukhumvit corridor where you'll get a bird's eye view of designer skyscrapers, zooming BTS, and Sukhumvit's twinkling strip.

**The Vibe** – Urban Beach Escape. The beach came to Bangkok thanks to Siwalai City Club's seashore décor. You can't help but feel relaxed. Coastal colours are highlighted in oceanic indigos, frothy whites, and seaside sand tones. Swing in hammocks or recline on daybeds overlooking Ploenchit's business district. It feels like you could be in Greece or Miami, but the style is completely Thai creating a relaxing respite for Bangkok's social set.

**The Crowd** – Post work drinks. Urbanites. Instagrammers. The cool kids. Local yuppies. Happy hours.

**The Drink** – Life's too short to drink boring cocktails. The SIWILAI's Twist cocktails offer creative takes on classic drinks. The Mezcal Margarita features Mezcal, maraschino liqueur, and lime juice. For another twist, try the New Era's sweet, strong gin martini with strawberry hints.

**The Tip** – It's easy to drop by for a post-work happy hour or pre-movie drink since Siwalai City Club is conveniently located within Central Embassy's luxury mall right at Ploenchit BTS.

**The Perks** – Check their schedule for various lifestyle activities such as movie screenings, art exhibits, chef pop-ups, and popular musical acts. These guys know how to throw a party.

**The Speakeasy**  
([www.hotelmusebangkok.com](http://www.hotelmusebangkok.com))

Just as the name implies, this atmospheric rooftop bar is tucked within Hotel Muse's lavish boutique property. Personality abounds. Old World charm mingles with sumptuous Asian flair. The 1920's comes alive in glitz and glamour at this sky bar inspired by the hidden speakeasies of America's Prohibition Era. On the 24th and 25th floors, you can wander through opulent areas which include a grand terrace, cigar lounge, and hidden rooftop bar where distinguished domes overlook Bangkok's metropolis.

**The Vibe** – Breezy speakeasy. Golden age glam. When you enter Hotel Muse, you get the feeling that anything is possible. The cinematic surroundings were inspired by the era of King Rama V with deep mahogany tones, luxe details, and vintage décor. Step back in time while remaining fabulously modern.

**The Crowd** – Post work drinks. Date night. Time travellers. Fun groups. Cigar lovers. Visitors.

**The Drink** – You won't find any bathtub gin here. Instead, a carefully curated menu of classic cocktails (think Aviation and Mint Julep) mingle with contemporary tipples like the Bacon Old Fashioned.

**The Tips** – Gin enthusiasts can explore botanical infusions with the create your own gin and tonic menu. Choose from eighteen innovative options such as The Cutlass which highlights coriander and white pepper notes or Rogue Society's lavender and orange blossom profile.

**The Perks** – Pair your cocktail with a fine Cuban cigar at the Blind Pig. Just remember that some things are hidden within plain site. On the 24th floor, find the door with the pig wearing an eye patch. Pull back the drapes to reveal this elusive cigar bar where you can sip and smoke in an atmosphere of pure decadence. Be sure to check their selection of







# Ten things the government must do to stifle the smog in Bangkok

*by Rajesh Daniel and Diane Archer, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia Centre.*

*We are reprinting an article that was written by Rajesh Daniel and Diane Archer from the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia Centre that was run in the Bangkok Post on 21st January 2019.*

For the second month, Bangkok's air pollution remains at extremely hazardous levels, with particulate matter (PM) 2.5 often as high as 150 micro-grammes per cubic metre of air.

The costs to health and the economy for Thailand are staggering. Recently, Thailand's Kasikorn Bank Research Centre reported that air pollution could cost up to 6.6 billion Baht in losses for the healthcare and tourism sectors. On smog-related sicknesses, the high PM2.5 levels had already increased the number of patients with respiratory diseases by at least 2.4 million in Bangkok alone.

The Pollution Control Department sets 50 micro-grammes as Thailand's safe level, with the WHO's limit at 25 micro-grammes. But in fact, there really is "no known safe level for exposure" to particulate matter, according to a UK Air Quality Expert Group report. Simply put, there is no safe limit below which it is alright to breathe polluted air.

PM2.5 is extremely harmful as these very fine dust particles are small enough to pass through the lungs and enter the bloodstream, with long-term exposure leading to respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses including lung cancer, heart disease and strokes.

Meanwhile, the Thai government's measures have wavered from the spectacular for temporary relief (shooting water cannons and artificial rain), grim admonitions that the public should simply wear masks and not panic, to just plain old-fashioned hand-wringing pleas to wait for the hot season so we won't have to think about this again until next January.

- Smog again covers Bangkok
- Smog returns to Bangkok
- Bangkok air pollution remains at hazardous levels

In controlling particulate matter pollution, Thailand needs a comprehensive approach that can combine both short and long term solutions with effective air quality management. In doing so, the country also has the opportunity to contribute to the global challenge of climate change, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

During the 1990s, when Bangkok smog was at similar hazardous levels, Thailand's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment took steps that eliminated lead in fuel, imposed stricter emissions controls based on European Union (EU) standards, and most impressive of all, regulated construction sites despite opposition from powerful oil refineries and the automobile industry. If effective action was possible then, it should be possible again now. A number of excellent measures have already been mooted by media, academics and civil society in recent weeks. Here's a quick list of 10 things that the government should do to immediately improve this situation.

**1. Treat air pollution as a public health crisis.** Simply waiting for the hot season to clear the smog is not responsible public policy. The urgency is for the government and its agencies, along with public and industry cooperation, to act now to implement both short and long term solutions to improve air quality and liveability in our city.

**2. Reduce the number of cars on the road.** Incentivise area-based car-sharing models. Mandate and enforce car-free days and pedestrianise all areas that are easily accessible via the BTS and MRT, to demonstrate that life is possible without driving. Start with Sundays, as Paris has done. In the medium to long term, redesign roads to make room for larger pavements and cycle lanes, so that cycling becomes a key form of urban transport along with other public transport like buses and trains. Devise a policy on electric vehicles (cars, motorbikes, bicycles, scooters and tuk-tuks) and start promoting them as viable transport alternatives.



