

EXPAT LIFE

October/November 2020

IN THAILAND

250B

Education . Art & Culture . Music . Travel . Healthcare . Food & Nutrition . Health & Fitness . Ecology

**The President
of SHOM and
her committee
(Spouses of
Heads of Mission
– the foreign
Ambassadors
partners)**

**The Singaporean
and Mexican
Ambassadors
interviewed**

**October is
Breast Cancer
Awareness
Month**

*Kindness is the
language which the
deaf can hear and
the blind can see.*

**WOMEN'S
HEALTH
ISSUE**

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pass on to other readers to share!



NANTAWAN: A NEW EPITOME FOR THE FINEST IN LIVING

At Nantawan, the A level series of luxury residence created by v PCL, is the new architecture of living in a contemporary expression of modern minimalism.

At Nantawan, the A level series of luxury residence created by Land and Houses PCL, is the new architecture of living in a contemporary expression of modern minimalism. The preferred style that is perfection in design language when every component and detail is condensed to the essentials.

Nantawan Rama 9 – Srinakarin located conveniently to the Krungthep-Kreetha Road and the nearby Bangkok-Chonburi expressway that connects to all destinations. It is in good proximity with a range of quality schools, healthcare facilities and shopping centres. The residences offer an intimate understanding of living to the finest with their approach to this new style, new space for life and house design. Under the triple assurances of the 24 hour full security surveillance, the residences masterplan offers convenient access from every house to the shared facilities area.

The elegant clubhouse comes with a fitness centre and private studios for personal sessions of Pilates and or



yoga. The facility also incorporates nature into the workout routine with its 180 degrees natural landscape to enhance both physical and mental health wellbeing. The unobstructed union of the landscape and the horizon is achievable through the placement of the powerlines into the groundwork.

The strength of a person in relation to that of the family, has beneficial effects for family bonding. Space and time that can be designated for the family to spend time together meaningfully comes in the facility of the Challenger Room, a place for games and bonding activities. A place where family members can actively learn how to listen and work together to strengthen the bonds and reinforce mutual respect.

Beyond fun and games, Nantawan also has a deep understanding that food is a universal bridge that brings people together on common ground to establish respect. This value is implemented into the Bistro area, a full facility cooking space for special cuisine that delivers joy and laughter to the table.



In the private place of the home, each house is a harmonic result between spacious and luxury utilisation of the affluent design language. The Life space zoning is a functional arrangement of interior space to coexist with nature in the form of a private and secret garden. It articulates the living and dining areas to be embraced by the garden with unobstructed views, along with convenient access to the two master bedrooms, both with en suite bathrooms. The Penthouse living area on the top floor is furnished with a large walk in closet and a private garden. The safety and privacy of the home is assured by the installation of motion, magnetic sensors and a heat detector.

The overall architectural dialogue of Nantawan seeks the pursuit of the essence of life, when the simplicity of minimalism is the ultimate sophistication to express the luxury within. An estate that is a reflection of status with the charm of nonchalant elegance. The picturesque reflection of finest in living.

Nantawan Rama 9
 – Srinakarin Price start from
 40 and are up to 60MB.



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'The Bistro' at Clubhouse

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Magnificent jewel of the North: Chiang Mai

by Leonard Henry Le Blanc III

Chiang Mai (sometimes spelled Chiengmei or Chiangmai) has more than enough charm to spare for all - for residents and visitors alike. It is well known for its cool winter climate, lush foliage, roses and other colourful flora, native handicrafts, and fascinating scenery. It has earned its reputation as one of Thailand's most favourite tourist attractions.

The capital of Chiang Mai province, the city is about 685km (or 425 mi) north of Bangkok. Situated close to the country's highest mountains, it boasts spectacular panoramic backdrops. These impressive peaks include Doi Suthep and Doi Inthanon, the tallest mountain in Thailand. Chiang Mai occupies a strategic position along the Ping River, a major tributary of the Chao Phaya. The city has long been a regional trade crossroads for centuries. Its key location has contributed to the city's historic importance. The whole metropolitan area counts about one million people, Thailand's second largest city. The name Chiang Mai means 'New City' in Thai.

The city was founded in either 1294 or 1296 by King Mangrai as the new capital of the Lanna Kingdom. According to local historic lore, the city was built on the site of an older site that was populated by the Lawa ethnic group. Thai historians now accept that Chiang Mai was built as a Northern fort city to potentially stop the Southern invasion from the Mongols in the 13th century. Old period Chinese garrison towns inspired the city's square moat design. The outlying sophisticated irrigation system has many of the hallmarks of old Khmer Empire irrigation construction techniques. On its foundation, Chiang Mai succeeded Chiang Rai, the old Lanna Kingdom capital.

Like much of early Thailand history, Chiang Mai's story is shrouded in legend due to the lack of surviving written records. Since all buildings were constructed of wood, little remains of old structures in a tropical climate. So archaeologists have had to rely on coins, pot shards, and datable ceramics plus the annals of the surrounding civilisations in Burma, China, Laos and Cambodia for information or clues.

King Pha Yu (reigned 1337-1355) enlarged and fortified the city. There was a defensive moat and brick wall built to surround the city against their closest enemies, the Taungoo Kingdom, a large Burmese based empire. Some of these defensive structures are still in existence.



As the Lanna Kingdom declined in importance, the Taungoo troops occupied the city in 1556. In 1599, the Lanna Kingdom lost its independence and became part of the Ayutthaya Kingdom until it was overthrown in 1767 by Burmese invaders. Later the Lanna Kingdom became part of the Thonburi Kingdom under King Taksin when the Burmese were finally expelled from the Northern part of Thailand. But even under the succeeding Chakri Dynasty the Siamese government only held nominal control of the Northern part of the country, at best, due to the distance involved, lack of effective communications and many other problems the government had to attend to in Bangkok.

Chiang Mai remained a modest, if serene, outpost until late in the 19th century until the city's fortunes underwent a sudden spectacular economic expansion. Untold wealth started to pour into the city's coffers from the British government who wanted teak to form ship masts. Two British companies, the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation and the Borneo Company Limited, received concessions from the Thai government to harvest teak starting in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Soon huge teak logs were being floated down the Chao Phraya River to various lumber yards and mills in Bangkok to be processed for export. In short order, other Thai and Chinese firms quickly entered the business and the country's Northern forests started to be rapidly decimated.

Eventually the Lanna Kingdom was formally merged into the Siamese Kingdom in 1893. For centuries it took about three weeks to reach Chiang Mai from Bangkok. That situation completely changed when a railroad line was built in 1912 between the two cities. By 1922 the first roads were constructed, and the city started to see growth and increased prosperity. With the rise in international tourism, Chiang Mai's many attributes and attractions have acted as a magnet for ever growing groups of tourists who want to experience the city's many benefits. Chiang Mai remains, literally, an important crown jewel of Thailand's wealth.

THE SINGAPOREAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND

Ambassador Kevin Cheok arrived in Thailand 15 months ago and Expat Life caught up with him recently.

How long have you been the Ambassador to Thailand? Did you arrive directly from home or were you posted somewhere else before?

I took up post in Thailand in May 2019. Before this, I handled the Infrastructure portfolio at the Ministry of National Development in Singapore. It was a secondment from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to that, I was Singapore's Ambassador to Cambodia. I have also served as Deputy High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, Deputy Permanent Representative in New York, and First Secretary in Berlin.

Where were you born and brought up? Do you have other diplomats in your family?

My father was a diplomat for over three decades, including stints as Singapore's Ambassador to Germany and High Commissioner to India. I was born in Singapore, but given the realities of diplomatic life, I spent a fair

amount of my childhood abroad. My initial schooling was in New York, followed by primary school in Singapore, and junior high school in Penang. I got my High School diploma from the Dalton School in New York, my Bachelor's degree from Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, and my Masters' degree from Columbia University in New York.

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

I see Thailand as a vibrant and dynamic country blessed with abundant natural resources and an enterprising and creative people. Thailand is also an economic force as the second largest economy in ASEAN.

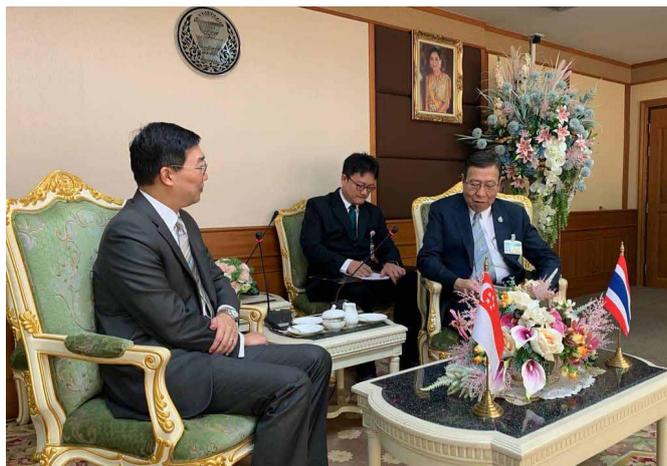
It has been hectic since I got here in May 2019. I arrived in the middle of Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship. This was a busy period with many meetings, Summits, and visits by Singapore political leaders. I did not have the usual "run-in" period to familiarise myself with places, people, and issues. But



it worked out fine due to the support and cooperation I received from Thai leaders and officials, as well as from my colleagues at the Embassy. I remain very grateful for that.

Shortly after the Chairmanship, everyone had to shift gears to deal with Covid-19. This extraordinary situation has challenged all of us to adapt and change the way we do things. It was

stressful. But it has also been an honour to be able to help Singaporeans in Thailand navigate through the uncertainty. One thing that also impressed me is the strength and resilience of the





Thai people. This was underlined by the way Thais banded together to manage the Covid-19 pandemic.

Do you see similarities between your country and Thailand?

The short answer is “yes”. Thailand and Singapore are old friends and close partners. Thailand was the 6th country to recognise Singapore’s independence in 1965. It is a fellow founder member of ASEAN. We are both trading nations. So we share similar views about the importance of free trade, a rules based multilateral order, and ASEAN centrality.

On an individual level, Thais and Singaporeans are both obsessed with food! We love good food. We love finding places to eat. We love sharing food with friends and family, and we love talking about food, usually whilst eating another meal! Thais are some of the most hospitable people I know. When I eat with Thai friends, it feels just like being at home.

Do you have children?

No. We have two spoiled senior cats who have travelled to four postings with us.

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

The nice thing about being a diplomat is how varied the work is. It is always new countries, new cultures, new circumstances.



You are an advocate, a negotiator, an analyst, an administrator, a representative of your country. You cover politics, economics, culture, protocol, consular, and meet so many different people. So it is hard to have an “average” day. But suffice it to say, I spend a fair amount of time interacting with political leaders, officials, the business community, academics, Singaporeans, etc. I also need to keep abreast of political and economic developments in Thailand and in Singapore. And there are many representational duties.

I assume you have some goals you would like to reach before you leave. What are they?

Thailand and Singapore have been friends and close partners for 55 years so the relationship has deep foundations. Political ties are excellent, economic links are robust, defence links are strong, and people to people links are warm. But having said that, it is always the intention of Ambassadors to further deepen bilateral ties.

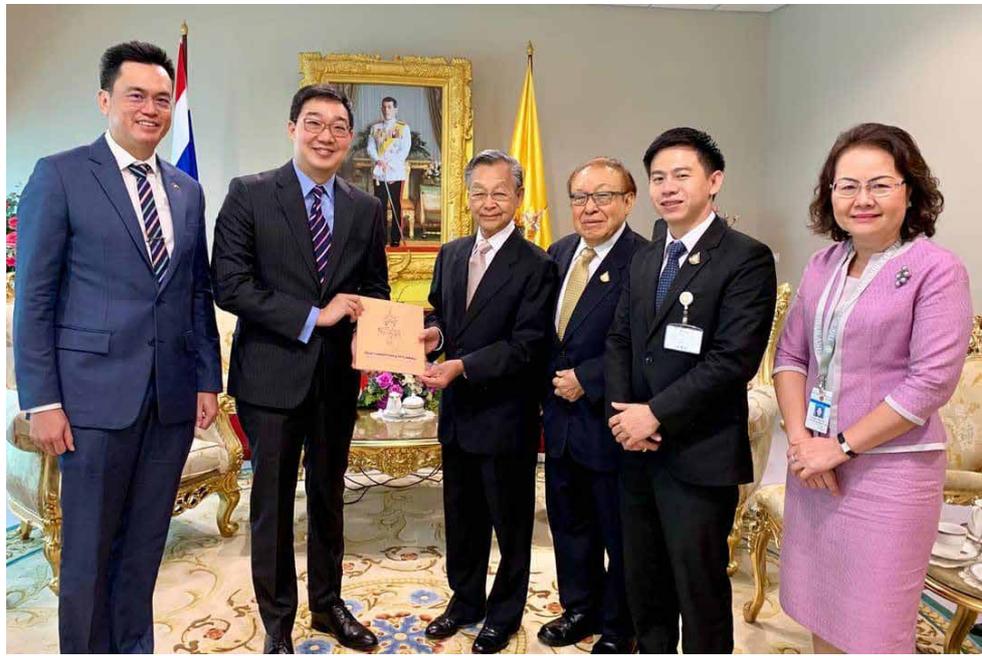
On the political level, I want to foster



more personal meetings. Relations at the leadership level are excellent, but Singapore has started a leadership transition to what we call our “4th Generation”. So I want to facilitate more contacts between newer Singapore leaders and their Thai counterparts. This will help increase the level of familiarity.

I also want to focus on the economic relationship. Thailand and Singapore are already amongst each other’s top trading partners. Singapore is a significant investor in to Thailand. But there is always room to deepen these mutually beneficial ties.





One possible area is agricultural trade. Singapore imports the vast majority of its food so there are opportunities for more food imports from Thailand. Another area is in Fintech and the digital economy. These areas represent economic drivers of the future for both nations. And the trends in this direction have been greatly accelerated by Covid-19. Thailand and Singapore can cooperate to reap the benefits of this transformation. One example is a pilot project between the two central banks to link up Thai and Singapore e-payment systems.

I also want to draw more attention to Singapore's cultural scene.

This part of Singapore is often less well known amongst our foreign friends. But it has grown in vibrance, variety, and sophistication over the years so it would be great to be able to showcase this to our Thai and international friends. Last year, we helped sponsor a performance by Singapore maestro Wong Kah Chun who guest conducted the Thai Philharmonic Orchestra. Earlier this year, we held a concert by Singapore jazz legend Jeremy Monteiro, the JASSO Big Band, and several stalwarts of the Singapore jazz scene. Even Thailand's Koh Mr. Saxman jammed with the band and it was amazing! Hopefully, this will give Thais another reason to come visit Singapore.

With the Covid situation hopefully normalising soon, there should be a strong bilateral focus next year when official events like the Civil Service Exchange Programme (CSEP) and the Singapore-Thailand Enhanced Economic Relationship Meeting (STEER) resume. These bilateral platforms allow us to review current cooperation and explore new areas for collaboration.



I also look forward to the Leaders' Retreat between the two Prime Ministers.

Have you been travelling around Thailand?

Yes. I want to see as much of the country as I can both officially and personally. It gives me a broader perspective and better understanding. I also want to meet Singapore communities around the country. Thus far, I have been to Chiang Rai, Pattaya, Hua Hin, Pranburi, Ayuthaya, Phitsanulok, Khao Yai, and various parts of Kanchanaburi and Chonburi. But to be honest, I have made fewer trips than I had wanted. It was hard to leave Bangkok last year given the ASEAN Chairmanship. And the trips that I planned for earlier this year were delayed by Covid.

What is your favourite destination in Thailand?

Hua Hin. It is just an amazing place with so much to offer. Everyone knows about the lovely beaches, but there are also great National Parks nearby. We just visited the Phraya Nakorn cave temple and it was stunning. The hotels in Hua Hin are wonderful and the town has varied and delicious restaurants. I really enjoy walking along the beach at dawn and dusk. Sea breeze in your face, surf crashing in the background... there is something very peaceful about this. We have been to Hua Hin several times. The fact that it is less than three hours away by car makes it so easy to spend weekends there.

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

We try to explore Bangkok or make day trips to get a better sense of our surroundings. I try to exercise – mostly walking, swimming, and gym work – now that old injuries have stopped me playing basketball, golf, and fencing. I try to catch up on my reading, mostly history and non-fiction these days. I still collect old maps, history books, and die cast model planes. But I have not had time to indulge in these hobbies recently.

How many of your countrymen live in Thailand? When and why did Thailand become a favourable destination for them?

Prior to Covid-19, there were around 5,000 Singaporeans resident in Thailand. But on any given day, the numbers were much higher because over a million Singaporeans visited Thailand every year. In fact, Thailand is one of the favourite holiday destinations for Singaporeans. It is easy to see why. Thailand has mountains, beaches, islands, vibrant cities, great food, superb shopping, and most importantly, warm and friendly people. There is something for everyone. And with a flight time of just over two hours, this is the destination of choice for Singaporeans.

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

Educational cooperation is an important part of our relationship. There are interactions at several levels. For example, our universities and polytechnics have exchange programmes with their counterparts in Thailand. Our universities and polytechnics also have programmes that allow Singaporean students to pursue internships in Thailand.



At the secondary level, there is a wonderful and longstanding collaboration between Singapore's Northlight School and Thailand's Chaipattana Foundation. Under the programme, both sides exchange visits on an annual basis. There is obviously great educational value, but it's the camaraderie and friendships forged that last a lifetime.

Singapore also offers Thai students what we call the "ASEAN Scholarship" which allows them to go to Singapore for their secondary education.

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

There is a joke in most Foreign Services that the best way to ensure that you don't get the posting you want is to ask for it. So I'm not going to answer this question! Seriously, I've been in Thailand for just over a year and I am very happy here. I'll think about this a few years from now.



Any memory you would like to share or an awkward situation?

Thailand is a special place for my wife and I. We have spent many happy vacations here. Our first holiday together when we were dating three decades ago was to Bangkok. I was serving in the Singapore Army at the time so I didn't have much money. I chose a cheap tour package which was what I could afford at the time. Of course, we ended up at a very modest hotel and in a basement room with no windows! It's amazing that she still agreed to marry me in the end.

Do you regularly meet up with your community?

Yes. It is very important for an Embassy to stay close to its community. We obviously provide consular services. But we are also there to help our community maintain a connection to Singapore.





We have hosted several events for the Singapore community in the past year. One was to meet visiting Singapore MPs. Another revolved around a wonderful performance by a Singapore conductor and the Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra. A third was a community get together. Unfortunately, I have not been able to host anything since the beginning of this year. But I am looking to host another event for Singaporeans now that the Covid situation has improved.

I attend events hosted by Singapore organisations like the Singapore Club of Thailand and the Singapore -Thailand Chamber of Commerce. These are also good platforms to meet the community and get a sense of how people are doing.

I try to meet the local Singapore community when I visit various provinces. Unfortunately, the Covid situation has delayed several trips planned for earlier this year.

What is your most important task as Ambassador?

I am a conduit between Thailand and Singapore. My role is to deepen and broaden ties between our countries.



I want to help Thais understand Singapore and vice versa. I want to facilitate interactions between politicians, officials, businessmen, cultural leaders, students, everyone who has an interest in engagement between Thailand and Singapore. I want to act as a bridge, to foster mutual understanding, and to help resolve misunderstandings. And I want to be there for Singaporeans in Thailand.

It has become a bit of a cliché to say that this is a globalised and interconnected world. But it is true. None of us can go it alone. So increasing bilateral and regional cooperation is crucial for Thailand and Singapore to thrive. This is even more salient in these times of economic turbulence, transboundary problems, and global disruption.