**3. Incentivise the use of public transport.** This also means increasing the capacity of existing mass transit including adding more train carriages and putting in more ticket barriers to reduce congestion in stations. Bangkok will see a number of new train lines come into operation in the coming years, so changing habits now will mean that more people will use mass transit for daily life rather than their cars. Introducing the long-delayed one-ticketing system or providing tokens for people who park their cars can be further incentives. Integrate Park'n'Ride infrastructure at terminal stations of train lines and offer free parking for commuters. Renew the public bus fleet towards modern efficiency standards replacing old diesel engines.

**4. Improve fuel supplies.** Require motorists to use more fuel-efficient cars with better fuel quality or alternative fuels to diesel. Improved petrol and diesel standards can help facilitate the adoption of better, cleaner emissions control technology, and reduce pollution and vehicle emissions. For example, European emission standards that define mandatory limits for exhaust emissions from new vehicles sold in the EU and member states. Electric cars could be one solution, albeit a limited one as they end up occupying the same road and parking space, and lead to increased electricity consumption.

**5. Ban heavy trucks.** Focus on reducing large vehicle traffic, particularly trucks with diesel engines and inefficient combustion. Enforce regular vehicular checks and make their movement highly regulated so that they are not crisscrossing the city during the weekdays.

**6. Stop burning.** Every December onwards, fields in peri-urban Bangkok start showing large smoke plumes from waste incineration, unintended dump fires and burning of farm residue. Local community cooperation is crucial to prevent these burnings in peri-urban Bangkok. Provide better waste management options so that burning is not the go-to solution.

**7. Enforce laws.** Existing standards for factory pollution and construction sites need stricter enforcement. The PCD is a

small agency – bring in other state agencies and police teams to assist the PCD to inspect and shut down construction sites that fail pollution standards. The threat of shutdowns could inspire big construction companies, who prefer to pay pollution fines and continue with construction, to clean up.

**8. Mandate schools to restrict outdoor play** and exercise on poor air quality days, as Seoul has done. Remember, there is no safe limit for exposure. Educate teachers, parents and children about the dangers of poor air quality and the potential for lifelong respiratory problems.

**9. Provide masks and healthcare** to the most affected and vulnerable people in Bangkok. The poor and marginalised (especially daily-wage labourers) are burdened with the worst impacts as they work in the streets for their livelihoods. These include construction workers, guards, motorcycle, tuk-tuk and bus drivers, commuters on non-air-conditioned buses, street food vendors, maids and sweepers. Employers should be required to provide their staff with adequate protective equipment.

**10. Stop telling people not to panic.** People feel the effects of the haze from piercing headaches to burning lungs and allergies while the solutions offered are vague at best. Provide clear information, share data, address concerns publicly. In a welcome move, Thailand's PCD has set-up many large LCD screens around Bangkok showing pollution levels with red alerts, but more efforts are possible, and we can learn from other countries. The "Breathe London" initiative by Mayor Sadiq Khan uses data analytics, sensors and maps to provide Londoners with a visual tool explaining their exposure to air pollution. China has fought air pollution with transparency, using publicly available data to create air pollution maps to highlight polluting firms and activities. Real-time disclosure helps both locate pollution spots and provide the public with useful information.

**Judge for yourself what action has been taken by the government since.**







# Community choir in your town

by Rie Atagi

*I joined a community choir this year and this was “a small but significant step forward” in my life. You may laugh at me for making a big deal out of nothing. But when you have zero-confidence in singing, joining a choir requires some courage.*

I love music but singing in public has been a big “No, No” for me. Why should I take the risk of feeling humiliated when nobody is forcing me to do so? Yet it has turned out this is one of the best decisions I’ve made in recent years.

When I was small, every time I sang, my grandma hastily called out, “Missed!” or “Missed again!” at the parts I was out of tune. Mind you, I was not taking a lesson or practicing for a show. I was singing simply because I was happy singing. My grandma was a singer, not a professional or someone famous. She sang merely as a representative of her high school for some occasions, but you could tell she was very proud of it. I remember little me protesting, “Grandma, why do you have to interrupt me when I am just singing?” She smiled awkwardly and stopped it for a while, but before long, she started again, “Missed!”

To make it clear, my grandma was not mean or strict. She was the one who spoiled me with sweets. Actually, her “Missed!” sounded more like “I found you!” as if she was playing the hide-and-seek. But this was really annoying because I was the one always caught. I never finished a song without her triumphant “Missed!”

I don’t know if it was a pity or other reasons, but my mother arranged piano lessons for me. My grandma left me alone with the piano. Maybe she hoped the piano would take care of her granddaughter’s ability to carry a tune. She was half right. I learned how to read music and became able to

play some of Chopin’s and Mozart’s pieces. But that didn’t mean I was able to sing. Some people sing beautifully without reading music, but the other way around is not necessarily true. Now that I developed an ear for music, I could tell when I was off-key. Despite myself, I started criticising my singing, “Missed!”, instead of my grandma.

You can never underestimate how a seemingly innocent childhood experience affects someone’s psychological development. I guess my grandma was trying to improve my singing (or she was simply enjoying a music version of hide-and-seek with her granddaughter, I don’t know) but the repeated “Missed!” call-outs convinced me that I could never sing. I was not necessarily a shy kid, but when it came to singing, an inferior complex took over me and I tried to avoid singing as much as possible.

So how come I joined the choir?

A life decision can be made by a tiny incident. My son’s school offers an adult-education programme for parents and I went to sign up for the Thai language course. (I’ve lived in Thailand for twenty-plus years and I reckoned it’s about time.) When I finished registration and payment, the lady at a desk asked casually, “Anything else you would like to join?”

It was polite protocol for her to ask. But to my surprise, I found myself saying, “Yes, I would like to join the choir.”

If she didn’t ask the question, I would have left happily, having finally signed up for Thai language. It is still a wonder to me why I responded “choir”. I did eye the choir class while browsing the course catalogue, but I instantly dismissed the thought, hearing “Missed!” in the back of my mind. I guess my desire to sing had been waiting for the right cue.

The “Choral Union” is a group of expats and locals who love to sing in Nonthaburi, mostly from the International School of Bangkok (ISB) community. English is the medium of instruction, but we sing songs in various languages and genres. (In fact, this term’s songs were in Latin and Hebrew, which I knew nothing.)