Bumrungrad's

Breast Care Clinic



The Breast Care Clinic specializes in helping women with breast disease. It's more than just breast cancer; the Clinic assists women in the treatment and management of non-cancerous tumors and lumps, breast pain, fibrocystic disease, and other disorders.

Diagnostic Modalities: Screening and diagnosis using advanced techniques

The Breast Care Clinic examines palpable abnormalities – those that can be felt by hand – and uses sophisticated imaging technology to detect problems that cannot be seen or felt.

The Center uses a variety of methods to diagnose possible breast problems, including:

- Physical examinations
- Digital mammography and ultrasound
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Fine needle aspiration for cytology
- Stereotactic biopsy

Digital Mammography

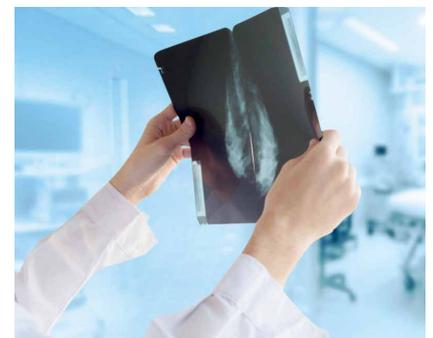
Digital mammography is a more technologically advanced form of mammography. It is quicker, more comfortable and gives the doctor better images with higher resolution than traditional X-ray based mammography. This is particularly beneficial to patients undergoing stereotactic biopsy-mammograms.

Treatment

The Breast Care Clinic offers a full range of treatment, including surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Specialists with the Horizon Regional Cancer work closely with patients to develop a personalized course of treatment.

Breast Conservation Therapy

Breast disease is a sensitive issue, and our aim is to help each woman maintain her body's natural appearance. The Clinic offers breast conservation therapy for women in the early stages of cancer. For patients whose condition is suitable for conservation, the treatment focuses on radiation therapy, as opposed to surgery.



Breast Care Clinic:

Bumrungrad International Clinic (BIC) Building, 16th floor

Tel: +66 2011 3694,

Monday through Friday (8:00 am to 8:00 pm)

Saturday & Sunday (8:00 am to 7:00 pm)



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Female cancers

Dr Abdulla El-Hossami, Medical Director Asia Pacific, Verita Life, Integrative Cancer Centre

Starting from the first menstruation cycle to menopause, the female body can go through many changes. Although it is normal to feel different sometimes, it is always better to ask your doctor about any changes happening as some of these changes could be the signs of cancer or other diseases.

Cancers affecting women mostly are breast, endometrial, cervical and ovarian cancers. Knowing about these cancers and what you can do to prevent them or find them early may help save your life.

Breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in women and the second most common cancer globally. In 2018 there were over 2 million new cases and the top 10 countries with the highest rates of breast cancer were Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, France, New Caledonia, Beirut, Australia, UK, Italy and New Zealand. Many other countries in Europe as well as US and Canada were also in the top 25.

There are a few well established risk factors for breast cancer. Ageing is directly proportional to your chances of getting breast cancer. Most breast cancer cases involve women of over 55 years old. Another risk factor is a positive family history. Having a first degree female relative with breast cancer doubles your risk of getting it. Likewise, having a personal history of breast cancer increases your risk 3 or 4 times more to develop a new breast cancer. Radiation or Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) exposure in the past raises the risk of developing breast cancer too.

Other risk factors may include:

- Being overweight
- Early menstruation
- Alcohol drinking
- Physical inactivity
- Tobacco smoking
- Certain breast changes.

Early detection of breast cancer – when it is still small, has not yet spread, and might be easier to treat – can help prevent further complications of the disease. Regular screening tests are always recommended as the most reliable way to detect breast cancer early.

According to the American Cancer Society, every woman between the age of 40 to 44, if they wish, should have the choice to start yearly breast cancer screening with a mammogram. While women age 45 to 54 should get it done every year. Women from 55 years of age can switch to a mammogram every 2 years, or can continue the yearly screening.

Ovarian cancer

Ovarian cancer is the second most prevalent gynaecological cancer in women and the one causing the most deaths in the US with an estimated 21,750 women confronted with the disease this year.

The most important risk factors of ovarian cancer are age and family history of ovarian or breast cancer. Although it can occur at any age, it is more likely to happen as women get older. Other risk factors may include:

- Being overweight or obese
- Using talcum powder
- Using hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- Smoking
- Having endometriosis.

So far there is no specific test or screening to detect ovarian cancer, but certain signs should not be ignored and should be reported to your doctor. These signs include:

- Abdominal (belly) swelling with weight loss
- Digestive problems (including gas, loss of appetite, and bloating)
- Abdominal or pelvic pain
- Feeling like you need to urinate (pee) all the time.

Endometrial cancer

Endometrial cancer, sometimes called uterine cancer, is a type of cancer that begins in the endometrium which is the inner

lining of the uterus.

Endometrial cancer is the most common type of cancer occurring in the reproductive organs of women. The American Cancer Society has estimated approximately 65,620 new cases of uterine cancer in the US by the end of this year.

The risk of endometrial cancer increases by age and it is more likely to affect women above 60 years old. Other factors may include:

- Early menstruation, late menopause
- Not having been pregnant
- Being obese
- Having had breast or ovarian cancer
- Having received hormone replacement therapy for breast cancer.



There are no screening tests or examinations to detect endometrial cancer early in women who are at average risk and have no symptoms. However, every woman should be explained about the risk factors after menopause and should report if they have any unusual discharge, spotting, or abnormal vaginal bleeding. It is important to know the Pap test, which is very good at finding cancer of the cervix, sometimes can detect some early endometrial cancer although it is not a test for endometrial cancer.

Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that arises from the cells of the cervix in women and it is the fourth most common type of cancer in women. The World Health Organization estimated 570,000 new cases of cervical cancer in 2018.

The most common cause of cervical cancer is HPV (Human Papilloma Virus).

Other risk factors include:

- Smoking
- Having a weakened immune system
- Having history of a chlamydia infection
- Being overweight
- Being exposed to or taking certain hormone treatments.

Having regular screening tests can help find changes in the cervix that can be treated before they become cancer. A Pap test and an HPV DNA test are the two most popular methods to screen for cervical cancer. Diagnosis also involves a pelvic exam with a colposcope to check for any visible abnormal changes in the cervix.

As you can see these cancers share more or less the same risk factors. So, if you could avoid smoking, exercise regularly, follow healthy diet, stay at a healthy weight, avoid or limit alcohol consumption to not more than 1 drink per day, have regular health checkups, you should be able to reduce your chance of developing these cancers.



For more information on our Integrative Cancer Treatments and Autoimmune Diseases Programmes
Email contact@veritalife.com
Call 02 554 8333



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Spouses of Heads of Mission (SHOM)

by Kathleen Pokrud
President Hong Kong Ladies' Group

Spouses of Heads of Mission Bangkok (known affectionately as SHOM) is a support group for spouses and partners of the foreign ambassadors in Bangkok, Thailand. It started in 2004 as an informal coffee group, known as 'Diplospouse'. This was led by the spouses of the US and New Zealand ambassadors at the time. The group provided support for newcomers to Bangkok and an opportunity to share experiences as a diplomatic spouse. It became a more established entity the following year with a committee set up to help organise get-togethers and activities.

Expat Life sat down with the 2020 committee for an exclusive interview, to learn about how the membership has supported their diplomatic life in Bangkok. The group shared their "must-do" lists when exploring Thailand with family and friends.

The SHOM President this year is Madame Christina (Chrissy) Macpherson from New Zealand. She said, "The objectives of our group remain largely the same over the last 16 years; to provide support and friendship to members. We typically meet monthly and have several interest groups. The current membership of both men and women come from over 20 different countries and regions. Spouses and their partners bring with them their own professional and family

backgrounds, experiences and achievements. So our get-togethers are always interesting and enjoyable."

Madame Chrissy added, "Wherever possible, we also look to promote mutual cultural understanding between the Kingdom of Thailand and member countries. We are keen to learn more about Thailand through a range of activities including meeting interesting people, undertaking cultural activities and visiting community groups."

Impressions of Thailand

I asked the group for their impressions of Thailand. Their universal answer was that they all felt "honoured to accompany their spouses on their diplomatic assignment to the Kingdom of Thailand." During their tenure here, many have had the opportunity to travel to a number of incredible places in Thailand. Without exception all have found the Thai people to be "incredibly warm, friendly and welcoming." Discovering delicious Thai cuisine and the vibrant city life in Bangkok were popular activities.

Many SHOM members were delighted to get the opportunity to participate in the 9th Celebration of Silk: Thai Silk Road to the World 2019 Festival last year with designers from their own home countries and Thailand. The project honoured H.M. Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother's continuous contributions to the promotion of Thai silk locally and globally.

Another particular highlight and honour was the opportunity to attend parts of the Coronation of H.M. King Rama X throughout 2019. As Madame Chrissy said, "The Royal Barge procession last year was moving, impressive and historical. It is something many of us will remember for the rest of our lives."



SHOM President
 Madame Christina
 (Chrissy) Macpherson
 Spouse of H.E. Mr. Taha
 Macpherson,
 Ambassador of
 New Zealand

A member of SHOM since August 2018, Madame Chrissy joined the committee last year. She serves as President amid the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic this year. “We have been impressed by Thailand’s

strong public health response to Covid-19. We have also reflected on the challenging past months and how so many people’s lives have changed due to the global pandemic. We think of those here in Thailand, in our home countries and around the world, which have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Keeping in mind those who have lost loved ones or friends, those who are unwell, those who are separated from family, and those who are experiencing economic hardship, we recognise the challenges that remain ahead of us and the importance of co-operation, friendship and support at this time.”

Charity work

During the lockdown, SHOM members found different ways to stay connected the past several months through virtual get-togethers and activities. Because of the social distancing policy, a planned fundraising event by SHOM was put on hold. Madame Chrissy said, “A group of members recently volunteered with the Covid-19 Relief Bangkok project which

is a coalition of organisations coordinating a relief effort for low-income communities in need. The coalition includes SATI Foundation, Scholars of Sustenance, and Urban Studies Lab, with support from Bangkok 1899 and the Thai Health Volunteers Foundation. As of 21 August, 2020, Covid Relief has helped 30,500 households in Thailand, covering 122,000 people, providing enough food for more than 1,000,000 meals. The coalition is now planning phase two of the initiative, which will focus on mental health and economic recovery.”

SHOM members also participate and lend support to other major fundraising activities. A number of embassies have in the past participated in the YWCA and the Red Cross Diplomatic Bazaars held annually to raise funds for local charities and groups. SHOM members often take a leading role in helping with the organisation of these events, and they hope to continue to do so in the future.

Introducing the 2020 committee:

Madame Olga Shumylo-Tapiola
 Spouse of H.E. Mr. Pirkka Tapiola, Ambassador of the European Union
 Madame Olga was SHOM President in 2019. Born in Kyiv, Ukraine, she joined the group in October 2017 and served as Vice President in 2018. She says of her membership, “SHOM is both a place where many cultures meet and where one feels at home. A beautiful paradox.”



On her 'must-do' list in Bangkok, "The Royal Palace, together with the renovated National Museum, are a must-see for any family member on their first visit. To go deeper, we like to take our guests to less mainstream places. Favourites include the Suan Pakkad Palace Museum, Chakrabongse Villa and Nai Lert Park Heritage Home, to show the history of Thailand through the lives of prominent families and personalities. For fans of textiles, a visit to the Old Siam Plaza is a must."



Madame Marie Patricia Cotter
Spouse of H.E. Mr. Joseph Anthony Cotter, Ambassador of Ireland

Madame Marie is the current Vice President of SHOM. She has been a member since September 2018. She feels that SHOM membership has been a great benefit in helping her settle into Bangkok. "Members are always available to advise on all matters from Thai culture and customs from hairdressers, to restaurants, places to see, health issues etc. The members are likeminded people who understand the issues involved in being an ambassador's spouse. Whilst we share many things in common, we each bring our own experience and culture to the group. Through SHOM I have met many interesting people and gained an insight into the Thai way of life. Our regular meetings keep us all in touch and all interests are catered for. The book club is fantastic and has introduced me to

many books that I know I would not have otherwise come across."

Like many visitors to Thailand, her historical favourites are the Grand Palace, Emerald Buddha, Jim Thompson's House, Ayutthaya and the River Kwai. She also recommends a dinner cruise down the Chao Praya River. "It is very enjoyable and affords spectacular views of Bangkok from the water." Madame Marie adds, "For a really fun evening, a personal favourite of mine is a street food tour by tuk tuk which includes food tasting at several stalls in Chinatown, a visit to the flower market and a view of the Grand Palace and other historic buildings all lit up at night. Of course, no trip to Thailand is complete without visiting one of its numerous beaches. I particularly enjoy the never-ending wide, sandy beach at Hua Hin. Whatever you like to do and whatever your level of fitness and sense of adventure, Thailand provides ample choice to cater for everyone."



Madame Louise Åkerblom
Spouse of H.E. Mr. Jean-Paul Senninger, Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Madame Louise comes from Sweden and she joined SHOM in February 2019. She appreciates that SHOM has provided her a great network. "I have supportive colleagues, and I turn to them whenever I have any questions."

Her list of 'must-do' things in Bangkok starts with "a bicycle tour

through Bangkok and surroundings, or take the boat from Khlong Toei Pier over and ride around the 'Green Lung'. Take a picnic and enjoy it in the Sri Nakhon Khuean Khan Park. Use the Khlong boats to get around town. Take a midnight tuk tuk food tour." For places outside Bangkok, Madame Louise suggests travelling to Kanchanaburi, and staying at one of the floating hotels on the River Kwai.



Madame Ximena Rios Hamann
Spouse of H.E. Mr. Fernando J. A. Quiros Campos, Ambassador of the Republic of Peru

Madame Ximena has been a member of the committee since 2018. She finds that being part of the SHOM committee has enabled her to get to know many people from different cultures and has given her different perspectives of life. "SHOM has different activities that allow us to know more about the many aspects of the culture of Thailand, its people and history. This has allowed me to be more integrated into Thai society and to have more access to what is happening in Bangkok."

Her three favourite places in Bangkok are the Grand Palace, Wat Po and Wat Arun, as these offer an excellent way to show the royal, cultural and religious components of Thailand. "The elegance and the art of the Grand Palace and the spirituality of both temples always impress people." She adds, "I also like to go to Ayutthaya

for a day trip. Peru has a millenarian civilisation, the Inca Empire, so it is interesting to see the Ayutthaya civilisation which is from the other side of the world and see its similarities and differences.” Other recommendations include the MOCA and the BACC, which showcase Thai art in multiple expressions and periods.



Madame Ewa Dubaniowska

Spouse of H.E. Mr. Waldemar Dubaniowska, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland

Having plenty of positive SHOM memories and experiences from her husband's previous posting in Singapore, Madame Ewa eagerly became a member in October 2017. In 2018, she joined the SHOM committee.

Madame Ewa says that SHOM was and still is an ideal springboard to make new friends. “I still remember my first Bangkok SHOM meeting when I became immediately richer of having 25 new friends. This is such a nice and supportive group, and a lovely experience. SHOM welcomed me with open arms and I feel so lucky that I have never experienced loneliness or felt like a stranger in Bangkok. Moreover, thanks to social media I also found a more practical side of SHOM. It serves as a very useful forum for us, where we can find or share advice, tips or recommendations.”

On the 'must-do' list in Bangkok, Madame Ewa loves the Chao Phraya

River and its fresh breezes, and finds it relaxing after exploring the hot and stuffy streets of Bangkok. For her guests, “It is almost obligatory to ride from Sathorn Pier to the downtown (Tha Tien Pier or even to Thewes Pier) by orange flag river boats. I love how they navigate at every pier, how they announce information, and even how they check tickets; it's so authentic. I must also mention the cafes and small restaurants along the river, the smaller and better hidden, the nicer they are!” In the evenings, Madame Ewa likes to send friends to Chinatown to experience the special atmosphere at Yaowarat Road. Their visitors are always overwhelmed by how fantastic the restaurants are. “I love exploring places which are off the beaten track, our visitors must be prepared for very local and authentic experiences! And of course, meeting with monitor lizards in Lumpini Park is another must for my Polish friends.”



Dr. Kevin Colleary

Spouse of H.E. Mr. Francisco de Assis Morais e Cunha Vaz Patto, Ambassador of the Portuguese Republic

Dr. Colleary joined SHOM as a member in Nov 2015 and volunteered for the committee in 2017. A native of New York, USA, he says, “My SHOM membership has been incredibly beneficial to me these past five years.

This is my husband's first ambassadorial posting and so I needed to learn a lot about this life. My more experienced SHOM colleagues have taught me a great deal about diplomatic life and many other things over the years. I have built important friendships and met incredible people through this group.”

On their favourite places in Bangkok, “Since we live alongside the river, we always include a klong visit by boat for our guests. We also always stop on the Thonburi side to visit the beautiful Wat Kanlayanamit Woramahawihan with the amazing Buddha statue and gorgeous sounding bell. Then we go to visit Kudicheen and the fascinating Luso-Thai neighbourhood including the lovely Santa Cruz Church and the wonderful Baan Kudicheen Museum. This is a hidden gem of Bangkok that many visitors never see but that I never let our visitors miss!”



Madame Low Hui Ching

Spouse of H.E. Mr. Kevin Cheok, Ambassador of the Republic of Singapore

Madame Ching became a member of SHOM in June 2019, and joined the committee a few months later. She says, “Moving to a new country always presents a fresh set of challenges, and SHOM is a terrific platform to make new friends, and to learn more about our host country Thailand.



From queries about practical matters to more intellectual questions, you can be sure someone in SHOM will have the answer or at least point you in the right direction!”

She considers The Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles a beautiful jewel of a museum. “It showcases clothes and textiles as part of Thailand’s history. There is currently an informative exhibition of batik collected by King Chulalongkorn, as well as occasional, temporary exhibitions of H.M. Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother’s clothes and photographs.” Plus, there’s an excellent gift store for souvenirs such as handwoven silk from various parts of Thailand. “We also love to introduce guests to Khao Yai, with its peaceful green surroundings. Walking in Khao Yai National Park and coming across waterfalls and wildlife is a lovely way to spend a weekend.” Visitors from Singapore love Thai food, so “eating and snacking our way across Bangkok is always fun and memorable!”

As our group interview comes to an end, Madame Chrissy says that “one of my favourite things to do in Bangkok with friends is to explore the fabric markets in Bangkok including Pahurat

market, Chatuchak weekend market and other destinations in Chinatown, such as the Old Siam Plaza Silk Zone.”

Throughout the interview, Expat Life was impressed by the genuine friendship and support amongst the group.

SHOM provides a platform for members from a diverse range of geographic, professional and family backgrounds, to learn more about Thailand and member countries through their different activities.



A New International School Driven By Design

VERSO is the first international school in the world to be conceptually designed by IDEO, the world-famous design and innovation company from San Francisco. Driven by design, VERSO delivers a highly creative, student-centered education in a stunning state-of-the-art campus.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING APPROACH

Moving beyond the traditional 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum, VERSO places each student at the center of their own learning. Students are organized into mixed-age groups and work with a team of learning designers. We value curiosity, self-direction, and independence and help students to think like designers. We have redesigned the school day so we can give students more time to dig deep into learning that truly engages them.