There is no audition to join: Anyone who likes to sing



can join. Accordingly, I was expecting, or rather hoping, to join a group of music lovers who are not necessarily good singers, so I wouldn't feel too intimidated. However, at the first session, as soon as we started singing, I realised this was not a group of untalented music lovers. They were excellent. With the first notes given, each voice group started singing their part. They were not just following the notes, but singing in full voice, creating beautiful harmony. I could tell the lady next to me was professionally trained. Her soprano voice was rich and deep, not like my squeaky voice. She could hold her breath for a long time: I breathed three times for her one breath.

I started feeling uneasy and wondered if I came to the wrong place. But you know what? The power of music overtook me. Despite my trepidation, singing in the music hall and being a part of the choir's harmony was blissful. It was a sheer joy. I simply enjoyed myself, out of tune or not. Then our choir director, Andy, said, "People say, oh, no, I cannot sing, but I believe there's no one who cannot sing."

Did you hear that, grandma? I smiled at her in my mind.

The 90 minute practice went so fast and I found myself still humming on the way home.

A small step out of my comfort zone opened a door to a new world.

I've learned a choir like "Choral Union" is called as "community choir" which is characterised by open admission and a community-based activity. Andy has mentioned the importance of community choir, but I didn't think much at that time: Do we need a choir in our community? Are we contributing to our community or the world? It is not like we are advocating human rights or environmental protection with tangible outcomes, but we are simply enjoying singing together...

Yet, after joining for a few months, I am now a strong believer in community choirs.

I've always loved music, but I didn't realise how powerful singing could be. It was a surprising discovery that there is a huge difference between



listening to music and singing yourself. Singing aloud uplifts your spirit and makes you happy. It works instantly almost like a magic.

Community choir gives you an opportunity to sing. Singing is a very primitive form of music. Not using any instrument or equipment, anyone can sing, anywhere, anytime. Singing has been a part of human life for centuries as we express our joy, cheer up, and console our souls. Yet, this simple need and desire to sing has been rather forgotten these days and singing has become a commercialised performing art for a few talented people. We enjoy listening to those few, but when is the last time you sang yourself? Singing is for everyone, but many of us are neglecting to enjoy the opportunity to sing.

We meet once a week to practice. It is a small segment of your time, but it is like a pocket of time you fall into, away from your daily life. When small, I sang because I was happy. But as you grow, you learn life can be quite complicated. Sometimes you feel distressed, yet don't know where to take your frustrations or sadness. Instead of screaming or crying, you can let it out by singing. You breathe in deeply, and let it go with a melody. Singing can be a great remedy. You sing not necessarily because you are happy, but you become happy because you sing.

It is nice to share a joy of singing with others as well. It is more fun than singing alone. Choir is an ensemble: First you practice your own part, which

is challenging enough for me, but that's not the end of it. You try to listen to the other parts to blend your voice into a beautiful harmony. I cannot always hear the other parts, but when I do, I am a part of the music and we are creating one piece of art together. I don't know the details of our members, what they do, where they are from, what their backgrounds are, but I feel a sense of unity with them. We are one when singing together.

Imagine more people in your community becoming happy, sharing the joy of singing and connecting with each other. I do believe community choirs contribute to society by healing and uplifting members. I don't know how many community choirs exist in Thailand, but there are several that expats as well as the locals can join. "Choral Union" joined a performance with "Bangkok Music Society", another community choir. Music is a universal language and we can be united beyond culture. It's a small but very fun way to belong to our host community.

Following are contacts for these community choirs. If you have any passion for singing, please do join.

**Choral Union:**

**Mr. Andy Marshall**  
(Choir director at ISB)  
[Andym@isb.ac.th](mailto:Andym@isb.ac.th)

**and Mr. Matt Enders (ES Music at ISB)**  
[Matte@isb.ac.th](mailto:Matte@isb.ac.th)

**Bangkok Music Society:**  
[www.bangkokmusicsociety.com](http://www.bangkokmusicsociety.com)



# BANGKOK MADAM: (CHAPTER 6)

## *Grey sky in August – Yurie*

*by Minami*

Looking at the grey sky through the backseat window, Yurie felt her heart sinking.

Was the Bangkok sky always so grey in August? She was not sure if the grey was due to pollution or the weather. Whatever it was, smokey clouds spread over the whole sky and weighed heavily on her mind. She had just come back from Japan, where she had spent six weeks with her mother.

After going through customs, collecting all the heavy baggage (full of Japanese foods, Japanese books, and Japanese knickknacks), and settling into the backseat of her car, she felt the unwelcoming grey sky reflect her sinking heart.

“We’ll see Daddy soon!” Nine year old May squeezed her mother’s arm, and Yurie looked at her. Seeing May’s shining smile and sparkling eyes, Yurie felt her heart rise a little.

Children are bliss. Collecting herself with some effort, Yurie smiled and squeezed May’s soft, little arm.

“Yes, we will see Daddy very soon, and we have a lot to tell him.”

The trip to Japan was a routine of their annual schedule. Every summer, she took her two children - May and seven year old Ken - to Japan for a long holiday. Sometimes they also went to celebrate the New Year as well, which was the biggest holiday in Japan. Occasionally they had gone back to see Sakura (the cherry blossoms) in Spring or to enjoy the harvest of Autumn. Yurie didn’t know how many times she had made the trip to Japan with her children, but since they had been born in Thailand, she wanted them to experience what it was like to live in Japan, to spend time with their grandparents (although now it was just their grandmother), to learn the roots of their Japanese identity. She wanted them to have a sense of “home” attached to Japan.

But if she was honest with herself, Yurie knew it was she who needed most to breathe in the air of home.

If she didn’t go back for more than a year, she felt she was losing a part of herself. She felt something wrong with her, as if her mind and body were not in accord.

Whenever Yurie went home, she quickly came to feel that she had been living there all along, as if she had never left Japan. Riding the Narita Express from the airport into Tokyo and then taking a train home was like going back in time. As she walked into her childhood house, she smelled all the familiar smells, knew the routines, and just fell back into







her old life. Her life in Bangkok felt like a dream she'd had last night.

As she walked around her neighbourhood, someone would call her "Yu-chan," her nickname since she was a little girl.

"Yu-chan. You are back! How's Bangkok?"

"Yu-chan. How are you? Is Bangkok still hot?"

Old ladies would greet her, saying the same things over and over every time she went home, spreading those same big, friendly smiles she had been brought up with. Yurie became their little "Yu-chan" all at once, as if nothing had changed.

Yurie had enjoyed a happy childhood, growing up in comfort as the youngest of three sisters. She was "the baby" of her family, and her father had adored her, calling her "my little princess." After graduating from a conservative women's college whose school motto – believe it or not – was "good wife and wise mother," Yurie didn't look for a job like most of her classmates did. Her father preferred her to stay home, and she simply followed his wish. She learned the tea ceremony and flower arrangement and helped her mother on domestic work, all as her father had wished. She didn't question this. She was happy and content under her father's wing. Then Kozo appeared in her life, and she moved to Bangkok with him.

"So the baton was relayed from your dad to your husband, Princess Yurie," Asako once said. At first, Yurie thought Asako was impressed, but then she rolled her eyes. "I thought those species were dead in Japan."

Yurie didn't quite like her comment, but she couldn't really deny it, either.

Now that her father was gone, her visits to Japan were not as complete, but it still felt like home.

And every time she came back to Bangkok, which had been her home now for twelve years, it took time and effort to get used to it again. She had to force herself to "adjust." Worse, this adjusting period was getting longer and longer with each passing year. First, it was just a matter of a few hours, then days, and now weeks.

It was not because she hated Bangkok. She didn't. She liked it here. Bangkok was the place she had blossomed as a woman, as a wife, as a mother.

Twelve years. Yurie was astonished

that she had been in Bangkok that long. She had met Kozo in Japan on a business trip, and within three months, they were married. He had his own business which required travelling to Japan often, but his base was in Bangkok. Yurie moved to Bangkok soon after their wedding, and all that had happened since – finding a home, learning Thai to survive, getting pregnant with May and Ken and bringing them up – made the time breeze by.

She'd never worked a job, but running a household was endless work – taking May and Ken to school every day and to the swimming club and piano lessons every week, plus arranging playdates and birthday parties, health checkups and vaccines, dinner parties for her husband's guests, and all the tasks required to make a nice home.

She wondered how her friends in Japan, some of whom also worked full-time, could manage all this without help. Yurie had a maid and a driver, and still she felt she always had more than plenty to do.

Not that she felt weary – well, sometimes she did – but she was devoted to being a good wife and mother. And she did enjoy it. Caring for others was, unexpectedly, fulfilling. She felt needed.

It helped that she had a happy marriage. Yurie knew she was a lucky woman. Kozo was very protective, and he was able to afford protection for his young wife. His business seemed to be doing fine, at least as far as Yurie could tell. In truth, she had no idea how his business was doing. He never mentioned anything about money issues, and she didn't know his income. She didn't even know the details of his business. But her family always had everything they needed and wanted.

Some might even call Yurie "spoiled." When she first came to Bangkok, Kozo hired her a driver. She didn't ask for it. He just arranged it. He'd always had a part-time maid who cleaned and ironed during his bachelor days in Bangkok. The maid stayed on to help Yurie, and when

May and Ken came along, Kozo





period after every return to Bangkok was getting longer and longer. Kimie tilted her head enquiringly. "Are you getting along with Kozo?"

"Oh, that's not a problem. That has nothing to do with this. Actually, I feel worse for feeling low because I am happy here. I can never tell Kozo-san about this."

Kimie started laughing. "Oh dear. You are happy but you feel depressed. What are we going to do with you?"

Yurie cradled a cup of green tea in both hands. "Please don't laugh. And I am not depressed. I am feeling... just a bit down. Anyway, I know it sounds ridiculous.

hired more help.

She didn't ask for it. Sometimes a ticket to Japan was on the kitchen table when Yurie walked into their house. Kozo would say something like, "Oh, a travel agency stopped by our office today. It was really a good deal." Then she realised she had been longing for a trip home. It was always like that. Before she could even think what she might want, it was given.

"Sugar daddy husband," Mika had once called Kozo. "When your wife is fifteen years younger, she appears to be a frail petal you've got to protect, I suppose." Yurie couldn't tell if Mika's tone was admiration or jealousy. And Yurie was not sure Mika's assumption was right. Maybe Kozo had thought that when she'd married him in her late twenties. But now she was forty years old. She had nieces and nephews who called her "Auntie" without hesitation. She would blush herself if someone called her a petal today. Yet she would not argue that being loved, protected, and provided for gave her a life of happiness as a woman in Bangkok.

Two days after returning from Japan, Yurie brought some flavours of home to her oldest friend in Bangkok, Kimie. Kimie grew up in Tokyo but married a Thai who was an old friend of Kozo's.

They had lived in Bangkok for nearly thirty years, so Kimie was always delighted to receive seasonal Japanese foods or the latest Japanese best-seller. Kimie was in her late fifties with no children, but despite these differences, Yurie could confide things to Kimie that she wouldn't share with friends her own age.

"So what is your problem?" Kimie asked gently, when Yurie was not in her usual cheerful mood.

Yurie sighed. "Is the Bangkok sky always so grey in August?"

"What?"

"I don't remember it so grey."

"Yu-chan, Bangkok sky is always grey. Except after a squall when the pollution is washed away. What is your problem?"

Yurie told Kimie about her sense that the adjustment

I don't know what's wrong with me."

Kimie shook her head and looked at Yurie for a long time before she spoke. "Yu-chan, how old are you?"

Yurie was taken aback by this abrupt question, but answered it obediently. "I'm forty. In a couple of months, I will be forty one."

"Hmm. Maybe you are going through a midlife crisis."

"Midlife crisis!? I'm having a crisis? You are joking, aren't you?"

"I'm not. A bit early, but just about time. Mind you, yours is very minor. Some people become totally miserable and depressed."

"Oh..." Yurie didn't know what to say.

"Don't look so confused. It is very natural to feel scared as your life is passing a peak. Nothing to be embarrassed about. Everyone goes through it, more or less, I suppose."

"Everyone? Am I scared? You had it, too?"

"One question at a time, please."

Yurie laughed at Kimie's business-like response.

"So I'm passing the peak of my life and I'm scared of ageing?"

"Aren't you?"

Maybe that is my problem, Yurie thought. Passing the peak. A wilting petal. I'm scared of getting old. But –

"But what does that have to do with Bangkok? These feelings only happen here. Does it happen to you, too?"