AGILE LEARNING SPACES

VERSO's iconic 'Loops' are designed to bring a sense of fun, flow, movement, and interconnectedness to our learning. Traditional classrooms have been replaced by contemporary learning spaces that are flexible, agile, and adaptive to the needs of our learners. We consider our whole campus as a learning space with frequent opportunities to play and learn beyond the walls.



A PASSIONATE LEARNING DESIGN TEAM

At VERSO, we believe in the creative capacity of our educational teams. We intentionally call our teachers Learning Designers. They are highly-skilled educators who work closely with our students to design deeply engaging learning experiences. At VERSO we are passionate about working in a highly collaborative and creative project-based environment that inspires learning for everyone.

CONNECTED TO NATURE

VERSO's impressive campus was designed to complement the rich bio-diversity of its natural surroundings. Working closely with environmental and landscape specialists VERSO's campus has been designed to support a thriving eco-system that allows us to connect with nature on a daily basis. We have a responsibility to help students develop a deeper understanding of the natural world and what we all need to do to protect it.

VERSO's innovative learning architecture has been designed using American curriculum standards. Learning is interdisciplinary, project-based, and personalized. VERSO will be fully accredited by WASC, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

MEXICAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND H.E. MR BERNARDO CORDOVA TELLO

by *Kathleen Pokrud*
President Hong Kong Ladies Group



Expat Life had the opportunity to interview the Mexican Ambassador to Thailand H.E. Mr. Bernardo Cordova Tello and find out more about his life as a diplomat and his post to Thailand.

How long have you been the Ambassador to Thailand?

I arrived to Thailand on October 26th 2019. This means I have been in Thailand for a little more than 9 months.

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

My wife and I came from Turkey where I was Ambassador of Mexico. I feel very lucky, because as Ambassador, I have been honoured to serve in two important countries for Mexico, both with a millenary history.

Where were you born and brought up?

I was born in Mexico, in the state of Michoacan. Which is located in Western Mexico and has a stretch of coastline on the Pacific Ocean to the Southwest. It is one of the 32 states which comprise the Federal Entities of Mexico. The state is divided into 113 municipalities and its capital city is Morelia. My family moved to Mexico City when I was a young boy. So I grew up and studied in Mexico City.

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

I chose Social Sciences in my senior high school year, which was a requirement in the Mexican education system to be able to later study International Relations.

However, my interest in diplomacy started when I was a young elementary school student. I had keenly studied world history. I was not only passionate about the great civilisations but also about the 20th century history, particularly, the I and II World Wars, the Korean and Vietnam Wars. My parents were very keen on their children being well informed of what was happening both in Mexico and across the world. With this background it was natural that I went to university to study International Relations and later on, that I applied and became a member of the Mexican Foreign Service.

Are there any other diplomats in your family?

I have a brother and an uncle who were also part of the Foreign Service for some years.



How do you see Thailand today, have there been any obstacles in your way since you arrived?

For me it was surprising to see a modern and vibrant city like Bangkok which accurately reflects the dynamism and modernity of Thailand. I have observed a country that works well and grows day after day. In this short period I have been witness of the great and successful work that the Thai government and society have done to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a fine example to the world and I congratulate Thailand for this.

Far from finding obstacles, I have found coincidences with Mexico. Thailand has been a welcoming country, where I have found happy, hardworking people, always willing to help, warm and welcoming to foreigners.

Do you see any similarities between your country and Thailand?

Despite our geographical distance, I see many similarities between Mexico and Thailand. Both of our peoples inherit traditions and knowledge from millenary cultures. In both societies, religion is of great significance and relevant. Family bonds are important to both societies. Mexicans and Thais are both proud of their history and they love their food and culinary customs. Both countries share a modern emerging economy and have similar visions about the main challenges in today's world.

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

We only have one daughter. She lives and studies in Madrid, currently finishing her last year in Graphic Design. Diplomatic family life is not always easy, because our children grow up in a constantly changing environment and therefore sometimes families have to be split up.

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

Diplomatic life requires us to learn and readjust. Every day sees us facing new challenges and the opportunity to create new opportunities between two countries. Work is rarely between 9am and 6pm so it is not a routine job, but



an agenda that constantly changes and never stops. Every day there are meetings and different challenges and sometimes the day finishes very late. You never stop working because diplomacy entails a job of permanent representation.

As with every ambassador, I assume you have some goals you really would like to fulfil before you leave Thailand?

In August 2020, Mexico and Thailand celebrate 45 years of diplomatic relations. Throughout our years of friendship, the two countries have enjoyed an excellent relationship free of any conflict. Nevertheless, diplomacy is the job that never ends, since there is always something new to keep bringing countries closer together.

As an ambassador, sometimes you have the opportunity to plant new seeds and at other times you are lucky enough to harvest from your predecessors, in a continuity that looks for contributing to a good relationship enduringness.





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

We have registered just over three hundred Mexicans who live in Thailand, most of them in Bangkok, but also in Nonthaburi, Chonburi, Chiang Mai and other key cities. There is an increasing demand for Mexican traditional food, so we have some chefs working in Mexican restaurants who arrived a few years ago. Most of the Mexicans who live in Thailand are senior staffers at international companies. Some others are in the hospitality and services industry at management level. Most of the Mexican people who live in Thailand have a family life, some of them married with Thai people and raising Thai Mexican children.

Have you been able to travel around Thailand?

Unfortunately, I have not travelled the country as much as I would have liked to, due to the problems that we have encountered this year. However, I have had the opportunity to visit places such as Hua Hin, Ayuthaya and the Northeast region and I enjoyed them immensely. In Bangkok I enjoy visiting temples, museums, food and flower markets, as well as some of its amazing contemporary buildings.

**Does your country and Thailand have an exchange
programme for students today?**

I have recently learned that there is an increasing interest of Thai young people in Mexico, Latin America and the Spanish language in general. So we have welcomed Thai college and degree students who wish to study one semester in Mexican institutions with the “Mexican Government Scholarship Programme for International Students”, which

**Do you have a favourite
destination in Thailand?**

I have very much enjoyed the atmosphere in the Northeast region, particularly in Chiang Rai. Another of my favourites is the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ayutthaya.

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

I like playing tennis and walking the streets discovering new places. Reading, watching soccer and motorcar racing are my favourite hobbies.





Do you regularly meet up with your community?

Yes, one of my main responsibilities as ambassador is to establish a permanent dialogue with the Mexican community. Unfortunately, personal contact with the Mexican community was interrupted by Covid-19. So during this period, the embassy asked them to comply with the lockdown and we implemented a new line of direct contact via personal emails and telephone one calls to know about their situation. I also try to greet with Mexicans who visit the embassy for any consular matters.

is renewed every year. Besides, there are exchanges between Thai and Mexican universities, such as the Colima University cooperation with Chulalongkorn and Mahidol Universities.

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

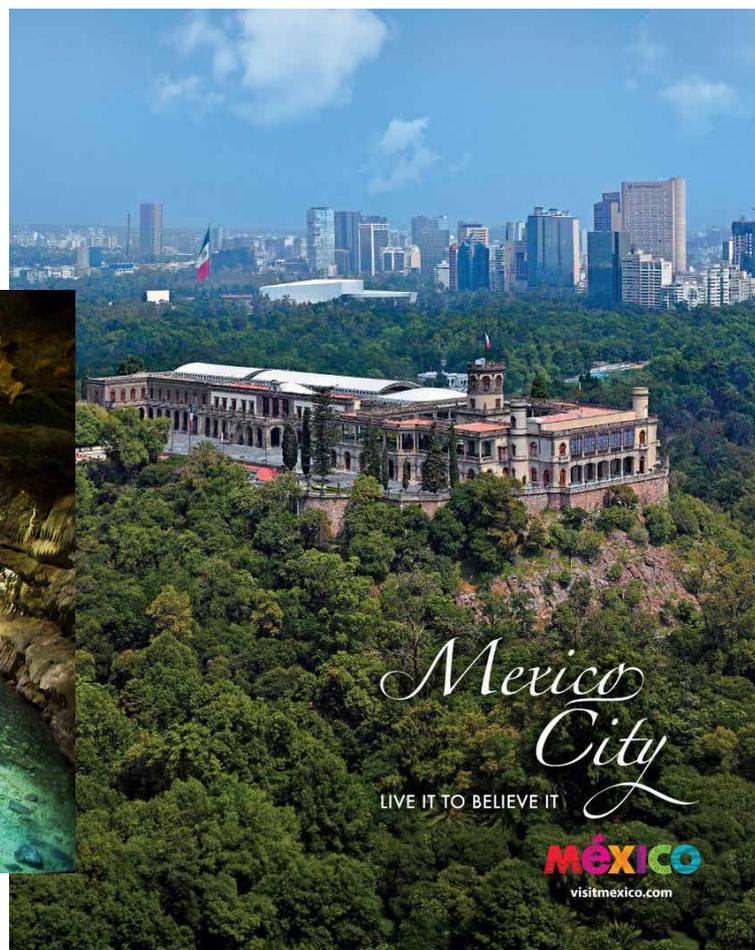
As a diplomat, I think that all countries have their importance and their particular interest, otherwise there would not be reason to have embassies or diplomatic relations. I have lived and worked in eight different countries and I have fond and wonderful memories of all of them.

Any memory from Thailand that you'd like to tell us, an awkward situation or a funny incident?

In this relatively short period I have been a witness of the great job done by the people and government of Thailand facing the pandemic situation. Such outstanding performance is one that will remain in history and and Thais should be very proud of it.

What is the most important task you want to fulfil before you end your post in Thailand?

I have designated instructions from my government: to strengthen our political dialogue in global issues. To increase the volume of trade and investment between the two countries and to accelerate the knowledge and understanding of Mexico. In this regard, my main goals are to contribute to our collaboration and coincidences in multilateral fora, to explore new market niches for both Thai and Mexican producers and exporters and to enhance commercial dialogue between the respective stakeholders. Also to intensify the presence of the different cultural and artistic manifestations of Mexico for the Thai peoples enjoyment.





OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

by Jane Crowder
Bangkok Breast Cancer Support Group

Life in Bangkok over the last 5 months has been challenging, uncertain and sometimes stressful. During this time our health focus may have altered and become more Covid-19 orientated. Despite these challenging times it is crucial that we don't forget about our general health. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and a good reminder to check that our screening appointments are up to date.

Breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common type of female cancer; 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed during their lifetime. These numbers are increasing globally... we are living longer but unhealthy lifestyle choices are also contributing to the increase. However early detection and improved treatments mean that fewer women are now dying from breast cancer. Our risk increases as we get older but women of any age can be affected.

Breast awareness

Breasts come in all shapes and sizes; they all look and feel very different.

Breast awareness is important for all women over the age of 20 years, this includes pregnant women and mums who are breastfeeding. Breast self-examination (BSE) whilst not a substitute for breast cancer screening enables women to become familiar with their normal. Breast self-exams should be done monthly, ideally a few days after your period has finished when your breasts are less tender. Menopausal women... choose a date, which is easy to remember i.e. the first day of each month.

Follow these 4 steps:

STEP 1

Stand in front of a mirror and with your hands by your side.

Look for:

- Any breast changes i.e. shape or size
- Irritation or dimpling of the skin
- Redness or flaky skin on your nipple

STEP 2

Still standing in front of a mirror, now raise your hands above your head and then clasp your hands behind your head.

Look for: any discharge from the nipple other than breast milk.

STEP 3

Lying flat on your back with your right arm behind your head. With your opposite hand and the pads of your 3 middle fingers and medium pressure feel the whole breast area, this includes the underarm, up to the collarbone and below each breast. Repeat with the left side.

Feel for:

- Any lumps
- Thickening or swelling
- Pain

STEP 4

In the shower, your breasts are easier to examine when wet and soapy, raise one arm above your head and repeat step 3.

Feel for:

- Lumps
- Thickening or swelling
- Pain

If you detect any changes, don't panic! Most will not be cancerous. However it is still important to have these changes evaluated by your GP, any persistent changes must



be investigated, normally with a mammogram or an ultrasound. This also includes women who have had a recent mammogram with normal results.

Breast screening

Regular breast screening with mammography and ultrasound are the most reliable way of detecting early stage breast cancer. Breast cancer when diagnosed at an early stage is easier to treat and has a better prognosis.

Do you have a breast screening strategy?

The American Cancer Society has the following recommendation:

- Women at average risk, this includes women with no personal history of breast cancer, no confirmed or suspected genetic mutation (BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene) or no previous radiotherapy at a young age to the chest area.
- Women aged between 40-44: should be given the option to have annual mammograms.
- Women aged between 45-54: annual mammograms
- Women aged 55+: can switch to biannual mammograms, but should be given the option to continue with annual screening.

Screening should continue as long as a women is experiencing good health.

Women who fall into the high risk category, starting from an earlier age should be offered additional screening with MRI.

See your GP to discuss your risk and screening preferences.

Good quality mammograms and ultrasounds are crucial for an accurate diagnosis; these are available at the large, well known hospitals in Bangkok. There is now evidence to suggest that we can reduce our risk of developing breast cancer and a number of other cancers by adopting a healthy lifestyle. This includes:

- Having a healthy body weight
- Eating a well balanced diet
- Regular exercise
- Having a low alcohol intake
- Quit smoking

If you are currently taking combined oestrogen and progesterin hormone replacement therapy (HRT... your GP should be reassessing your use every 6-12 months).

Finally there are many myths and misconceptions surrounding breast cancer. Here are a few. You cannot get breast cancer from:

- Wearing an underwired or tight fitting bra
- Using antiperspirants or deodorant
- Abortion or miscarriage
- Breast implants

- Bumps and knocks to the breast
- Breast cancer cannot be treated with natural/traditional medicines.

The Bangkok Breast Cancer Support Group is affiliated with The Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast Cancer. Our small group of volunteers consist of healthcare professionals and breast cancer survivors. We offer compassion, emotional support and up to date, evidence based information. If you, a family member or friend has been diagnosed with breast cancer or you just want more breast cancer information, we would love to chat.

Please contact us on:

M: Raymonde 085 810 8208

E: bkkbreastcancer@gmail.com

F: Bkkbreastcancersupport



Cervical cancer is the 4th most common type of cancer in women. It is one of the most preventable cancers, and is effectively treated if detected early.

The majority of cervical cancers are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). This is a common infection, which can cause cervical changes that may result in cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine is now routinely given to all children between the age of 9-12 to prevent cervical and other types of cancers.



Cervical screening in recent years has been updated. The traditional PAP smear has now been replaced with a new screening test, which detects for HPV.

This test is recommended for all women aged 25-74 and if normal only needs to be done every 5 years. Screening is still necessary for women who have had the HPV vaccine.

Women experiencing any of the below symptoms should speak to their GP:

- Vaginal bleeding in between periods or after menopause
- Menstrual bleeding that is heavier or longer than normal
- Bleeding after intercourse
- Unusual vaginal discharge

Ovarian cancer

Ovarian cancer can affect women of all ages, but is most common in postmenopausal women over the age of 50 years. Symptoms can be vague and are often similar to other more common conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome. This and the absence of screening for ovarian cancer means that it is often diagnosed at a later stage when the cancer is more advanced, making it more difficult to treat.

You should speak to your GP if you are experiencing the below symptoms, particularly if they are persistent, frequent or severe:

- Stomach or pelvic pain
- Persistent bloating
- Difficulty eating and a feeling full after a small meal
- Altered bladder or bowel habits
- Excessive fatigue
- Lower back pain
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- Pain during sex

Always remember, regardless of the health issue, that after speaking to your healthcare provider you are not comfortable with their diagnosis, you should get a second opinion. Early detection saves lives.

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Written by Jane Crowder. Registered oncology nurse Australia. Postgraduate certificate in Breast Cancer Nursing, Australian College of Nursing (ACN) 2018.



become more aware of how they usually look and feel, and to help you spot any changes. If you're over 50, you will be invited for a breast screening (mammogram). You are offered this screening every three years until you are 70. You should still be checking your breasts regularly – a breast screening shouldn't replace your regular breast checks.

What should you do if you find a lump?

If you notice a lump in your breast, it is really important to get this checked by your doctor. A lump or change to the feel or appearance of your breasts should never be ignored. Whilst it may not be anything serious, it can help put

your mind at ease to speak to your doctor about any changes you spot.

How to check your breasts

When you are checking your breasts, look at the size and shape of each breast and check for any lumps. Make sure you check your nipples and the skin on your breasts. Check each area for any pain when you are touching them, too. You might notice that your breasts feel different at different times in the month; it's a good idea to become familiar with what's normal for you during these times, so you can spot anything unusual.

What to look out for:

- A change in the size or shape of your breast
- A change in the look or feel of your skin
- A new lump, thickening or bumpy area in one breast or armpit
- Discharge or bleeding from your nipple
- Any new discomfort or pain in one breast that does not go away

How often should I be checking my breasts?

Try to get into the habit of checking your breasts regularly – as a general guide, aim for at least once a month. Find a suitable time that works for you; perhaps it's after you have had a bath, when you are getting dressed or when you're settling down for the evening. What is also important that you are aware of what's normal for you and your body. You should be mindful that your breasts will change during your monthly cycle, pregnancy and menopause.

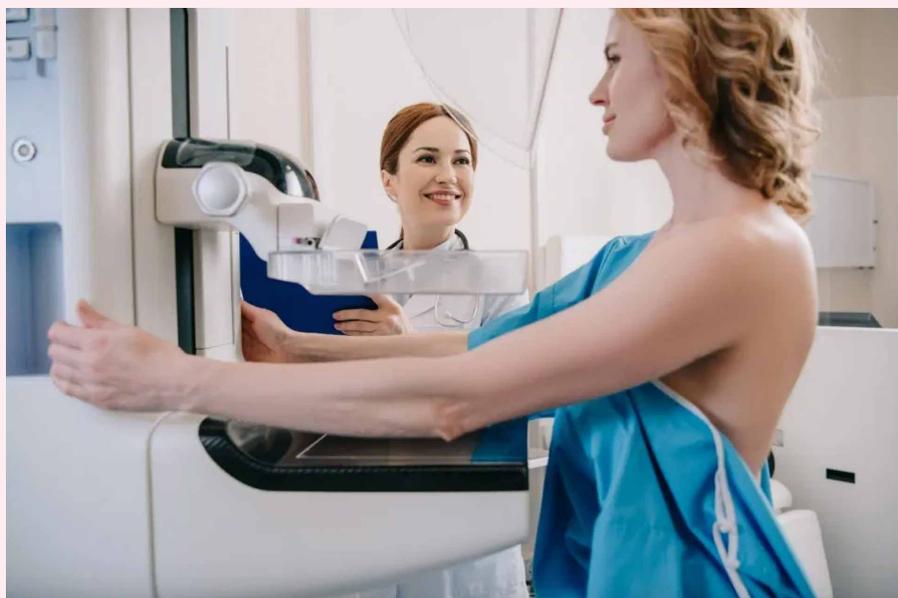
How early should you start checking for lumps?

Whilst there's no specific age you should start checking your breasts, checking them from an early age will help you to

Are there any breast abnormalities to look out for that may not be cancer?

Your breasts will change naturally each month and as you get older, and they may feel tender, heavy or lumpy at the end of your monthly cycle. These changes should normalise once your period starts. It is easier to check your breasts regularly outside of your monthly cycle. If you are pregnant, your breasts will change while your baby is developing to get ready for breastfeeding, which means they may get bigger and feel sore and tender. When you reach the menopause, the amount of glandular tissue in your breasts reduces, because of the changes to your hormones. This can make your breasts feel different, and some women find they are softer and less firm. It's really important that when you're checking your breasts (make sure you're checking the whole of your breast area), you are looking for any changes that feel different for you.

It is best to speak to your GP about anything you are feeling unsure, worried or anxious about – as they'll be able to help you.



International tennis supports the QSCBC breast cancer screening project in Thailand

International tennis joined forces with the Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast Cancer (QSCBC) in the fight against this disease, which has become the leading cancer cause of death among Thai women. The WTA, the international, Women's Tennis Association, in partnership with the Thailand Open Tennis 2020, organised professional players and coaches to play tennis with the children of a slum community in greater Bangkok, while the QSCBC breast screening project team taught the community women of all ages, about the risks of breast cancer and registered them for the free full clinical screening project at the QSCBC hospital.

The Thailand Tennis Open 2020, which is a part of the WTA international world tennis tour, also raised funds for the QSCBC breast (and cervical cancer) screening project. The theme for the whole event was bright pink, including the centre court surface, to match the international symbolic colour for breast cancer, and to also honour the dedication of the QSCBC's 25 years of work, providing the highest standard of breast cancer care for the underprivileged in Thailand.



PINK Centre Court at the Thailand Open 2020, part of the WTA-International Womens' Tennis Association tour. Pink, the internationally recognised colour for breast cancer, also honoured the work of the QSCBC which has taken care of the poorest women with breast cancer for 25 years. The QSCBC slum outreach screening project has been in operation for over twenty years, helping those in society who do not have access to breast (and cervical) cancer care. The project's founder Khunying Finola Chatamra, works closely with the dedicated QSCBC medical and nursing team, as well as the patient support group volunteers, who all give up their weekends to help organise the project.

*The QSCBC Foundation relies on donations to support the project.

www.qscbcfoundation.org

International tennis players and coaches from the WTA and Thailand Tennis Open 2020, entertaining the children in a slum community, while their mothers, carers and grandmothers are being taught about breast cancer and registering for the free QSCBC breast screening project. Above Chloe Paquet a professional WTA player from France.



(Below)
Chloe Paquet and international professional coach Stephane Cherret.



Closing ceremony GSB Thailand Tennis Open 2020 presented by E@. Representative of the WTA, finalist Leonie Kung, Magda Linette winner, Khunying Finola Chatamra Honorary Advisor QSCBC and Dr Kris Chatamra Honorary Director of the Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast (QSCBC), representatives of the Thailand Open including, Proudputh Liptapanlop (Proud Group) and Victor Ruiz Director APG Hong Kong – joint event director with Paradorn Srichapan – previously ranked 9 in the world. The GSB Thailand Open presented by E@, in association with Proud Group, APG and WTA Charities, raised over THB 1.6 million (around US\$53,000) for the Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast Cancer Foundation.





Wang Yafen WTA professional tennis player, playing with the children at the QSCBC project.



Chloe Paquet WTA professional tennis player playing with the children at the QSCBC project in the Prapadaeng slum community Bangkok.



Karim Perona international professional coach en route to the Thailand Open 2020, volunteering to play with the children.



Local expat tennis coaches based in Bangkok Gary Sakuma (top photo) and Harry Haines (above), volunteered their time to support.



International WTA professional tennis players and coaches with the children from the Prapadaeng slum community. Back centre: Karim Perona, Stephane Cherret, Garry Sakuma, Harry Haines, Wang Yafen, Chloe Paquet, Victor Ruiz, Dr Kris Chatamra, Khunying Finola Chatamra co-ordinator of the project, Angelica Manalo.



Dr Kris Chatamra, QSCBC Director and Chloe Paquet WTA professional tennis player from France.

(Right) Angelica Manalo a keen tennis player at the British Club Bangkok.



(Left) International professional tennis coach Stephane Charret, taking time out from the Thailand Open 2020 to play with the children in the slum community.





International professional tennis coach Stephane Charret taking time out from the Thailand Open 2020 to play with the children in the slum community.



Victor Ruiz Director APG Hong Kong and Event Director of the Thailand Open 2020, Khunying Finola Chatamra, project coordinator, with some of the children who enjoyed tennis who enjoyed the tennis with the international professional WTA players and coaches, while their mothers were registered for the project.



Breast Screening project day 1: The WTA international professional tennis players, coaches, the QSCBC team and the women and children of the Prapadaeng slum community, attending the free breast screening project.

Over 20 years ago QSCBC began an educational outreach programme for breast and cervical cancer in the slums of greater Bangkok. Teams comprising of dedicated specialist nurses, doctors and breast cancer survivors, volunteer their time to offer teaching programmes to the poorest women, during the weekends, when the women are not out working for a daily subsistence wage. The QSCBC's remit is to care for the women in the greatest need in society, who live a hand to mouth existence, feeding their families from the money earned during the day. The two days are offered as a free service to these women.

The QSCBC team give up their private time to carry out the project over three days, every 3 months when possible. The cost varies according to the number of women attending, but a pap smear and mammography and ultrasound costs 3,700B, including medical examination and pathology lab costs.



Victor Ruiz, Director of APG Hong Kong and Event Director of the Thailand Open 2020, Khunying Finola Chatamra with some of the children who enjoyed tennis with the international professional WTA players and coaches, while their mothers were registered for the project.



QSCBC nursing team during the teaching session in the slum community. (Right) Kritsanar Ronkard.



King Chulalongkorn social work team volunteer to assess the validity of each case, to ensure good stewardship of funds. (Right). Head Social Worker, Chalida Uthachalerm



The project rotates around slum communities in greater Bangkok. A woman, who previously registered for the QSCBC breast screening project, living in the Klongtoey slum community. Her home, shown in the photo, is under an express way. All the women are visited at home prior to being accepted on the project to make sure those most in need receive help from the money raised by the QSCBC.



Teaching the women about the risks of both cancers



A home in the slum community. The teaching (and registering) is carried out in the slum community by the QSCBC team and volunteers, in a friendly environment, where all questions can be answered without fear and embarrassment. A pre-questionnaire is given to the women, to test how much they already know about breast and cervical cancer. Following a teaching session, the questionnaire is repeated, to ensure that the women understand fully all that has been taught to them. Those who have difficulty with reading and writing are helped in a sensitive and supportive way. Prizes are given to make the event fun and not daunting. The women become the best 'PR agents' for the work of the project, spreading the word in their communities about the value of these teaching events and identifying the women in need of urgent treatment. The project aims to attract all ages, including the younger women, to inculcate accurate healthcare information on these two diseases, which today are the leading cancer killers of Thai women. During the teaching sessions the women are registered to come in to the QSCBC for free breast cancer screening, including digital mammography, ultrasounds and full medical examinations, as well as cervical pap smears. Women under 40 years, are offered pap smears only, (unless they have presenting breast symptoms) and those over 40 years are offered both breast and cervical cancer screening.



QSCBC nurses Registering and teaching the women in the slum community. Kanokporn Nakarat, Pongthing Hongptomayart, Preeyaporn Wipchakul.



QSCBC and King Chulalongkorn gynaecology nursing team with volunteers. Rungnapa Srisung (front left) Supanaree Sumonmart Manager QSCBC Foundation (front right)



Khunying Finola Chatamra and Nurse Bencharat Thampreechong, coordinators of the QSCBC breast screening project for over twenty years, visiting woman from a slum community and informing her about the breast screening project. The woman is shown above on day 2 of the project at the QSCBC.



The children are entertained by volunteers at the QSCBC hospital, while their mothers, grandmothers and carers have breast and cervical cancer screening. They enjoy food, drinks, games, face painting, arts and crafts and a magician. They wear the fancy dress costumes of their choice, to take home.

*All fancy dress costumes and toys are donated by local parents and schools. To donate, contact: pawana@qscbc@gmail.com

Khunying Finola Chatamra and QSCBC senior nurse Bencharat Thampreechapong coordinators of the project visiting the home of a woman shown below at the hospital on Day 2 for the clinical screening.

The women most in need are invited in groups of 120 to come to the Queen Sirikit Centre for screening. Thai Red Cross coaches collect the women and return them to their homes after the investigations. They are encouraged to bring their children to avoid any concerns over childcare and volunteers and a magician are on hand to entertain the children during the day at the hospital. The women and their children are given meals to further alleviate any further anxiety they may be feeling about any loss of daily income. Cosmetic companies are invited to do makeovers on the women, if they chose to do so, and gifts are given out at the end of the day too. The team will often invite a famous star into the slums or to the hospital, to reinforce the message that screening for cervical and breast cancer, is essential. The QSCBC endeavours, therefore, to make the whole experience a non-threatening and enjoyable day out.

If a woman is found to have a problem that needs treatment they are followed up and brought back to the QSCBC for care. The project rotates around all the communities to repeat screening periodically and gather women who have health concerns in the interim period. Having built up positive relationships with the communities over many years, the women now know they can contact the QSCBC if they are in urgent need, before the next screening session or refer a friend or neighbour. Many of the women take care of children or grandchildren alone, so in addition to caring for





the individual woman, this outreach programme also aims to protect the family. One in 10 women are at risk of breast cancer across a lifetime in Thailand.

The QSCBC has a commitment to ensure that the message, 'early detection may save your life', is well understood in these communities. Often breast or cervical cancer is believed to be a death sentence. women suffer in silence because they do not seek help early enough, due to fear, lack of funds or because the individual becomes resigned to the fact that they will die whatever they do.

As a result of over 25 years of experience with the poorest women suffering from breast cancer, a hospice village has been built, by the QSCBC Foundation, near Minburi on donated land called 'Pink Park'. This sanctuary will serve the underprivileged cases that are cared for at the QSCBC main hospital site, who may need a further period of recuperation or for a few patients it will be a place to pass away peacefully, pain free and with dignity, rather than in the squalor of a slum. Pink Park is a specially designed facility where all the individuals in need can be referred. The project has been launched, but donations continue to be needed to carry out this work and the breast screening project.

Donations: www.qscbcfoundation.org
or contact pawana.qscbc@gmail.com



Centre Court. The women and children from the Prapadaeng slum community watching the Thailand Open 2020 from the VIP seats on centre court.

(Right) The children and women enjoying the beach at the Hotel Intercontinental Hua Hin, during a day out to the Thailand Tennis Open 2020 part of the international WTA professional tour. For most of the women and children it was the first time they had ever seen the sea.



During the week of Thailand Open 2020

The WTA Thailand Tennis Open 2020 sponsors, including APG Hong Kong and the Proud Group, with the QSCBC, collaborated to take the women and children from the Prapadaeng slum community, who are part of the QSCBC Slum Community Breast Cancer Screening project, to Hua Hin for a day of activities. For many of the women and children it was the first time they had ever had a day out in their lives, and most had never seen the sea. They visited the Intercontinental Hotel Hua Hin to swim on the beach, followed by a day of adventure at the Vana Nava Waterpark in Hua Hin and ended the day by watching the Thailand Open 2020 tennis tournament from the VIP seats on centre court.



The Thailand Tennis Open 2020. The Prapadaeng slum community women and children, part of the QSCBC, at the True Arena to watch the Thailand Open tennis 2020.



THE ROYAL WING SUITES AND SPA AT THE ROYAL CLIFF HOTELS GROUP PATTAYA... LUXURY PERSONIFIED



The Royal Cliff Hotels Group is located between South Pattaya and Jomtien on the cliff top overlooking Cosy Beach, the Gulf of Thailand and looking out to Koh Lan island. The theme and motto of the destination is the State of Exclusivity and Fascination.

The four hotels are set on a 64 acre beautifully landscaped exclusive estate set in a tropical paradise – the flora and fauna lovingly cared for daily by the legion of estate staff. 145kms or 90 minutes from Bangkok and 3kms from the City of Pattaya – far enough to offer tranquillity and a good nights uninterrupted sleep but near enough should you want to party the night away...

The Royal Wing Suites and Spa set on the oceanfront offers ultimate luxury in 85 private suites on 8 floors – one, two and three bedroom suites in one of the finest boutique hotels. It is always rated as one of the top three hotels in Asia on TripAdvisor and you will be totally spoilt by the myriad of exclusive services on offer. It has won over 200 awards from prestigious travel organisations in recent years.



The suites offer unrivalled views across the Gulf of Thailand. The elegantly appointed interiors feature a timeless Thai inspired decor. Each suite has a living room and a separate bedroom with a circular Jacuzzi and a private balcony.

Upon arrival you will be met by an exotic fruit platter and homemade praline chocolates and given a choice of pillows. You will have already specified your choice of beds: king size or twin with fresh white linen. They offer a complimentary unpacking and packing service. Live like royalty whilst on holiday.

The Royal Wing Suites have a private swimming pool but guests are welcome to use any of the seven swimming pools on the extensive hotel complex and the fitness suite and tennis courts. Your sun loungers will be reserved by the side of the pool for your entire stay.

You can choose to take breakfast in the Terrace@Caprice or on your private balcony.

Have lunch in the same restaurant, in your suite or alongside the swimming pool.





Dinner is served at the fine dining restaurant Caprice or again in your suite.

For a family group of six adults you can book a Presidential Heritage Suite that has three luxurious bedrooms and three matching marbled bathrooms with walk in showers and circular Jacuzzis. Soak away the pleasures of the day whilst watching the tropical sunset on the horizon with a cocktail or a glass of chilled Champagne.

Presidential Suite guests have the added facility of a 24 hour butler to serve your every wish. Their mission is to make your holiday one to remember.

Presidential Platinum Suite with two to three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

Inspired by the opulent essence of Thai culture, reconnect with the entire family and discover beauty, tranquility and ultimate relaxation within the confines of your elegantly designed suite boasting unobstructed views of the sea in the best 5 star beach resort in Pattaya.

Tucked away among this new standard of luxury, take your comfort to new heights as you bask in rejuvenating massages, feast on delectable gourmet dishes and soak in an



open air Jacuzzi as glorious sunsets over the Royal Wing's exclusive beachfront takes your breath away at your very own beachside sala (open Thai-styled pavilion).

With remote working becoming part of the "new normal" use the hotel as your second office whilst entertaining and being in the company of the extended family. The hotel offers high speed internet and every necessary aid and technology available. You will find it the perfect environment.

"The health and safety of our guests and employees remains our number 1 priority. We provide a safe haven where essential services can be enjoyed with the appropriate safety precautions in place. We have taken significant steps

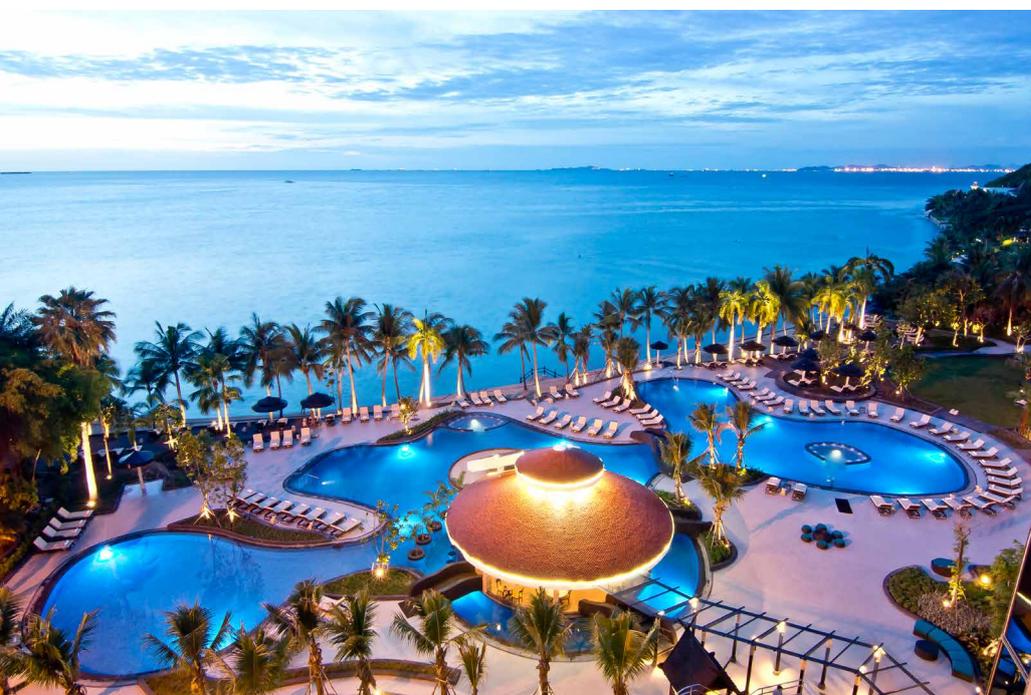
in reviewing our existing service offerings and adapted them to create a safer guest experience for you and your loved ones," Mr. Vitanart Vathanakul, the CEO of Royal Cliff Hotels Group.

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How do you know you are healthy?

by Karla Walter

It may seem like a very simple question. Before you read any further, perhaps you would like to write down the top 10 things that come to mind. Can you write more than 10? Being healthy is a simple way of life if you choose to commit to the basics of life. Does that include the latest superfood, diet plan, energy drink or some other trend? The answer to that question is, no.

Being your healthiest self has a starting point. Once you can tick all the boxes associated with the basic starting point, then you know what you have to bring in if you do in fact require some extra help.

That might be supplements or even medication. It may be that you need to discuss with yourself about changing some of your habits.

Once you make the commitment, the body then has the tools to either turn your health around or maintain your healthy state.

There are only 7 items to maintain life. Constantly checking these 7 items places the body in the best position to remain healthy. However, most people dismiss the simplicity of being healthy or don't know how or why the importance of these items is needed.

It's a funny thing being healthy, the majority of people only seek attention when they get sick and therefore are part of a sick care system, not a health system. The emphasis is on you to take responsibility to be healthy, not the practitioner to whom you visit. The list below are the basics of life. No matter where you live in the world only the items in this list matter.

Air, Water, Sleep, Shelter, Exercise, Nutrition, Mind/Spirit

1. Air – breathing

The quality of the air you breath. It is the one action that we do automatically to keep us alive and if we do not have it for as little as 3 – 5 minutes we die, yet people give it no thought at all. Learning how to breathe deeply into your lungs and not the top third of your lungs will bring more oxygen into the body. Fast, shallow breathing expels carbon dioxide too quickly and has ill effects on our physical and emotional health. Slower, deeper breathing, combined with the rhythmical pumping of our diaphragm, abdomen, and belly, helps turn on our parasympathetic nervous system – our "relaxation response." Such breathing helps to harmonise our nervous system and reduce the amount of stress in our lives. This of course, has a positive impact on our overall health. Yoga breathing exercises for example is one option to learn deep breathing. Other areas of poor quality air are in our homes or offices such as products that produce gasses or invisible pollutants. Removal is by high quality filters that do not produce ozone as ozone is also a toxic gas.

2. Water

The type of water that you drink and how much? Is your water high in acid or does it have minerals to support your body? Failing to drink enough water has many adverse effects including, dehydration, fatigue, headache, certain skin conditions, weakened immunity, to name but a few. Be mindful of plastic bottles that leach petroleum and BPA into the water. Find a level 6 or 7 plastic bottle to carry, refill the bottle and be kind to the planet. Stainless steel or glass are other options. Humans are the only animals on the planet that have made drinks from chemicals. Many times people have cravings because they are dehydrated. Dehydration is responsible for many ailments. I carry a water bottle that has a built in filter, so I can fill it just about anywhere and have clean water.



3. Nutrition – food – supplements.

Humans are energy beings and require energy coming into the body through food. Vegetables are the main source of minerals and vitamins. Experiment with eating a variety from each level of the earth to get you started. Above the ground (all large green vegetables), on the ground (onions, sweet potato, zucchini, butternut squash, etc.) Below the ground (carrots, parsnips). 5-9 different vegetables per day with each one being only a ¼-½ cup in quantity. Protein is required every day, through red meat, white meat, fish or legumes and grain combined. Portion size is the palm of the hand for red meat (4 ounces) or the whole hand for white meat and fish.