Yurie looked at her elderly friend. Kimie was cool and calm as usual, but Yurie did not know the depth of her loneliness. Perhaps Kimie would never let on if she was scared. "Kimie-san..."

Yurie was hesitant to continue.

"What?"

"Ummm... are you happy?"

"I am happy as I can be." Kimie smiled calmly, but the very calmness silenced Yurie.

This was a place that Yurie shouldn't go, despite their friendship. Kimie turned the conversation back around.

"Yu-chan, people are funny. You know you are happy.



But when you are so happy, you start being scared of losing it."

Perhaps, she is right. I am living a happy life like the princess in a fairy tale. But could the princess live happily ever after in reality?

"I remember you were very fond of your father," Kimie continued. "It's been, what, two years since he died? Maybe without your father, you feel you have lost your home in your heart. Maybe that is why you feel so low coming back to Thailand. This is your home now, and luckily it is a happy one, but it is your only real home now. Are you afraid of losing it someday?"

Even after two years, the mention of her father's death caused tears to well up in Yurie's eyes. She knew, unconsciously, that the loss of her father had changed how she felt about Japan and about Bangkok, but she had ignored it forcefully until she had almost hidden it from herself.

But when Kimie unveiled it, the pain and realisation flowed out like blood from a wound.

All her life, Yurie had been protected by her father and then by her husband. She had always been loved by a man she loved. But now that her father was gone, maybe she was fearing what would happen when Kozo is gone too. If a midlife crisis is a fear of ageing, as Kimie was saying, maybe she was going through a midlife crisis.

And it won't be too many years before May and Ken leave our nest. What will happen to me then? All I know of life is being a mother and wife. What will happen to my life without my children and my husband? Will I be living in Bangkok or will I go back to Japan? By that time, my mother will be gone as well. What will there be to go back to in Japan? But what would I do in Bangkok? Bangkok is not my home. I will be an outsider here forever. When the happily ever after ends, who will write the princess a new chapter? Will I be able to write another happy story for myself in this foreign land?

Kimie was patiently waiting as all these thoughts passed through Yurie's mind. Finally, Kimie spoke again. "You know, people say 'forewarned is forearmed,' but forewarned doesn't mean you worry about it. When you go through misery and hardship, the happy memories will support you."

Yurie realised she had no idea what Kimie had gone through in her life. Although Yurie always confided in Kimie, she suddenly understood that Kimie had never burdened Yurie with her own worries.

Kimie waved a hand through the air like she could clear away the grey with just her will.

"It's silly, isn't it? Worrying about

something not happening yet?" Yurie was not sure if she was talking to Yurie or herself. "If you are happy now, just enjoy it." She smiled like bougainvillea in sunshine.

Seeing Kimie's smile reminded Yurie that here was another precious person she was scared to lose. The thought prevented Yurie from smiling back.

"Yu-chan. Don't worry. We all love you. You accept love naturally, and love attracts you. Watching you happy makes me and everyone else happy. So it is your duty to be happy, you know that?"

Being happy is my duty? The thought replayed over and over in her mind, while saying goodbye to her old friend.

If all her precious people wanted her to be a princess living happily ever after, maybe it was her duty to stay as such.

On the way home, she stared out the car window at the gloomy sky and resolved to try her hardest to be happy. She closed her eyes, trying to imagine blue sky peeking through the clouds, and then, slowly, she made herself smile.

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To contact the author and find out more about Bangkok Madam please write to: [minamilove00@gmail.com](mailto:minamilove00@gmail.com)







at everyone, by day. It's a unique feature of Bangkok and continues to throw me. The aromas overwhelm and it's quite delightful once you get used to it. I've partaken of street food and its delicious fare, freshly sautéed on a wok right in front of you, is definitely worth every penny. It's awfully cheap as well.

Bangkok, the city throbs and moves incessantly, and can be very daunting, even if you're an Indian from India. Yes, there is chaos and noise and pollution in Delhi – all that's true, I can't deny it. Yet, the noises and the smells and the semi-chaos in Bangkok appear and disappear depending on your openness and your willingness to observe, to own and to flow. It grows on you, this city and its people, if you will permit it too. The

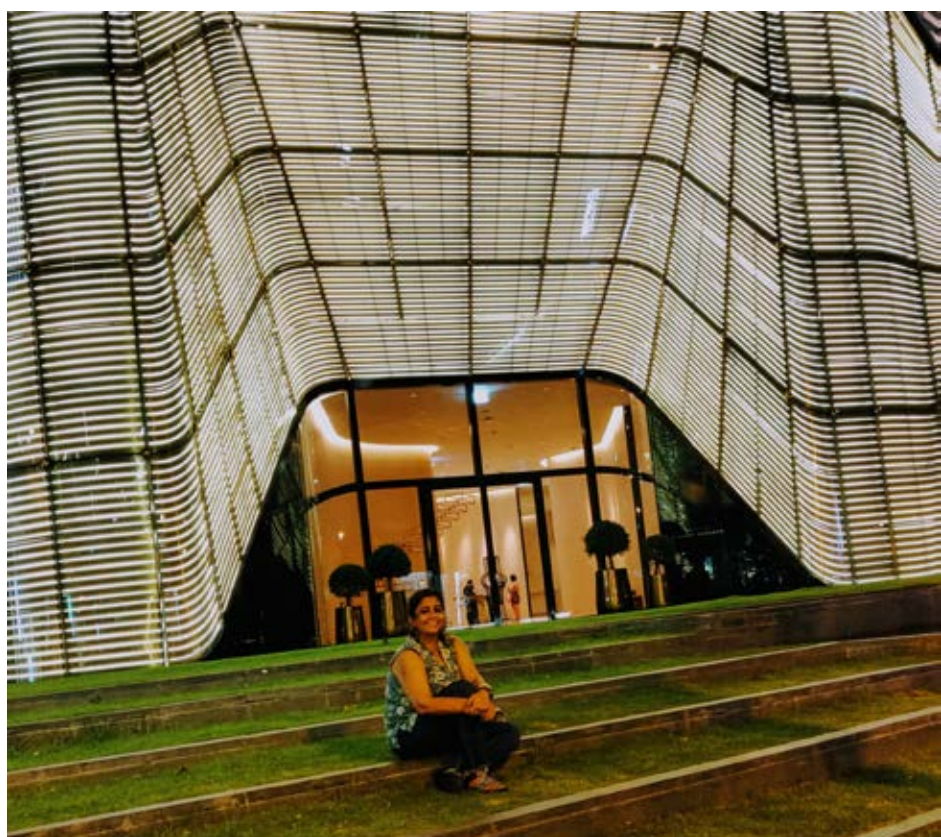
gentle Sawadee Ka, and the '7/11s that thrive along with their half-sister 'Family Mart', make it that much easier to find what you need, at least for the body. That said, the longer you stay, the more comfort you find in the little things that make life