Vegetarians must work at their diet every day with protein. Eggs, almonds, peanut butter are not enough of the right protein to form strong healthy cells. Organic fresh non processed food will always be my preference for people. Many foods that are processed and have binders and fillers which in turn may have a detrimental affect on the body. If it's white leave it out. When a person removes a lot of processed food from their diet, many symptoms from emotional to physical may in turn be removed. The example here is spicy foods that give people heartburn or gastric reflux. When we know that a food or beverage causes symptoms leave it out instead of taking antacids, don't let your ego rule your taste buds. Purchase high quality supplements where the binders will not harm your health.

Supplement fillers to avoid:

- Sodium laurel sulphate (foaming agent in shampoo)
- Aluminium silicate (talc)

- Artificial colours (FD and C)
- Sodium benzoate (preservative that destroys friendly bacteria)
- Propylene glycol (antifreeze is used as an anti crumbling agent)
- Cornstarch
- Sugars
- Shellac
- Coal tar
- Petroleum products

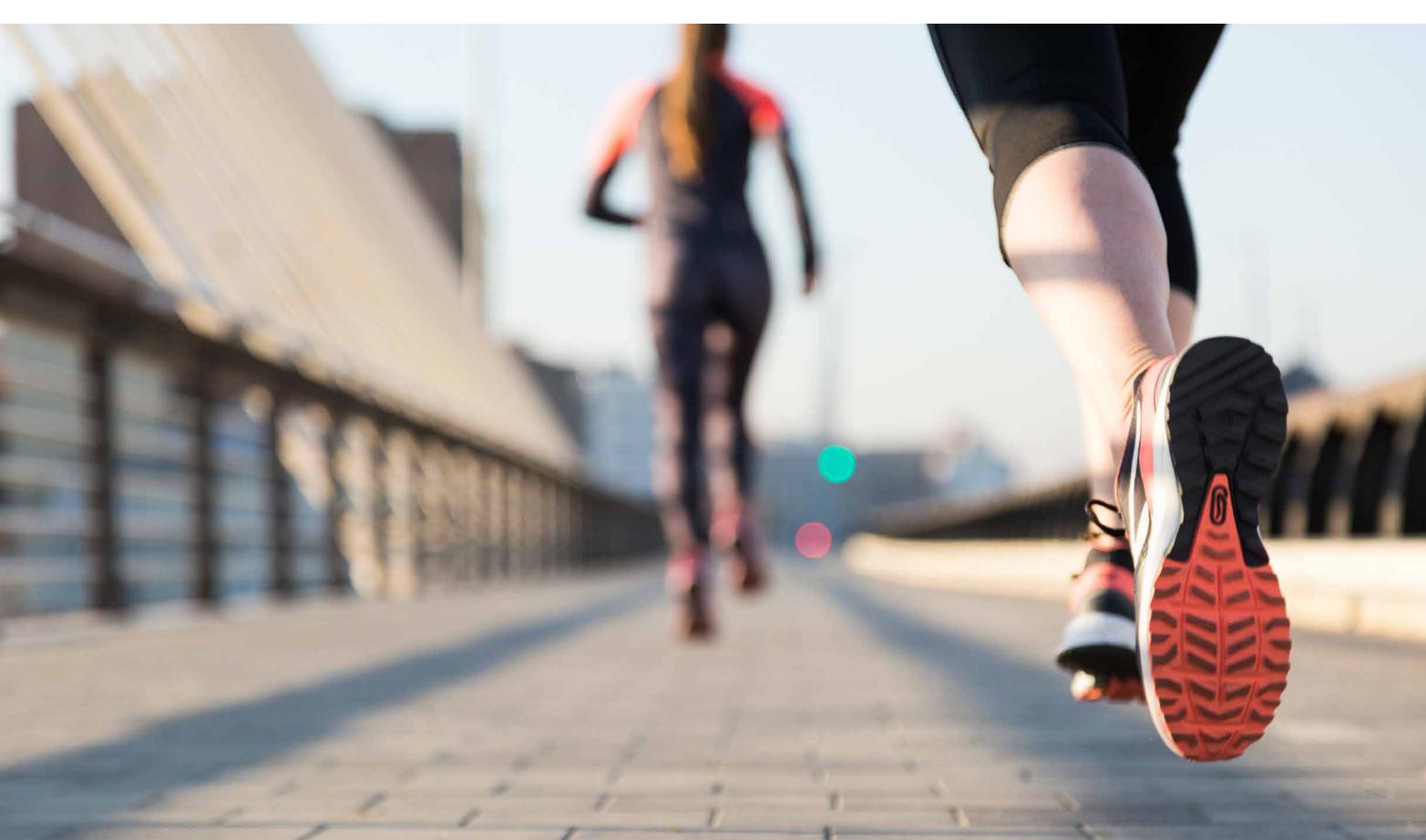
Microwave experiment: take two plants, water one plant with boiled water that has cooled from the stove and water the other plant with water that has been microwaved and then cooled. Continue this for 10 days. Which plant is healthy? This is a wonderful visual experiment to see how plants absorb the microwaved water. The same process applies to your own body.

4. Sleep

The body repairs when it sleeps. Poor sleep leads to poor health. Be sure to have a mattress that supports your body. Go to bed at days end with thanks for a wonderful day. Children are told to go to bed to rest so they will not be tired the next day, the same message applies to adults. Working on the computer stimulates the senses, it does not relax a person, so avoid at night.

5. Exercise

30-45 minutes every other day is the minimum requirement. Types of exercise may include walking, jogging, swimming, etc.



6. Shelter

Home and clothes: clothes made from natural fibres: cotton, silk, bamboo, hemp, wool are the best quality for your health. Natural fibres assist in the rhythm of the natural electromagnetic field around the human body. Synthetic fibres distort the natural rhythm.

Your home is your castle the safest place you go to. Make sure it is supporting you and not making you sick.

Like the office, out gassing products from carpets and furniture be mindful to purchase and use natural products. What's in your kitchen cupboards for cleaning? The list is endless for natural cleaning products.

7. Mind/Spirit

Remove the chatter of gossip, anger, bitterness and fill your mind with conversations that are positive and uplift you. It may be time to turn off the TV so the mind does not get bombarded by violence or a constant of so called bad news.

Watching TV for short periods of time, watching interesting or comedy type programmes may have a more positive impact on your senses.

You are the most important person and checking in with yourself is your first priority to keeping you healthy. Once you have incorporated these simple steps, it is easy and effortless to assist family and friends to do the same.

Health and happiness always

Karla Walter

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Red divinity... pomegranate

by Margaret Elizabeth Johnston ND

Pomegranates. They are a very sensual fruit, as I am in Thailand right now I see it selling on the streets for pennies compared to what I'm used to in exotic local Farmer's Markets in both the USA and the UK. I think people refrain from buying them as a normal consumption fruit because they plain ol' forget about them! Unlike oranges, apples and bananas, it takes a bit of time to be able to enjoy these divine fruits. The seeds need to be plucked from the insides and they may stain your fingers but the result can be a delightful addition to salads, on top of yogurt or just as a fine summertime treat all alone. Pomegranate has many incredible health benefits for your body. It is called a divine fruit because it is the most mentioned fruit in theological books.

The pomegranate is native from Iran to the Himalayas in Northern India and was cultivated and naturalised over the whole Mediterranean region since ancient times. It is widely cultivated throughout India and the drier parts of SE Asia, Malaysia, the East Indies and tropical Africa. Now I see it all over the world and I always get a thrill when I see them offered so abundantly here in Asia. As a child I used to sit on

a neighbours fence and pick them with a friend and then eat them in my treehouse getting stained fingers and nails so the fun of the pom has been in my days growing up in California. My mother planted a pom tree in our backyard for this reason but as I grew getting stained nails as a young adult was something I tried not to do... haha, now I just don't care!

Pomegranate has antioxidant, anti-viral and anti-tumour properties and is said to be a good source of vitamins, especially vitamin A, C, and E, as well as folic acid. This amazing fruit consists of three times as many antioxidants as both wine or green tea. Protection from free radicals and the thinning of blood can prevent the hardening of artery walls and also help pump the level of oxygen to our blood. This fruit also can help reduce inflammation, works with cardiovascular and cancer issues in the body and experiments have proven it helps improve memory! The high fibre due to the seeds helps with digestion and prevents plaque formation in the mouth. All the nutrients to be had in one delicious pomegranate are well worth the trouble picking out the seeds.

Here in Thailand there are small fruit stands on every corner and one can order plain sweet unadulterated pomegranate juice. I usually have mine with some carrot and orange for a wonderful midday treat! At home I spend 3 minutes putting the seeds in a glass jar and then sprinkling a few

tablespoons full on top of my yogurt and/or chia seed puddings I've been making lately with coconut milk and seeds. Colour is the name of the game when wanting to get all the nutrients into your body and with that delicious bright red colour you cant go wrong!

I thought this information on the fabulous pomegranate fits in well with this edition's discussions about woman's issues and also goes along with my article Hormone's in Balance; A Woman's Way. The pom is a leathery skinned berry containing many seeds, each surrounded by a juicy, fleshy aril. It is one of the recommended fruits to incorporate into your diet to help stabilise hormones naturally. Read more about hormone support through food in this edition!





Balance your hormones naturally

by Monique Jhington

Hormonal imbalances lie at the root of a host of common health concerns that affect many, if not most, women at various stages of life. Whether it is teenage (or adult) acne, PMS, fertility issues, fibroids, weight gain, fatigue, mood swings, blood sugar imbalances, osteoporosis, premature ageing, insomnia, loss of libido, most women have experienced at least one or more of these symptoms of hormonal imbalance.

Fortunately there are many ways to support hormonal balance naturally and take back control of your health, your life and your sanity. There is no quick fix and neither will you ever be “done”: as your body, the environment and your circumstances keep changing, so does your need to adjust and course correct.

But despite these caveats, achieving hormonal balance is within reach. If you are ready to do what it takes, make targeted diet and lifestyle changes, use some good quality natural supplements, work on optimising your digestive health, you can be well on your way to feeling better and resolving many of your hormone related health concerns.

In this article I will discuss some common root causes that contribute to hormonal imbalance and share some essential nutrition and lifestyle tips that can help restore balance and resolve symptoms.

The wondrous world of hormones

Hormones are chemical messengers, secreted by the endocrine glands that govern most bodily functions. The role of the endocrine system is ultimately to maintain balance and to regulate important processes such as growth, reproduction and development.

The way this system works is truly amazing. It depends on an intricately complex communication and feedback system and can be compared to an orchestra with a conductor and many musicians, who need to be finely tuned into one another in order to create that perfect symphony.

Many things influence that delicate balance but there are 4 areas that can be considered of prime importance when it comes to building a strong foundation for hormonal health.

1. Adrenal function

Our adrenal glands are the tiny glands atop our kidneys responsible for regulating the stress response in our bodies through the synthesis of a number of different hormones such as adrenalin and cortisol. The adrenal glands are, in a way, the fuel tank of our bodies. Designed to respond to a sudden stressful situation they release (amongst other things) adrenalin and cortisol, which get the body ready with increased levels of energy and focus so you can “fight” or “flight” from the stressor you encountered. When the situation has resolved, you adapt and your body recovers so that you can go on with non-emergency functions such as digestion, repair, reproduction etc.



sugar foods it can eventually cause that system to falter leading to blood sugar highs and lows, insulin resistance, and eventually continuously high blood sugar levels.

This in turn can affect the body and brain in several negative ways. Blood sugar imbalances become an additional “stressor” on the already taxed adrenal glands contributing to the whole cascade of hormonal imbalances.

A first step to better blood sugar balance is to modify your diet and reduce carbohydrate consumption, most importantly refined sugar and high sugar foods. Eating healthy whole foods and including healthy fats,

However, sometimes life is an ongoing chain of stressful events. You might be facing deadlines at work, eating a not-so-healthy diet, entertaining often with alcohol and late nights, dealing with relationship issues or worrying about the health of a relative. Maybe you live in a big city and have to deal with traffic, pollution or a long commute to work.

There are so many different things that cause us stress and when there is no time for the body to recover and adapt the adrenals pump out high levels of cortisol continuously thereby not only affecting essential functions in the body but also disrupting hormonal balance. Thyroid issues, and steroid hormone imbalance often happen as a result of continuously elevated cortisol levels.

As you can see it is very important to address the stress in your life: mental/emotional stress but also the “internal” stress caused by a poor diet, nutrient deficiencies, infections, or toxicity.

2. Blood sugar balance

When we eat carbohydrates they get broken down into simple sugars, which are then absorbed into the blood stream causing blood sugar levels to rise. This triggers the release of the hormone insulin by the pancreas, which signals cells to pull glucose out of the blood stream and into storage. This mechanism helps to keep blood sugar levels in a normal range.

When we are continuously flooding our system with high

fibre and protein in every meal further helps to regulate blood sugar levels.

3. Gut health

All (hormonal) health begins in the gut.

For every hormone that is created or detoxified in our body we need certain minerals or vitamins. A healthy and well functioning digestive system results in the efficient breakdown and absorption of these vital nutrients. Additionally, our gut microbiome (the trillions of micro-organisms that reside in our gut) is directly involved in the regulation of many hormones, including oestrogen, thyroid hormones, melatonin and hormones involved in metabolic processes.





Diet is critical in supporting gut health and a healthy gut microbiome. Removing foods that contribute to intestinal inflammation, and including foods that support digestive function are vital. Make sure to include fermented foods such as kimchi, sauerkraut, yoghurt, kefir in your diet as well as a variety of colourful fibre rich plant based foods that help feed the beneficial bacteria in your gut. This will all help build a strong and healthy gut and support hormonal health.

4. Liver function

We know the liver as the body's main detox organ, responsible for breaking down and eliminating harmful toxins but some

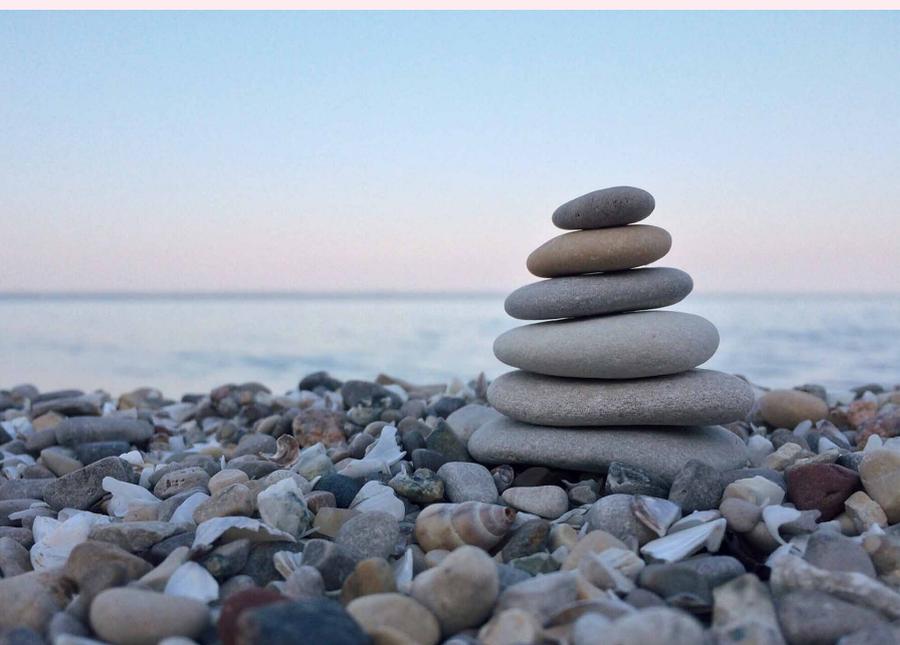
of its other important functions include the detoxification of excess hormones, conversion of thyroid hormones into their free and usable forms, the production of serum proteins that act as hormone carriers and the regulation of sex hormones.

You can see how a compromised liver function can have a ripple effect on your hormonal balance and how important it is to support your liver function. Eating a clean diet, restricting alcohol, sugar, nicotine, reducing your environmental toxic load, and supporting toxin elimination with adequate hydration, a fibre rich diet, and exercise can enhance the body's natural detoxification pathways. Vitamin C rich foods, turmeric, beetroot and cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, onion, kale and radish are wonderful to help support liver function.

Diet first

When it comes to building good health there is not just one thing that is going to do the trick. Finding the right diet for your unique body and circumstances is essential but so is movement, sleep, eliminating toxins, enjoying good relationships, spiritual wellbeing, stress management and having a purpose.

Even though all these areas need to be addressed, adjusting your diet helps to build a strong foundation. Eating a healthy whole food diet that is right for you will ensure that your body and mind are getting the right building blocks in the form of macro and micronutrients.



Everybody is unique and I work with my clients to identify their root core imbalances as well as their unique requirements in terms of nutrition but there are a few principles that apply to everyone, no matter what the circumstances are:

1. Eat real food: unrefined, unprocessed, traditional and wholesome, preferably seasonal and local.
2. Bump up your rainbow coloured vegetable intake to increase the nutrients and fibre in your diet.
3. Eliminate inflammatory foods such as sugar, GMO foods and unhealthy fats such as trans fats and refined vegetable seed oils.
4. Avoid overeating and unlimited snacking and eat with awareness, chewing properly to support your digestion.
5. These principles, even though very simple and straightforward, can be very powerful in building a strong foundation for health in general and hormonal health in particular.

If you focus on supporting the four areas I covered in this article and you apply these four diet principles in your life, you will start seeing a difference in the way you feel and in the symptoms that are related to your hormonal balance. If you feel you need more help, get in touch with me on my website to set up a free Nutrition Breakthrough session!

Be well.

Monique



Monique Jhington is a Functional Nutrition & Lifestyle Practitioner who offers select private coaching to expats whose health and digestion has been compromised as a result of transitioning into new environments, cultures, climates and foods. You can read more on her website and sign up for a free Nutrition Breakthrough Session here: www.moniquejhington.com

A "lighthearted" ode to menopause



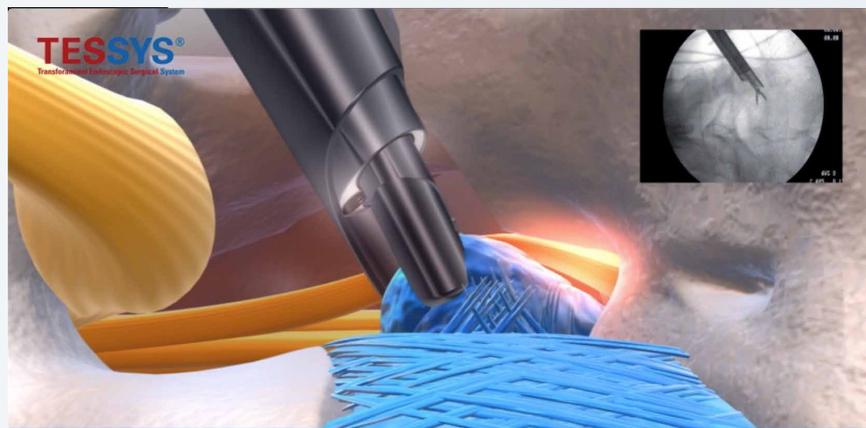
Ours is not to reason why
 ours is just to sweat and sigh
 I was feeling young and happy
 now I'm feeling old and crappy
 Memories gone,
 where do I belong
 Where are my keys
 what's happened to my knees??
 Bones turning chalky,
 time for a walky
 Hormones roaring,
 who the hell's that snoring
 Feeling bloated, duly noted!
 HRT that's not for me,
 oops time again for another pee
 Energy levels zero, time to call on
 my inner hero
 Could be worse at least now
 I don't have "The Curse"
 I am a woman I am strong,
 I can handle this "Bring it on"
 Look to the future
 it's not time to shoot ya.

The risks of herniated discs

At Sukumvit Hospital, professionals use minimally invasive surgical technology to treat herniated discs so patients can live a painless, worry free life.

Nowadays, advanced medical technology has allowed people to live longer. Many individuals now retire at a later age (60 to 75) as they still have the capability to enjoy various activities, exercise, and travel, making their lives more comparable to those of working age. However, this can also make them forgetful about prioritising their health. Particularly the back muscles and spine, which are no longer as strong and flexible as before since one's physical condition naturally deteriorates with age. As a result, the muscles, nerves, and tendons become more at risk of injury, whether from bad posture or overexertion during exercise.

In the case of Khun Suraphon Narangsin, a retiree aged 62 years old, he had been exercising regularly since he was a young man, which helped him remain healthy and strong as he grew older. He often spent weekday evenings doing yoga and walking, and he would spend weekends road cycling and even mountain biking on occasion. One day, Khun Suraphon began experiencing pain in his left leg with no idea what was causing it. He assumed it was muscular inflammation from rigorous exercise and began taking pain medication.



However, after taking 3 tablets but no feeling of pain relief, he decided to visit a doctor at another hospital.

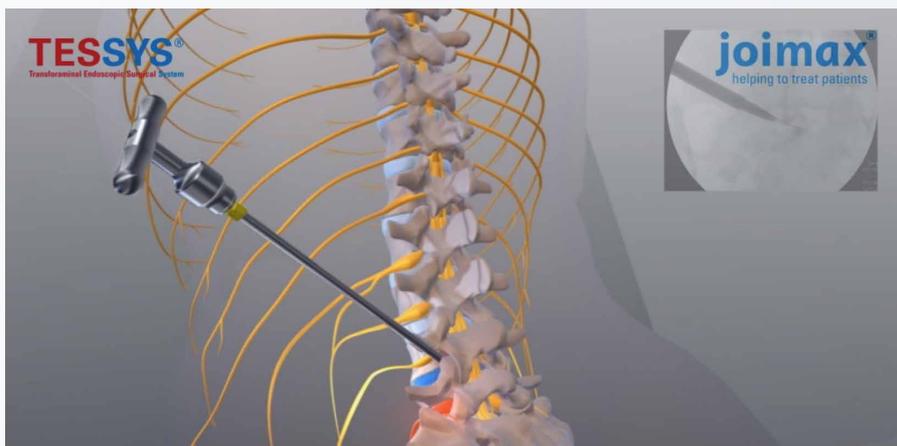
After receiving Xray and MRI results, doctors found that two spinal discs had been reduced to half their normal height. As a result, the discs were pushing onto his nerves, causing serious leg pain.

The initial recommendation was to undergo physical therapy in conjunction with taking medication, but after two days, the pain got so unbearable that he had to ask for stronger pills and injections. He then got a consultation from a different hospital, where he was advised to get standard back surgery that involves inserting screws into the bone. However, Khun Suraphon expressed his concerns about major surgery and sought out alternatives.

At this point, his pain rapidly increased to the point where he could barely move or even stand up to urinate on his own. His family searched the internet to try to find answer. During their research, they stumbled across Sukumvit Hospital's comprehensive treatments and decided to make an appointment with Dr. Poonsak Artamnuayvipas, an Orthopedic Surgeon. The minimally invasive full endoscope discectomy makes the job easier...

Dr. Poonsak, had made a very specific diagnosis:

"The patient had severe back pain and pain in the left leg. Usually, Khun Suraphon is





Khun Suraphon Narangsin

an active person, exercising frequently. However, five days before he began experiencing symptoms, he described how he was exercising very hard and began to feel pain in his back. After he visited a doctor at another hospital, they found that his discs were herniated. When I saw the nature of the fracture with the MRI results, I felt the case was complicated because Khun Suraphon was probably experiencing spinal degeneration. Two spinal discs, which are usually 11mm high are now only 6mm. These discs, three and four, were also fractured into two to three large segments quite severely.

Luckily for Khun Suraphon, advancements in surgery allowed us to remove these fragments without the need for an invasive procedure.

We decided to go ahead with a full endoscope discectomy, which involves making a small incision, shining a camera down into the spine via a small tube, and removing the fragments without damaging the surrounding tissue. It has many advantages, including short recovery times, minimal scarring, and it preserves the spine's mobility. After surgery, Khun Suraphon no longer experienced pain, he could stand up and walk around in a few hours, proving that this new technology is a successful, minimally invasive alternative."

A word of advice from Khun Suraphon:

"I would like to offer advice to friends of the same age, to the younger generation, to those who suffer from chronic pain, and those exercising rigorously: please seek treatment early. I recommend Sukumvit Hospital as it is affordable, the initial diagnosis costs very little, and you can figure out the root cause of your problems quickly so you can resolve any potential issues, with or without surgery."



Dr. Poonsak Artamnuayvipas, an Orthopedic Surgeon



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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Are you a prisoner of your own thoughts?

by Saree Jitta

First thing in the morning after you open your eyes you start thinking of the problems you have (same old story in your head).

"I don't like my job my boss is an idiot."

"I hate my tummy it's just hanging there."

"I am never going to get married and will end up being alone."

Then you drag your exhausted body out of bed, take a shower, and rush to work. By the time you get to work you're too busy answering emails because that what you do first thing.

You probably don't have time to eat breakfast because you always rushing to work (you thought who eats breakfast anyway).

Lunchtime comes you kind of hungry you grab a quick bite and another coffee to keep you alive before 3pm.

In the evening you go to the gym because you want to get back in shape. You kill yourself in the class kind of punish yourself to make it up for the guilt that you think you eat too much and now you're fat.

By midnight your eyes still wide open, a mix of hunger and some posts that you saw on FB or a photo of this "slim girl" on IG that make you feel bad with yourself, then you think about your boss and your colleague at work, still can't sleep at 1am might have a look at email on my phone a bit then you fall asleep by 2am.

Your alarm wakes you up at 6am, you push the snooze button because you just want to sleep a bit more. But it's time to wake up and you have to start everything all over again.

Is this the life you really want?

Stress will never be out of our life because it's a part of life. Actually, a bit of stress can push us to start doing something about it, to ask for help, to change how we eat, to start doing exercise. But most people have too much worry, too much stress. We think of what would happen in the future which



most of the time it's never going to happen.

The only moment that is real, that you can have, that you can enjoy is this present moment here is now. You can't turn back time and fix your past, and you can't keep worrying about the future which hasn't happened yet.

"Worrying is using your imagination to create something you don't want."

Worry is in your head; you might keep telling yourself the same story what happened in the past or what might never happen in the future. Worry is helpful only if leads to change, not if it turns into obsessive thoughts. There's nothing in this world can trouble you, as much as your own thoughts.

Stress affects your body. When you worry too much it creeps to your body not just the thought in your head anymore. You might start to see some of these signs; headache, diarrhoea, or even throw up.

Anxiety happens in your mind and body. Not only you're a prisoner of your own thoughts but a slave of your life.

Let me tell you this story. Once a psychologist walked around a room while teaching stress management to an audience. As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected they'd be asked the "half empty or half full" question. Instead, with a smile on her face, she inquired "How heavy is this glass of water?"

Different students gave different answers. She replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, it's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, my arm will feel numb and paralysed. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn't change,

but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

She continued, "The stresses and worries in life are like that glass of water. Think about them for a while and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer and they begin to hurt. And if you think about them all day long, you'll feel paralysed – incapable of doing anything." It's important to let go of your stress after a particular time.

So how long have you been holding this glass now?

I believe the easiest and cheapest way to reduce stress is exercise. You need to start moving your body. All the thought in your head the more you think about it the more energy you give to it. Just get outside, go for a walk, meditate or journaling helps a lot too. Start putting good nutrients into your body.

For meditation, you just have to sit comfortably and focus your attention on every in and out breath. Our breaths are born and die with every moment and they only happen in the now. When your breathing stops, now will also cease to exist.

If your mind drifts away from your breaths, gently bring it back and return your focus to where it should be. Do this simple meditation every day start from 5 minutes if you're new then increase the time to 20 minutes. I've

been practicing meditation for 30 mins everyday my goal is to add up to 60mins at the end of this year.

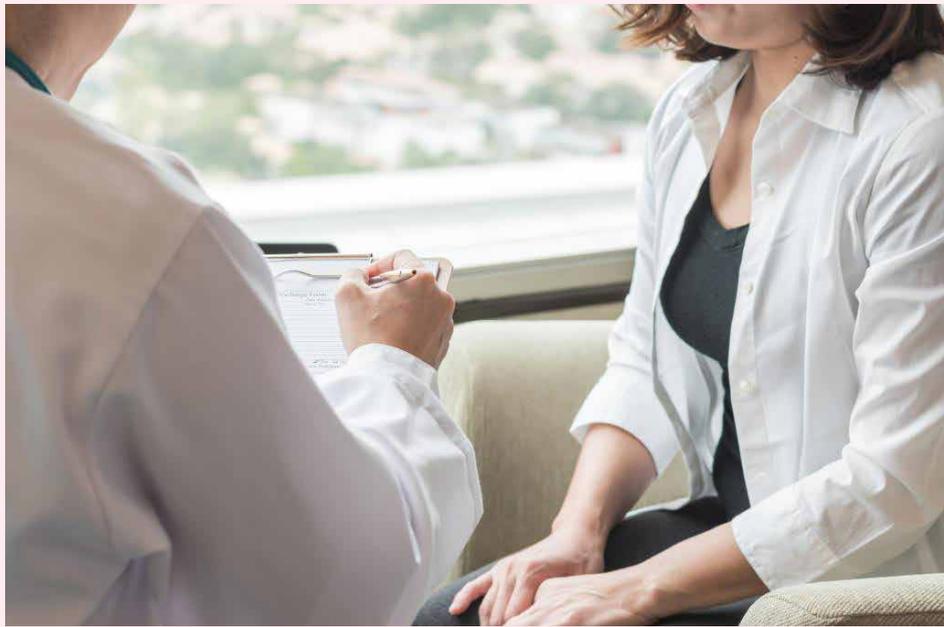
As you become accustomed to focusing on your breaths, it will become progressively easier to stay in the now. Your mind will become less distracted by haphazard thoughts and memories. By being able to focus on this moment, you bring greater awareness to your everyday life.

When there is full awareness, mental walls slowly break down. Instead of being limited by your conditioned way of thinking, you live life spontaneously and act according to the needs of each moment instead of living in the past or future.

Take home message. My trick which works most of the time is to know that eventually you're going to die, we all are. You're on this earth for a limited of time so you better start enjoy it because when you're gone none of this would matter anyway.

Saree Jitta has helped hundreds of women regain self-love and self-confidence through her popular Superwomen Wellness System. Her inspiration came from her struggle and triumph over emotional eating and trauma which now has allowed her to help others transform. Schedule in for a complimentary consultation via contact@sareejitta.com or find out more at www.sareejitta.com





Breast cancer

by Dr. Donna Robinson

Breast cancer is the most common invasive cancer in women and the second leading cause of cancer death in women after lung cancer. Breast cancer begins when normal cells in the breast start to change and grow uncontrollably, forming a mass called a tumour.

Most breast tumours (about 85 to 90%) are considered to be ductal carcinoma (invaded surrounding tissue). If the tumour is well contained and non-invasive, it is called ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS), which means the cells haven't spread or grown out of the breast ducts into surrounding tissue. DCIS is considered precancerous, and can usually be successfully treated. It is often found during a mammogram or as part of a routine breast cancer screening. If left untreated, DCIS can lead to cancer. About 43% of breast cancers are found as a lump during self-examination and about 57% are detected by mammogram.

Cancer causes the cells to multiply uncontrollably. This excessive cell growth causes cancer because the tumour uses nutrients and energy and deprives the cells around it. Breast cancer usually starts in the inner lining of milk ducts or the lobules that supply them with milk. From there, it can spread to other parts of the body. The first symptoms of breast cancer usually appear as an area of thickened tissue in the breast or a lump in the breast or armpit. Other symptoms may be pain or a rash around the breast and nipple area. A key to tackling breast cancer is catching it early. For example, one of our close friends R.Lemieux caught hers early the second time round which meant that the cancer hasn't spread and can be easily treated. It is very crucial that us women follow up on all our checkups and screening as to detect, if any, symptoms of the cancer.

The exact cause of breast cancer still remains unclear, but some risk factors make it more likely. It is possible to prevent some of these risk factors.

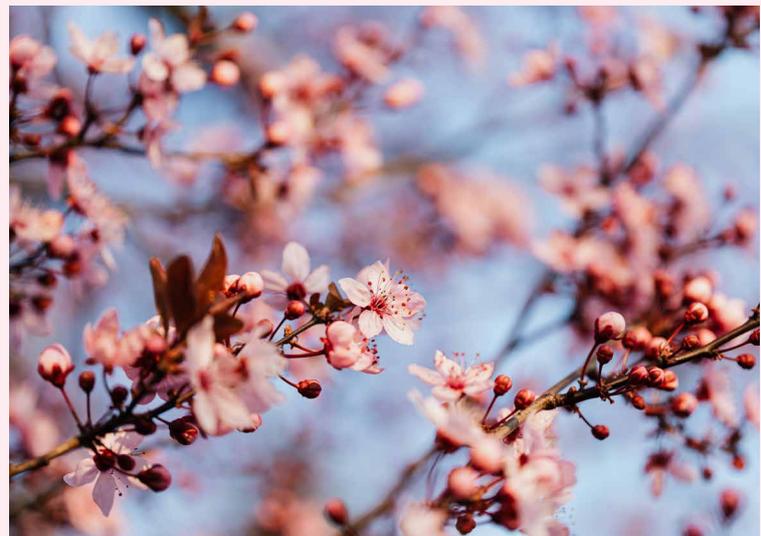
Women who carry the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes have a higher chance of developing breast cancer, ovarian cancer, or both. In some cases, like Angelina Jolie and one of our close friends Jayne who tested positive for the gene, can decide to be 'proactive' and opt for a double preventative mastectomy followed by a full hysterectomy (removal of uterus and ovaries) to minimise the risks. Cancer is still a word that strikes fear in almost everyone, making us feel vulnerable.

But today it is possible to find out through a blood test whether you are highly susceptible to breast and ovarian cancer, and then take action.

Most women might be afraid of how the procedure might affect their appearance and lifestyle but let me assure you with Angelina Jolie's own word: "I feel empowered that I made a strong choice that in no way diminishes my femininity", and that she made a quick recovery back into her "normal life" straight after.

Therefore I would like to encourage every woman, especially if you have a family history of breast or ovarian cancer, to seek out the information from medical experts who can help you through this aspect of your life, and to make your own informed choices.

"Life comes with many challenges. The ones that should not scare us are the ones we can take on and take control of". – Angelina Jolie





Plastic free menstruation

by Aparna Sharma

Let's talk about plastic in the menstrual products we have been buying for so many years. You might be thinking that you read that wrong, we knew plastic is in our clothes and food but now we are learning that plastic is in our menstrual products. Gosh!! Why would anybody knowingly sell products that are damaging to our personal hygiene and to the planet. The answer to that will require another article on what corporate greed is doing to humanity and why we need to become more mindful consumers and start ensuring that there is traceability in the products we buy.

Coming back to our monthly red flow visits, did you know that most commercial pads available in the market have synthetic materials including plastics, adhesives, artificial fragrances, toxic chemicals like phthalates, dioxins and petrochemical additives. Some pads also contain chloroform which is a carcinogen and acetone. Yuk!! When I started understanding how damaging commercial pads are to personal hygiene and the thought of millions of non biodegradable pads lying in landfills on Gods green earth literally made me have a meltdown. I was under the assumption that all pads are biodegradable. Furthermore, the average woman will use 15,000 disposable menstrual pads in her lifetime and it apparently takes more than 100 years for these pads to biodegrade. Luckily, there are various options available for eco conscious consumers today to ditch the synthetic pads and move towards plastic free menstruation.

When exploring safer plastic free alternatives, here are some things to consider.

- Are the materials used biodegradable and safe
- Is the packaging eco friendly

In my opinion as a writer who focuses on climate change issues, I constantly meet brands working

towards creating products which mitigate climate change. I have learnt a few important things that I would like to share. The healthiest option for you and the planet will be pads made from organic and toxin free materials which have minimal packaging and are not single use. The use and throw culture has got to change so the best option is a menstrual cup, reusable pads and reusable underwear. All of these options prevent tons of plastic waste. Reusable pads and underwear are usually made from organic cotton and they are so much softer than the plastic pads. They also come in various sizes depending on your need. Menstrual cups made from silicone or rubber are gaining traction as an eco alternative to conventional tampons and I personally recommend this option because I find it extremely convenient. I made the switch more than a year back and it is one of the best decisions I have made towards a more conscious and mindful lifestyle.

These options might not suit everyone, if you are someone who chooses to use disposable pads, the best option is to find brands which are making non plastic biodegradable pads. Fortunately, there are a few companies making pads from coconut fibre, banana fibre, bamboo fibre etc. which are 100% biodegradable. I have not personally come across any in Thailand but there are a few in India. I worked on a small project with an organisation in India which is educating women on the importance of plastic free menstruation. I learnt about a few different biodegradable pads which are safe for human use from them. I was very impressed to see the work the organisation is doing at the grass root level to educate women and to eradicate plastic from menstrual products.

Have you already started your journey towards plastic free menstruation? What are the issues which are holding you back? I would love to hear from you and answer your questions. For more queries, kindly get in touch with me [@info@elbkk.com](mailto:info@elbkk.com) and I will answer all your questions and hopefully we can all collectively ensure that we can eradicate plastic from menstrual products and move towards a plastic free menstruation.





YOU ONLY GET TO LIVE YOUR LIFE ONCE, SO LIVE IT TO THE MOST



by *Barbara Frank*

We often hear such advice that it seems to have lost its essence. But for those who battle chronic diseases as cruel as cancer, it's another story.

In June of 2018, aged 52, during a normal health check in the Samitivej Hospital Bangkok, the doctor saw in the mammography a lump in my right breast. It wasn't round – the shape like a real crab ;-)- the size of a golf ball.

Diagnosis

Your entire life can change in an instant. You don't think it can, but it can.

My plan was to fly to Germany for 3 weeks' holiday and I told the doctor – before we start with any treatment or surgery or examinations I will go home for recharge my energy, enjoy my life, having fun with friends, see my family, eat and drink my favourite German food, walking, hiking, etc.

The biopsy revealed a mix of ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) or pre-cancerous cells and invasive ductal carcinoma (IDC), the most common type of breast cancer. I learned breast cancer vocabulary very, very quickly. I was diagnosed on 16 June 2018, and my right breast preserving operation was on 18 July 2018.

During a mastectomy, a breast surgeon also examines the lymph nodes to see if the cancer has travelled outside the main tumour in the breast. Before surgery I only knew that I wanted – no, I needed – negative nodes. I knew that if the cancer had spread beyond my breast, treatment would be more complicated.

Women who die from breast cancer don't die from cancer that stays in the breast; they die when that cancer spreads to other parts of their body, commonly the lungs, liver, brain, and bones.