## *A couple moves to Bangkok*

*by Kay Natesan*

**W**e are moving into a service apartment for the first month, so you have nothing to worry about dearest, my husband of many years announced with aplomb. Ah, that's cool, I thought. All we need - a comfortable dwelling whilst we roam a tourist's dream delight: City of Angels – Bangkok; Thailand here we come!

Well, it wasn't quite as simple as that, and I was naïve to imagine this move to be a sail into unknown and calm waters. Establishing a new nest in an unfamiliar city, even as one struggles with leaving friends and family behind, was, as I discovered, an emotional rollercoaster. Yet Bangkok left no stone unturned to embrace us. It turned on its charm full throttle and I succumbed, slowly and surely. Landing a massive apartment on Soi 20, played a pivotal role. It had taken us all of two weeks, and every apartment I saw, brought me closer to my vision of home in this new city that lights up at night; whose streets conjure up rows of tables and chairs casting its net of aromatic fare







liveable and less of a task.

As a wife, who is not granted a work permit or visa , I needed to find my niche. While my husband went off to work on Wireless Road, a wide and tree-lined avenue, with Embassies and what not, I made myself a list that would aid the process of 'naturalisation'. Language is the key and I am a language person – so I enrolled in a school and quickly made friends from all over the globe even as I struggled to make sense of Thai. It's not like any European language – it's both easier and more challenging. Go figure!

In the meantime, our apartment gradually began to feel like home, as I decorated it and fixed homely meals. I surmised that getting around on a bike was a lot easier, than trying to grab a taxi. The BTS served the purpose of gliding over Sukhumvit, the lifeline of central Bangkok, and carting you around without much ado. So I roamed the city, footloose – and it hit all the right notes. I was taken.

#### What I've come to love about Bangkok:

- Ease of communication: a smile, a nod, a few words of Thai and you have won the locals over;
- Innumerable food outlets – cafes, pubs, restaurants, bakeries, tiny libraries with food on the go – at affordable prices;
- The availability of transport – bikes, taxis, skytrain – everywhere or almost everywhere;





- The colourful mix of folk that thrive;
- A humungous number of malls you can duck into when the heat gets to much for you;
- The proximity to other countries that immediately become accessible when you live here;
- Massage parlours that abound on every soi, and the heavenly treatment you receive at any given time of day or night;
- Food, food and more food: I've never eaten a substandard meal in Bangkok, and any cuisine I wish to savour;
- You can be anyone you want.
- Every Soi off Sukhumvit has unique and distinct characteristics I find fascinating;
- If it exists, you'll find it here in this city.

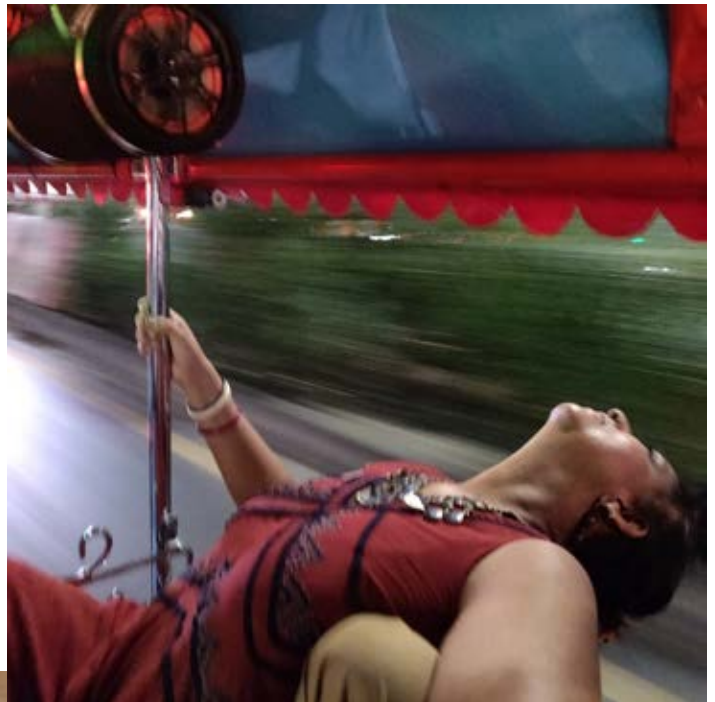
#### What I find unsavoury:

The frequency with which one needs to visit the immigration department.

*Life here is what you make of it. There's peace and quiet if that's what you wish for; there's noise and music and bars, if that's the life you seek; there's art, there's a river and there are people. Life in Bangkok is turning out to be a pleasant experience for us, and I wake up very morning with gratitude, thanking the universe for having gifted me this unique experience.*

This part of the world has been relatively removed for us – we chose Europe and USA over SE Asia, because the weather was inviting, our kid was studying there, and we have more friends in the West.

Living in the warmth of Thailand, I am learning and I am growing and I have access to more of myself than I ever did back in India. It has offered me the best that life has to offer: time, a kind and skilled Burmese house-help, access to Indian groceries and a gateway to some of the most beautiful and natural habitats in the world. If I wish for any more, I'd truly be upsetting my karmic balance.







CLB – Cosmopolitan Ladies of Bangkok, 1st luncheon gathering in January 2020 at Crostini Italian Cafe' & Restaurant. CLB ladies in the pictures: Shakuntla Gurbani, Arlene Rafiq, Hope Esperenca Philunthanakul, Nancy Bathan Lewis, Stephanie Lim, Maria Schlueter, Jindarat Jumsai Na Ayudhaya, Margare Van Meel, Josephine Js Lee, Ronelle Stoessel, Nikki Khorana, Tetsuko Wilberg, Winda Braun and Siti Survo.