My surgeon removed seven lymph nodes and during the surgery the pathology and found out that there had been cancer in three of those nodes. Scans of my lungs, liver, and bones were, thankfully, clear. My cancer was hormone receptor positive, which meant I would need hormone therapy for the next 4–5 years to keep my body from using oestrogen. Before that I would need chemotherapy and radiation.

Treatment

My chemotherapy regimen was called TAC for the three drugs I would receive via an IV, every three weeks for three infusions. (Each infusion and rest period was called a "cycle.") The list of possible side effects of these drugs were terrifying and endless. The first infusion was my learning one. I spent all night vomiting. I was exhausted down to my bones. I lost my

sense of taste so I could barely eat or drink. Water tasted foul. No bitter taste – like beer or coffee. I had to avoid all of my favourite foods because they tasted nothing like they used to.

My hair fell out two weeks after my infusion and I shaved it off. In that moment I looked like a cancer patient. Something that felt private became very public.

I hated chemotherapy but I am grateful for it because it worked very, very well, but I hated the way it made me feel. I had horrible nerve pain, problems with my bowels, the first few days I had the feeling that I wear a heavy metal coat, my fingernails were very sensitive and under my skull was a heat like in an oven.

I had my last infusion on 16 of December, 2018. At the end of chemotherapy, I started hormone therapy. I would receive a shot called Zoladex every three months to put me into menopause and I would take an Aromasin pill daily. If surgery was to cut out the cancer and chemo was to poison it, then hormone therapy was to starve it so it could never grow again.

I started radiation on January 2019. I had to be at the Chula hospital five days a week for a total of 30 radiation sessions. Radiation was much easier than chemotherapy; the only inconvenience was the daily commute to and from the hospital. I did not experience any real side effects from radiation except for a little sore throat and dry skin. Unfortunately, after 3 weeks I had very burnt skin (I couldn't wear a bra). And then active treatment was over.

Survivorship

It has been more than two years since my diagnosis. I have found navigating survivorship to be surprisingly difficult. When you are in treatment your doctors are responsible for you. Your life is all about “killing cancer.” And then it's done and you're meant to live your life and hope that you'll never have to go through it again. But you might. Or you might not. So you live in this limbo that can make you crazy.

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

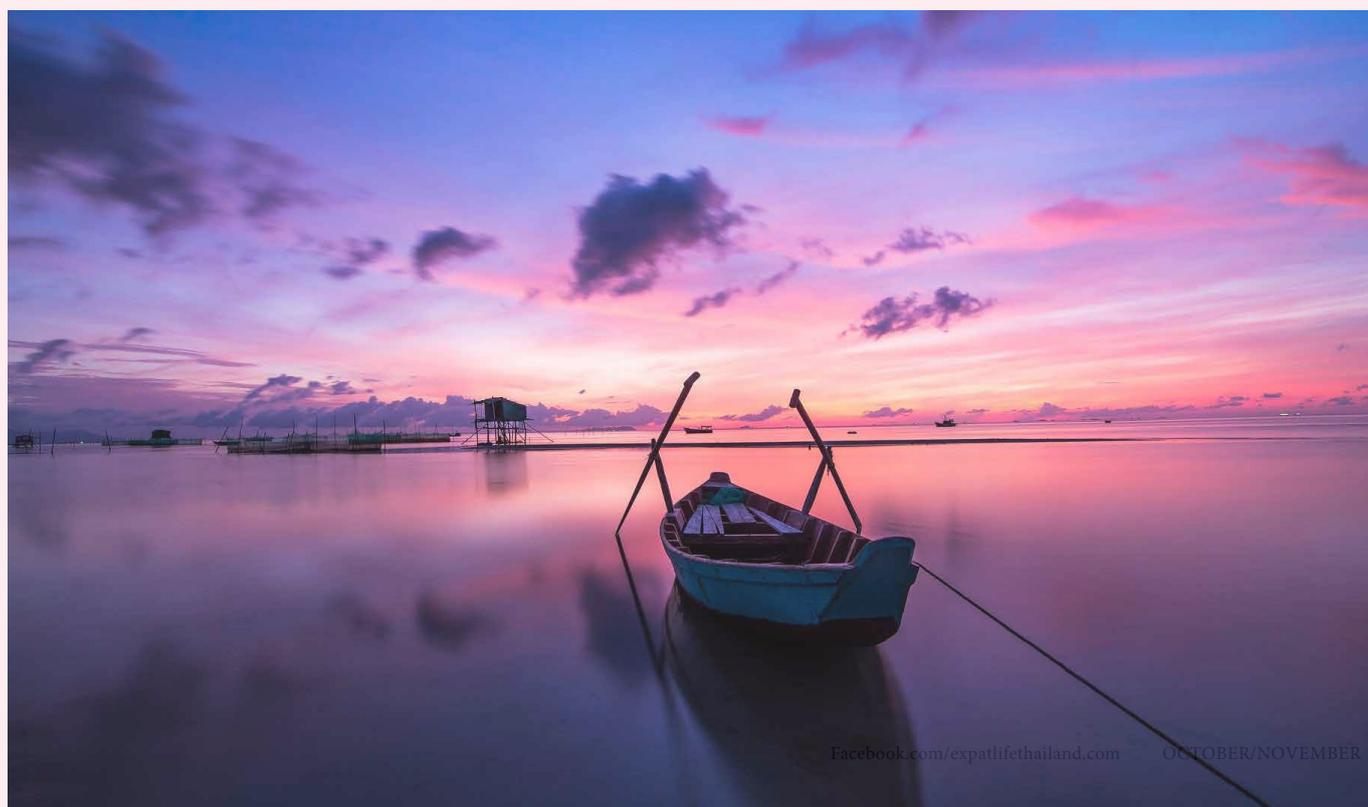
– Mary Oliver

Sometimes I am so scared I can hardly breathe, and sometimes my life is full and busy and I go without thinking about cancer. Some days I am filled with gratitude to be alive today, to be done with treatment, to feel about as close to normal as I guess I will ever feel. My bones ache and I get hot flushes all the time from being forced into menopause. But I am here – from the moment I was diagnosed, that is all I ever wanted.

I lost friends when I went through treatment. Many people don't know how to act around someone that's going through something so hard, especially something as scary as cancer. But it's not nearly as complicated as people seem to think. When you love someone, you show up. You stand by them. You hold them up when they're falling. You listen to them rant and rave about the unfairness of it all. You throw them a magical, sparkling unicorn party to celebrate the end of chemotherapy. You treat them like the person that you love, the person that needs you to just love them, to stick by them, to invite them to things even when they are too sick to go.

We are all going to die. We just think that it won't happen until we are old and ready for it. Cancer took a lot from me, but cancer helped me understand an important lesson: none of us are promised tomorrow. You know this already, but you really don't. So listen to me.

Be happy now. Go on that adventure now. If you're unhappy, change your life. There is no “right time” for the things you love. Now is it! Because this one life is all we get.



10 habits I blame for sabotaging weight loss

by Saree Jitta

1. Skip breakfast

Most people skip their breakfast because they don't have time to prepare their meals. They might even say I'm "fasting" just another excuse of I don't have time to eat in the morning so I start eating my first meal at lunch which might lead to sluggish metabolism over time. I don't have anything against fasting, I used to do fasting. But most people only have 2 meals a day (not having enough nutrients) and call it fasting.

We're all busy I get it but if your goal is weight loss and fat loss then you better start having breakfast! What's more, eating one piece of fruit or processed fare like packaged muffins won't keep you full until lunch, which has a ripple effect on how well you function. "When my clients eat a more satisfying breakfast, they're more energetic, less irritable and more productive." Aim for 20-30 grams of protein by including options like cottage cheese or hard boiled eggs.

2. Lacking magnesium

Weight loss isn't just about diet and exercise, and you've likely heard about how sleep is essential for a healthy weight. Skimping on sleep increases your hunger hormones, and you may find you reach for a sugary snack as a pick-me-up more often.

Of course stopping the pre-bed social media scroll is important, but you probably also haven't considered how your magnesium levels play a role in shut eye. "Most people do not consume an adequate amount of the mineral, and this can interfere with proper sleep." Try adding almonds, tofu and leafy greens to your diet. Or you might consider taking magnesium supplements. When I was training hard and I found myself having trouble sleeping I took Magnesium Glycinate it helped me fall asleep better.

3. Having a "bad food" mentality

What if I told you there's no "good" or "bad" food? Food gives you energy, different food gives you different nutrients therefore you should get a variety of food. Having a piece of Oreo cookie dipped in milk isn't the end of the world. If you're being good 80% of the time (have a balanced diet) then you can leave the 20% for some fun (enjoy your chocolate cake guilt free).



4. Exercising only to burn calories

Some girls I've talked with confess that they use exercise as a punishment. When they eat a lot the next day, they kill themselves at the gym, was hoping to burn those calories they consumed. You need to shift your mindset and think of exercise as part of your healthy lifestyle. You eat, shower, sleep and exercise.

5. Eat the same food every day

Going on a diet shouldn't be boring and you shouldn't have to eat the same food every day, obviously not chicken and broccoli if you want to lose weight! There are many varieties of food out there. You can steam, grill, or bake the chicken or fish. You can add different spices to enhance the flavour. Eating healthy doesn't have to be plain and tasteless. You should be happy when you eat or have food.

6. Not eating enough

I can say if you've been going on a diet for a while trying to lose weight but you haven't seen any result, I bet you don't eat enough! That's right you heard me, most girls are not eating enough because they're scared to gain fat. If there's not enough food or water in our body, the metabolism slows down.

Our body is so smart, it has been designed to survive in any circumstances. However they don't have a clue that you only eat little because you want to lose weight. They think I don't have enough resources for me to function well so I'm going to slow down or might even shut down. So now it doesn't matter what you eat it's not going to burn that calorie because it gets used to the very little food in the system.



A realistic goal is achievable, makes you feel good and is one you can maintain for the long term.

Do you really want a six pack abs? Or you just want to look good in a swimming suit? Because having six pack abs require hard work; strict dieting and exercise and if you're a busy woman (not a fitness model) it might not

suit your lifestyle.

9. Ignoring your stress level

For many of us, responding to stress means reaching for comfort foods while watching Netflix. While doing so is perfectly fine on occasion, it's important to have healthy, non-food-related outlets for reducing stress. "Stress can negatively affect metabolism and get in the way of reaching weight or fitness goals." Helpful ways to mitigate stress include meditation, taking a walk outdoors, or reading a good book.

10. Gut health

Happy gut, happy you. Gut health refers to the balance of microorganisms that live in your digestive tract. Looking after the health of the gut and maintaining the right balance of these microorganisms is vital for physical and mental health, immunity, and more.

These bacteria, yeasts, and viruses – of which there are around 100 trillion – are also called the "gut microbiome" or "gut flora." One way to look after your gut is to take probiotics and eat fermented foods.

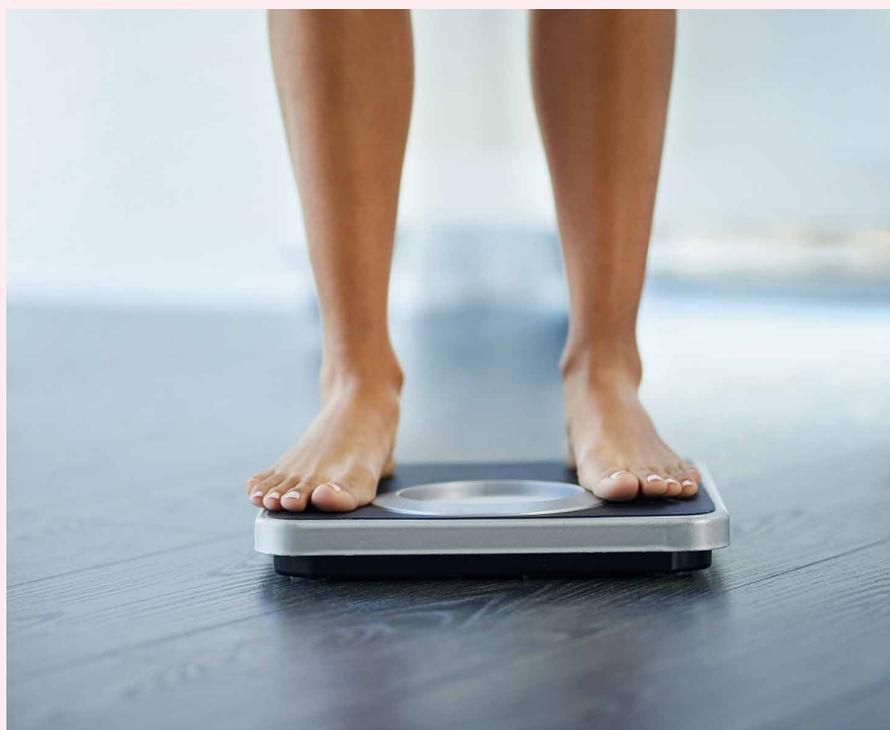


7. Not tracking your intake

"Making sure you're eating in a slight caloric deficit is important for weight loss." While you don't need to button up so much that you're eating too little, you're also going to want to reduce the excess fluff. To find what that might be, you should track your food, at least in the beginning. "It can be easy to forget about what we ate previously and make it harder to pinpoint what's preventing you from reaching your goals." My favourite free app is MyFitnessPal.

8. Setting unrealistic goals

While what you're eating matters, it's not the only piece of the equation. "Other factors can affect how our body utilises, burns and stores calories or energy." Those include metabolism, age, genetics, stress and hormones, and "can also play a role in being able to get past a certain point on the scale." Meaning: Just because you choose a certain number does not mean it's a goal weight that may be attainable, comfortable or sustaining for you. While that may seem like a downer at the outset, it's actually incredibly freeing.



8 foods high in water content that can help prevent dehydration

by *Moira Lawler Medically Reviewed*
by *Kelly Kennedy, RD*

You have no doubt heard the advice to drink eight 8 glasses of water each day. But do you know where that advice for avoiding dehydration comes from, and if it is still relevant?

Sean Hashmi, MD, the regional physician director of weight management and clinical nutrition for Kaiser Permanente in Southern California, says it originally came from a recommendation from the US Food and Nutrition Board in 1945. (1) “But people misread the statement,” Hashmi says. “The second part of the sentence said most of that water you get from food.”

That said, you still need to drink water during the day to avoid health risks like kidney stones. National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine, or IOM) generally recommends ½ ounce (oz) to 1oz of fluid, including water, daily for each pound of body weight. That means if you weigh 150 pounds, you’d need between about 9½ and 18¾ cups of fluid per day. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding need more. (2)

The exact amount you need also depends on factors including age, gender, and activity level, says Rachel Lustgarten, RD, a registered dietitian nutritionist with Weill Cornell Medicine in New York.

The good news for those who have a hard time sipping H₂O all day: The foods you eat play a big role in keeping you hydrated. Shreela Sharma, an associate professor and registered dietitian at UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston, estimates about 20% of the body’s hydration needs

come from foods. “These foods are not just hydrating, but also nutritious and provide various nutrients, including vitamins and fibre,” she says.

Another plus: You don’t have to overthink it. “If you are eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, this should not be hard,” says Julie Devinsky, RD, a clinical dietitian at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. To hit the mark, you can follow tried-and-true nutrition advice by aiming for two to three servings of fruit and five or more servings of veggies daily.

That said, some foods are more hydrating than others. “Foods that rehydrate are typically the ones that hold the most water,” says Garth Graham, MD, MPH, the president of the Aetna Foundation and a cardiologist based in Hartford, Connecticut. Just keep in mind that the fruit or vegetable will lose water if it is cooked. “To optimise the hydration aspect of these foods, it is best to eat them raw or minimally cooked,” Devinsky says. And for the best, most hydrating effect, enjoy these foods with a glass of water. “As much as it is important to eat your daily dose of fruits and vegetables, do not use it as an excuse to skimp on water,” Devinsky says.

Here are eight of the most hydrating foods and some ideas for how to enjoy them.

1. Swap crisps for cucumbers for a hydrating snack





The refreshing summertime fruit has water built into its name – and that is not just a coincidence. Watermelon is high in water and low in calories (and has just 46 calories in one cup). (4) It is a welcome addition to many summer dishes and works well in gazpacho and fruit salads. Devinsky says watermelon also plays nicely in an arugula and mint salad.

4. Cantaloupe offers hydrating Potassium and is good in a fruit salad

Devinsky says cucumbers, which are 95% water, are one of the most hydrating options available. The green vegetable is not just a salad topper. Sharma says to get creative about incorporating cucumbers into your diet. For instance, try dipping cucumber slices into dip in place of crisps or making a chilled cucumber soup for a refreshing summer appetiser. Be sure to keep the skin on to reap the most vitamins and minerals.

2. Dip celery sticks into creamy peanut butter to up your water intake

There is not much to them. They are low in calories (only 14 per cup) and other vitamins and minerals, but they're very hydrating and made up primarily of water. (3) Celery sticks can be boring to eat on their own, but there are ways to make them more filling. Devinsky suggests pasting them with peanut butter or tuna salad, which can help reduce your carb intake if you use celery in place of bread.

3. Watermelon is the perfect addition to a summer salad



Even though watermelon is the most obvious hydrating melon, others, such as cantaloupe, should not be overlooked, Sharma says. A 1 cup serving packs 427 milligrams (mg) of potassium, which is about 9% of your daily value. (5,6) The nutrient is important for hydration — it is an electrolyte, which means it helps the body balance its water content. (7) You can eat it solo or in a fruit salad, add it to smoothies, or pair it with prosciutto for a sweet-and-savoury snack, Devinsky says.

5. Strawberries contain a surprising amount of water

The sweet red fruit is an excellent source of vitamin C, with a whopping 162.6% of your daily goal in just 1 cup of slices! (8) That's not all: Strawberries are also incredibly hydrating and clock in at 91% water. (9) Devinsky suggests getting your fix by serving a strawberry-and-basil salad. Or try dipping pieces of the fruit in melted chocolate or adding to chia seed pudding for a nutrition filled dessert.





6. Trade your bread bun for iceberg lettuce

All types of lettuce (and other greens like kale and spinach) have high water content, but iceberg lettuce wins as the most hydrating at 95% water by weight. (9) The most obvious way to enjoy it is chopped in a salad, but you can use it in place of a bun on your next burger, Devinsky suggests.



7. Tomatoes, no matter how you eat them, are hydrating



8. Bell peppers are a low carb hydrating food

Bell peppers are about 92% water and are a decent source of fibre, especially considering how low carb and low calorie they are. (11) Use diced bell peppers to add crunch to salads and salsas or large slices as an alternative to crisps for scooping hummus or dip, Devinsky says. Stuffed peppers are also a great entrée option, though keep in mind they will lose some of their hydrating benefits during their time in the oven.

Tomatoes boast about 95% water content. And, like cantaloupe, they're also a good source of potassium, offering about 9% of your daily target in a 1 cup serving. (10) Happily, they're as versatile as they are delicious. You can enjoy them in pasta sauce, stew, fresh salsa, gazpacho, or simply sliced and sprinkled with a touch of salt and pepper.



Does this earring make my ear look big?

by Bea Toews (my dear friend)

Three years ago, a friend asked me to write a book about ageing. It was to be a reference book for those of us PAST menopause. Yes, Virginia, there is a long and vital life after menopause. Once your memory comes back and the hot flushes go, you have a life that's as full as your life before, this time not encumbered by children, but by care for your parents who are ageing. But that is another whole story.