# TOP 10 SHOPPING LOCATIONS IN PATTAYA

by Jess Thakkar

Here is my “top ten” with a short explanation where appropriate. I’ve lived in Pattaya for ten years this year... and I’ve done my fair share of shopping believe me! It hasn’t always been a good shopping experience but it certainly has got better in the last few years. With the new wave of destination malls, the whole experience is a more glitzy one where going shopping could last the whole day.

## 1. Central Beach Festival



It’s not the newest but it is the best in my opinion. It has high end stores, such as Armani Exchange and Furla as well as international high street stores such as Zara and Mango.

With the added draw of a the Central Department Store that sells everything from lightbulbs, designers watches and diamonds to a leg of lamb in its supermarket.

## 2. Terminal 21



Pattaya’s newest shopping mall. It has all the usual shops that are in all Thai shopping malls, with some super restaurants and a fabulous cinema. It also has a floor dedicated to boutique type shops, the likes of which Thailand does so well. Some gorgeous shopping finds are to be had, from shoes to handbags and jewellery. All the things a tourist would want!

But lacks a department store... a mistake in my opinion. But it does have a supermarket.

## 3. Royal Garden Plaza





One of the older ones. It has been through many changes over the years. With the better quality of shops sadly no longer within it. But it still has appeal as it has the usual Thai brands, and some international brands, Aldo shoes for example. Some good independent stores and stalls and those special Japanese stores. It also has a very good array of restaurants attached to it, Including the wonderful Coffee Club.

#### 4. Mike's Shopping Mall



This mall has been around for years. Its recently had a facelift, a very nice one. With a gym added to it and a hotel is being built alongside it. The malls front half is full of independent stalls selling the type of goods Thailand is renowned for... copy handbags and clothing tourists love.

The back end of the ground floor has a more department store feel to it, it's basic but good for certain things such as luggage and shoes/active wear.

#### 5. Outlet Mall



This is exactly that. The mall is full of Thai and international stores selling clothing at hugely discounted prices. Think Mango, Converse and Pena House. Some sportswear as well as equipment and children's wear. Ample parking, you could easily spend the whole day here.

#### 6. Central Marina



Another big mall from Central. Some Thai usual stores inside, along with Japanese stores. The big attraction I would say is the discount Nike store and the Big C supermarket. Loads of dining options with an outdoor market/eating area with a super vibe in the evenings. Great for tourists or expats to sit and people watch.

#### 7. Tesco North Pattaya



As you know a shopping mall here in Thailand is never just one store. Tesco is on the upper floor. The ground floor has local independent stores and some Thai brands. Think Bata shoes.

The best thing about this mall is the sports store it has within it, Decathlon, it's changed the lives of so many! And I am not exaggerating... good quality, affordable sportswear and equipment. Everyone has been raving about it!

#### 8. Big C Complex South Pattaya







The quality is the same as you would get in any market here in Thailand, which I think is quite good. You can shop for whatever clothing you may need. It's mainly that, with jewellery and shoes. The food is very good too and it's always busy.

#### 10. Soi Buakhao Market

Held on Tuesday and Fridays. A market for locals but frequented by local expats and tourists in the know. Clothes, shoes,

A huge complex with the supermarket in the middle, with the usual stalls and stores but around it there is a go to place for home improvements. Baan and Beyond opened a couple of years ago. And along with that we have a Swedish kitchen store, Jim Thompson outlet store, an international branded homewares store, and the more upscale supermarket "Tops". A super destination mall to while away hours !

fresh fruit and vegetables. This is in the open air but partially covered. Opposite you will find a concrete structure housing a large number of stalls selling secondhand clothes, shoes and accessories. An amazing place to wander around. If you are into finding a special vintage piece, it's the place for you.

The last two from my ten are outdoor markets.

#### 9. Theprasit Road Weekend Market

The smaller version is open Friday evenings, with the full market functioning on the weekend. They've recently added an "upstairs", accessed by an escalator. Possibly for food. The market is amazing. It sells everything. It's frequented by locals, expats and tourists.

There are of course a few more I could add to the list. Pattaya is actually a shoppers paradise. You can spend thousands of Baht or indeed very little. We have designer brands and small boutique stores. Shopping for expat needs is now so much more easier, you can get whatever you need. From clothing, shoes, accessories, OTOP (One Tambon one product) – local Thai arts and crafts, and a huge array of international foods.

Next time you visit Pattaya bring your own shopping bags and a full wallet.







Opening of Casa De Stella on 8th March, 2020. New concept fusing co-working space, art gallery, bar and multi-functional meeting room at Sukhumvit 53 and Thong Lor Soi 9.







# BE A SAVVY SHOE SELECTOR

by Erik Bohm

**H**ave you ever sat in a restaurant just gazing at the menu because you couldn't make a decision on what to choose? Some menus are so overwhelming that we get analysis paralysis in trying to decide what we should have for dinner. Should I go for the soup as an entree or the shrimp cocktail? Fish or steak for the main? And what about dessert... The more choice you have, the more complicated the decision.

Going into a running store looking for a new pair of shoes can be a bit like gazing at a menu that has a million options on offer. It can be pretty overwhelming if you don't know what you are looking for. And let's be honest, the screaming bright colours of some of the shoe brands don't really help in calming the nerves down. A systematic review of the literature concludes that there is still a lot of uncertainties regarding which type of footwear is best for which type of runner.

There is a vast array of brands and models out there. All different types and with different technology. Each of these shoes are designed and built for a certain type of feet. So how do you know what is right for you? The answer is actually surprisingly simple.

**"The best running shoe for you is the one that feels the most comfortable on your foot and fits your foot the best."**

So how do you choose that perfect shoe? This article provides you with four easy steps to success. Follow these and you are guaranteed to get yourself a lovely new pair of runners!

## Step 1: Arc... Ark... Argh... Arch!

The arch of the foot is an area along the bottom of the foot between the ball and the heel. You can have a high arch, neutral arch or a low arch (flatfoot).

In order to determine your foot type, you take the so-called "wet test". To do this, wet both feet and then stand on tiles or a piece of paper for about 10 seconds. Step off and observe

the imprint your foot made.

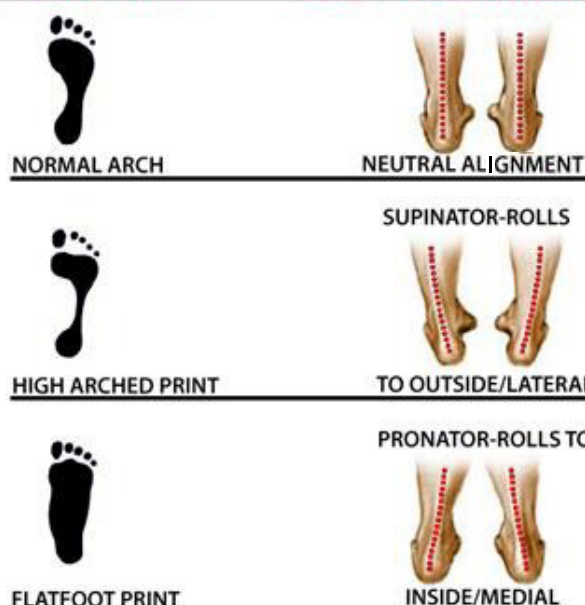
- A normal arch is when you see a distinct curve on the inside of the foot and roughly an inch (3cms) of width on the smallest part of the foot
- A high arch is determined by a very narrow band connecting heel and toe
- A low arch or a flatfoot is when your imprint shows almost the entire width of your foot

## Step 2: Support please!

Now that you know your arch, you can determine how your foot behaves when you make a step or a stride. As shown in the above image, a low arch is often associated with a pronated (turned inwards) foot alignment. So low arch runners need support on the inside of their shoe to help prevent their ankle joint collapsing inwards.

Side note, foot strengthening drills like the tennis ball roll are highly recommended for this group.

## ARCH TYPE — FOOT ALIGNMENT







Simply place a tennis ball between your feet and try and roll it up your lower leg using the bottom of your other foot. For a visual, copy this: <https://youtu.be/yKU37vKSyY>

Contrary to the low arch runners, high arch runners need (some) help to prevent the ankle from rolling outwards too much. High arch runners should opt for a neutral shoe and practice rolling onto the ball of their foot in order to absorb the impact of the ground force. If you tend to roll your ankles often, you may be a high arch runner who needs to develop a better running form.

Neutral arch runners can choose a neutral running shoe, of course. However, as most of the anti-pronation shoes tend to be more expensive, a more expensive shoe may not be the better choice for your foot.

### Step 3: Shape your shoe

In the shop you will find a variety of shoes in all shapes and sizes. The shapes give you a pretty good clue of what kind of shoe you are looking at. If the sole is wide and does not curve much, you are probably looking at a 'motion control shoe', good for low arch runners. Especially if there is a different coloured extra stability part in the middle of the sole. Another telltale sign is a different colour patch that wraps around the heel of the shoe. These are the shoes that low arch runners want to look at.

If you have a normal arch or pronate slightly, you will want to look for a 'stability shoe'. Stability shoes usually lack the different coloured motion control part in the sole. They have one colour sole and have a semi-curved shape to them. Stability shoes offer a good balance of cushioning and support.

Ultimately, if you have a high arch or a neutral arch, neutral cushioning shoes are the ones you will be looking for. These shoes have the most curved shape to them. If you have a high arched foot and run on the outside of your foot, you should choose a neutral cushion shoe.

### Step 4: Show time!

Armed with knowledge about what type of runner you are and what shape, size and colour shoe you are

looking for, go to the local running store. If they won't let you try on the running shoes or will not allow you to run on the treadmill or a few laps outside the store, feel free to smile and immediately turn around to go to another store. You must be able to test the shoe that you are planning to buy. To make sure you help the salesperson to find the perfect shoe for you, bring your old, worn-out pair of shoes so (s)he can have a look at the profile of the sole.

Also let the salesperson know what type of runner you are, what the surface is that you intend to use the shoes on (trail, road, track, ice), what your weekly average running volume is and of course what your arch is.



Try on at least three different pairs of shoes for your foot type. There is no one right way of selecting a shoe but remember the golden rule:

The best running shoe for you is the one that feels the most comfortable on your foot and fits your foot the best.

Every self-respecting running shoe brand has a range of shoes that caters to all three-foot arches. Once you know you are in the correct category of shoes, there should be at minimum a choice of two brands for you. Once you reduced that wall of loud screaming colours to two or three brands with your type of shoe, the choice becomes a whole lot easier.

Happy Shopping!

You can download the free Effortless Running Secrets e-book on [www.effortlessrunning.com](http://www.effortlessrunning.com) and start your running transformation with the 3-week Effortless Running Essentials programme.

Effortless Running workshops are offered at the amazing facilities of the Sports and Wellness Resort of Thanyapura in Phuket. Check the availability of the Effortless Running workshops at [www.thanyapura.com](http://www.thanyapura.com).





# Events

*What's been happening*

International Women's Club stages Chinese New Year luncheon officially welcomes 2020 Club President Mukda Sorensen at Arnoma Grand Bangkok

Members of the International Women's Club of Thailand (IWC), led by the newly elected 2020 Club President Mukda Sorensen (6th from right), staged a special luncheon in celebration of Chinese New Year at Arnoma Grand Bangkok recently. The luncheon was graced by such distinguished guests as Madame Anita Rusdi (7th from left), wife of the Ambassador of Indonesia to Thailand, and Khunying Kingkaew Uathavikul (7th from right) amongst others.

Highlights at the luncheon included the tossing for prosperity of the auspicious "Lo Hei" or "Yu Sheng" dish as well as a lion dance performance to entertain the colourfully dressed members and guests alike.



Pictured from left are: Tharinee Thavijaroen; Rita Indhewat; Pan Bencharit; Carmen de Schuster; Tasnee Sarnvivad; Rani Narula; Madame Anita Rusdi; Narudee Kiengsiri; Khunying Kingkaew Uathavikul; IWC President Mukda Sorensen; Anu Chopra; Chavali Osathanugrah; Emorn Haridoss; Ramiah Thamavithya; and Kathleen Pokrud.







Cuban National Day  
Arnoma Hotel, 28th January







CLB – Cosmopolitan Ladies of Bangkok,  
lunch gathering in February at Pizzazo  
Bistro, Bangkok





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