You have a life, after menopause, but odd things start to happen to you. For example, your ear lobes start to grow and your nose gets bigger and your feet get wider. At least that happens to many women. What my friend wanted to know was this – is it normal for your ear lobes to grow? Is it normal for your nose to get bigger? She wanted a reference book listing age related changes, with a comment on the extent to which each change was normal and at what stage the change should be taken to a doctor.

The book was to be a medium size volume, with a page for each item, a personal story by a woman about each change and then a doctor's comment on the normalcy, or otherwise, of the change. Then there was to be a brief section on what could be done to prevent further change and/or damage.

Examples of personal stories would vary. An example would be a woman who noticed that her teeth were slightly protruding, for example. Another woman's story on how her moustache became more visible as her eyebrows became sparser and eyelashes shorter. Or a woman's story about how her glasses were a necessary accessory that defined her face



rather than just a way of seeing (as she had lasik surgery and didn't really need glasses).

The doctor was then to comment on the normalcy of the change and suggest when it should be attended to by a doctor. I was not about to rely on Dr. Google for this part of the book.

The last section was to be some way of dealing with the change. Pills and exercise for osteoporosis; hearing aids for loss of hearing, botox for wrinkles, surgery for replacing hips and knees, braces for protruding teeth, a podiatrist for changes in feet and so on... Though it's clear that gravity always wins, and death is inevitable, there are ways of staving off the ravages of time. (Though short of a wig, there is little that can be done about thinning hair). And nothing short of a miracle will shrink earlobes.

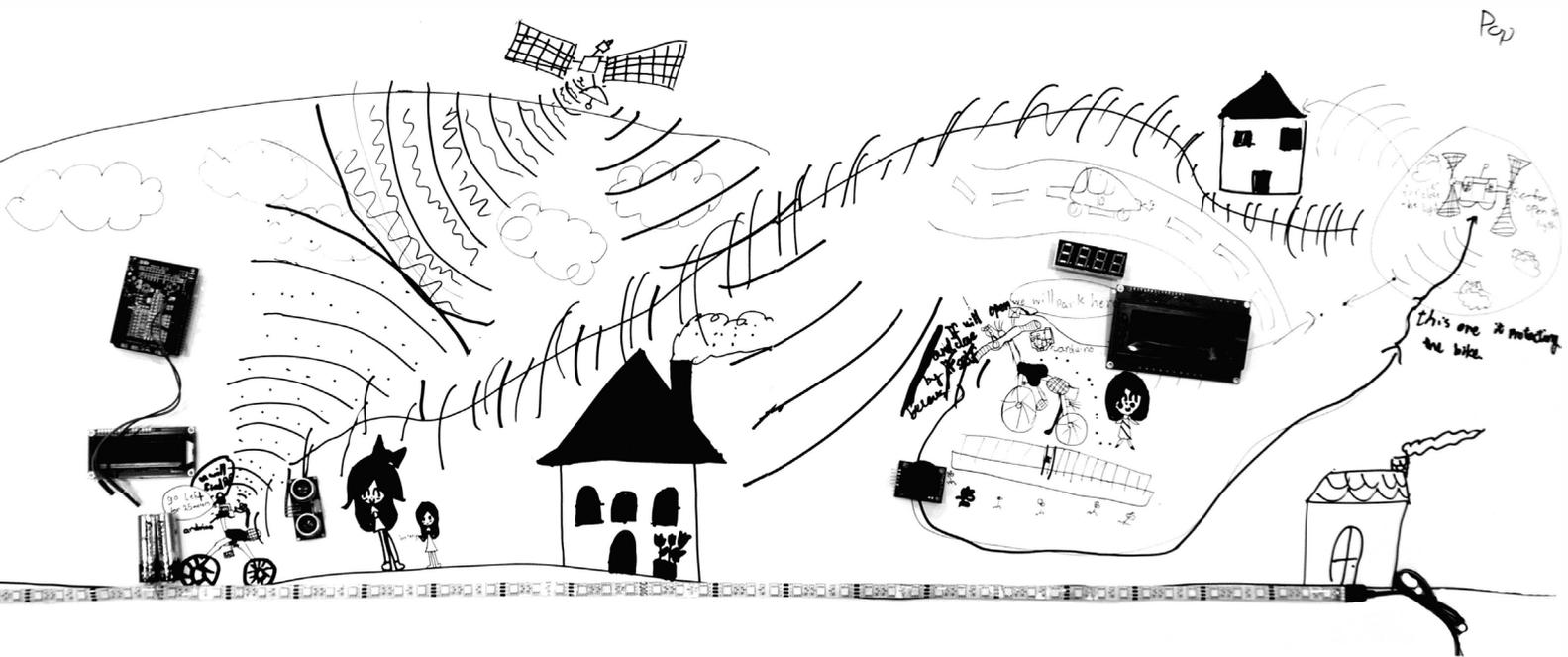
I intended to start at the top of the woman and go down to her feet. I also intended to put this on a website so digital literates could access it without the need to buy the book.

Don't you think this would be a marvellous book/website? I do.

But I won't be writing it. I had listed over 50 different things that could change, and I hadn't done anything about mental changes (loss of friends, libido, freedom of thought to name three off the top of my head) or all the internal organs that can go wrong with their appropriate symptoms. Much as I would love to write the book I can't.

It's too depressing and at my age, one of the last things I need to be is depressed. Batwing arms and loss of taste buds to go along with the big earlobes...





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

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Ages 18 – 36 months

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The Purple Elephant 55
Ages 18 – 36 months

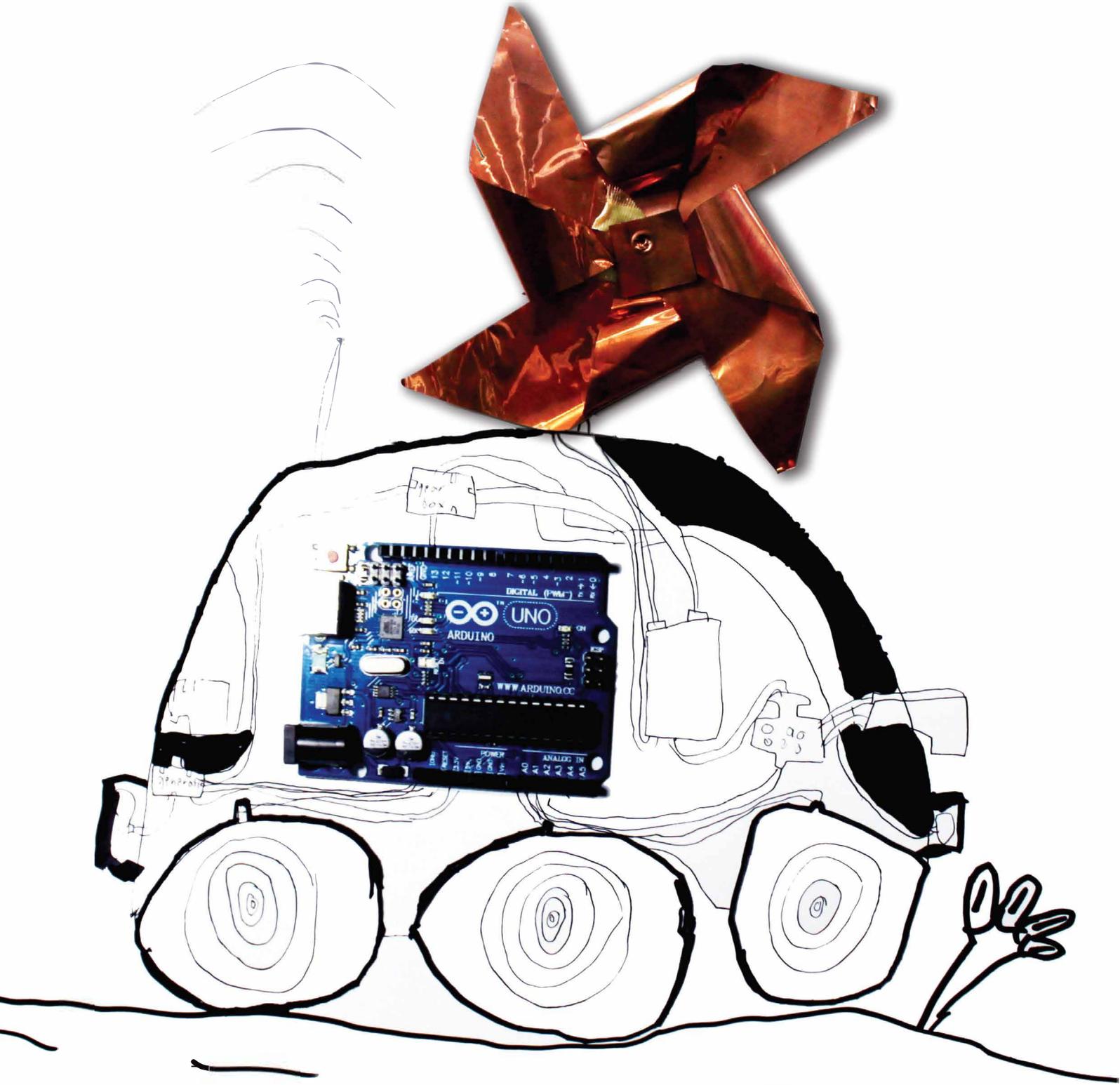
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elc international schools

The challenging child at school

by Bea Toews

A challenging child needs, most of all, supportive parents. One of the most important choices a supportive parent makes is the right school for the child.

The right school for the child is a place where adults care about and are trained to help children become their best intellectual, emotional and physical selves. Rose Marie Academy is such a school.

Rose Marie Academy is a compact, easily accessible school in the safe, gated community of Nichada Thani Estate.

The Academy offers best teaching practice conditions. Small class sizes, well equipped classrooms and a high teacher/pupil ratio are three. Teaching methods include



practical, hands on learning; varied delivery strategies and different assessment methods. There are opportunities for children to participate in their learning plans and to express themselves in ways that reflect their learning.

Far more important than the physical plant and the teaching strategies at Rose Marie Academy are the teachers and auxiliary workers. These people are a cogent reason for choosing this school for your challenging child. They are patient without being lenient; they make compromises without losing their principles. They devise programmes that are appropriate and rigorous.

The challenging child gradually realises that learning is important and interesting and relevant. With that realisation, more productive behaviour, a cooperative attitude, community mindedness and personal growth often follow.

To evaluate the school for your child, there are many ways of assuring yourself that Rose Marie Academy is the right place.

Start by visiting the Rose Marie Academy website at <https://www.rose-marie.ac.th/> and then watch the introductory video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8wi9rkCoTA>.

Finally call the Director, Rose Marie Wanchupela, on 02 960 3663 to arrange a meeting at the campus on 39/932-933 Nichada Thani Samakee Road, Pakkret, Nonthaburi 1120 .

It's never too late to help your challenging child become an enthusiastic and participatory learner.





Physics is not open to girls will not try her best in it, as she will feel that she cannot succeed without gargantuan efforts.

This is why King's Bangkok places pastoral care, the care for the wellbeing of individuals, at the heart of everything we do. By providing an environment in which students feel able to access every activity or subject open to them, we truly feel that they will be able to follow their passions and reach their full potential.

This takes a huge amount of work. During our recent staff induction process, we ran sessions designed to openly examine and question the inbuilt biases that we all hold. Challenging our own thoughts and getting students to think about the language that they use are two big steps in breaking down barriers.

Our next step is working with parents to help them see that the language used at home is just as important. We are lucky to have thoughtful, reflective and kind parents who want to work with us in supporting their children to be happy and successful. We are confident that we will work together to ensure that dance is for everyone, that Physics is a subject for all and that we recognise that we all have strengths and weaknesses but understand that these are individual and not dictated by our sex.

The importance of pastoral care in preparing women (and men) for greatness

As a father of two daughters, I have spent a long time thinking about how schools can limit or empower students, particularly young girls. We have all heard of the stereotypes and it is so sad that the following phrases are still heard in many schools:

“Dance is just for girls.”
 “Physics is a boys’ subject.”
 “Girls/boys are no good at...”

It is even more disheartening to see that this language often does not only come from children but also from adults who commonly do not question what they are saying or the effect it may have. This can be seen in the use of phrases like “You throw like a girl!” which is internalised by both girls and boys from a young age and sets children on the path of believing that ‘girls are not as good as boys at sport’. What a terrible lesson!

Of course, we would never purposefully limit our children, but we often unknowingly limit them by using language that tells them that boys have certain skills and girls have others. By not challenging lazy use of language or by allowing passive acceptance of stereotypes, schools run the risk of stopping children from pursuing what they are interested in. For example, a boy who believes that dance is overly feminine may feel too self-conscious to try that ballet class, and a girl who feels that





HOW WE CAN LEARN TO INSPIRE OUR CHILDREN



Inspiration helps children to think of new opportunities, propel them from apathy to possibility and change the way they see their own potential.

by Peter Hogan

It would be wrong to say that I hated my piano lessons. At the age of 14 I cared so little that I didn't put in the energy to hate

them. My parents had told me that learning the piano would be good for me, whatever that meant. It certainly wasn't true by any definition that I believed of good things as a confused and needy teenage boy. I went to the lessons, played the scales and arpeggios, prepared for the exams, scraped passes and had more classes. Certificates and old music piled up in the piano stool and on it went. It seemed to make my parents happy and as my brother and sisters were all older and had passed more exams than me these family pull and push factors kept me going. But it didn't make me like it. I attended the lessons religiously and with the same sacred fervour one sees in an infant being dragged screaming into church. Things were made even worse by the fact that I had piano lessons after school, after sport and the cold, dark evenings were the worst of all. I would go to my piano teacher's house with bruises and cut knuckles after two hours of hockey training with an attitude not at all in harmony with the nuances of music and the intricacies of keyboard techniques.

One evening, sucking my knuckles to staunch the bloody grazes and warming my fingers I was in a foul mood.

Throwing my sports bag in the corner of the room I sat slumped in front of the piano dreading the arrival of my teacher. I was cold, the house was cold and I hadn't practiced all week so I was in for a scolding. I would stumble over the keys, she would write in my notebook in capitals if I had played badly and there were always a lot of capitals. It would be really bad but at least it would all be over in 45 minutes. When the door creaked open I was disturbed to see not her but an elderly white haired man creep around the door. His wife, my teacher, was ill and he was going to take the lesson. He told me this in the shaky, high tones of a man who I assumed, summoning all the experience of my 14 years, to be well over 100. Could things get any worse? If she was ill I had banked on the lesson being cancelled but now I was going to have to perform to a stranger. I had no idea how he would react to my terrible playing.

This little old man sat next to me, asked me to play my exam pieces and I lurched along bar after bar, page after page until both hands reached the end at not exactly the same time. I stared at the keys, at the music, at the wall, anywhere but at him. There was a long pause. I am sure he was looking at the back of my head. I didn't enjoy it and I was sure he was not having a good time either. What were we both doing there? When would it end?

"What else are you learning to play at the moment?" he asked, after what felt like an eternity of discomfort and silent embarrassment. What else? I thought. Why would I be playing anything else? I played what I was told to play, I didn't practice enough, I took a verbal mauling every so often for my troubles, I sat exams and the cycle continued. How could there be anything else? I didn't know how to answer and so sat in silence. He helped me out by asking, "Sorry, I mean what are you playing for fun?" I was completely stumped. I mumbled an answer about being busy, about not being sure what else to play and hoped that we would move on. Surely it was time to go. It wasn't. He didn't move on. He just said something else.

"I won't charge you for this lesson. Instead I want you to use the money to buy some music that you like. Learn to play it. Just for fun. Not for me, do it for you."

That weekend I went out and did as I was told. I was stunned by this simple idea and his kind approach. He focussed on me enjoying myself, not the music or the lessons. I bought the book of sheet music for Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy, by Elton John. I had the album and loved it, my male friends loved it and the few girls I knew seemed to love it too. Amazingly the songs weren't as hard to play as I thought and I realised that all the boring practice, all the scales, chords, arpeggios and the discipline of timekeeping were pretty useful. I learned to play it all, just for fun, just for me and later with friends. It started a love affair with the piano that has lasted the rest of my life. It led to me buying shelf-fulls of music as well as a few pianos and practicing long after the lessons stopped. In truth, I am still not a very good but I made a living as a pianist for a while and I don't think I could live in a house that didn't have a piano in it. It's a thing I do to relax, to test myself, to shake off the challenges of the day, to entertain my friends and I just love the sound it makes.

I never saw the old man again. I never thanked him. I never knew he was a successful composer and a close friend of the legendary Sir Yehudi Menuhin. I never read the loving, respectful and lengthy obituary in The Daily Telegraph when it appeared. I learned he died a few years after our encounter and he was nowhere near 100. If I hadn't spent time in the company of the husband of my sick piano teacher I'm sure I would have given up playing. I would have been one of those people who used to play but gave up, wistfully thinking they should have stuck at it. He made all the difference where and when I never expected it. He inspired me.

Inspiration is a rare and precious commodity, especially valuable when bestowed upon the young. In schools we can

become all too obsessed with measuring ability through exams and tests and can overlook the role of inspiration. In fact, instead of ignoring it we should recognise that inspiration can be the vital spark that ignites amazing changes and opens up new possibilities. Inspiration helps children to think of new opportunities; it can propel them from apathy to possibility and change the way they see their own potential. Sadly history and fiction have tended to see it as mystical or even divine and this hasn't helped. In truth, we can all be inspired by what and who is around us. Research shows that it's not down to luck. Inspiration can be activated, captured and directed and it can have a major effect on important life outcomes. As psychologists and inspiration-exerts Todd Thrash and Andrew Elliot put it, "The heights of human motivation spring from the beauty and goodness that precede us and awaken us to better possibilities."

Thrash and Elliot found that inspired people were more open to new experiences, they were not more conscientious or hardworking than anyone else, in fact they tended to be less competitive and more optimistic. It seems they are people looking to be stimulated, open to the new and the different and not particularly focussed on the achievements of those around them. This is not so easy to manage in a school if you want everyone to be the same, to blindly follow orders and compete against each other. However it makes for a much more exciting and stimulating world if you are brave enough to let children follow their dreams and dare to be different.

When I was a headmaster in the UK, I invited an Arctic explorer into school to talk to the students. I really wanted to wake them up to different and better possibilities. The explorer had spoken in over a thousand schools all over the world and always asked the audience who their inspiration was. It's a great question! We spoke afterwards and he told me that in the UK and the USA when he asks children they say they are inspired by pop stars, footballers and TV personalities but in many Asian countries the children say they want to be like their parents.

This is a very telling observation and although

anecdotal, it feels true enough to me. It is a reminder to parents that what they do and say in front of their children matters every day and their influence is enormous. Inspiration can change a child's life forever and we all have this phenomenal power within us.

About the author:

Peter Hogan has been the Head of schools in the UK and Asia for 20 years. He writes about schools, teaching and learning at www.hogan.education and is a qualified Life Coach. He can be contacted at peter@hogan.education



RITUALS AND TRADITIONS IN FIJI

FEBRUARY 2020

by Dafna Nevo

I am a well known dreamer. Visiting the islands of the South Pacific was a part of my old year's dreams.

Last February, just before the Covid-19 brutally entered our lives and stopped the globe, we were travelling to Fiji, archipelago of more than 300 islands in the South Pacific. Famous for rugged landscapes, palm lined beaches and coral reefs with clear lagoons, rich culture and rituals – my imagination was 'working on full gas'.

Fiji has two major islands; both contain most of the population. The largest is Viti Levu ("Great Fiji"), the home of the capital Suva, which is a port city with British colonial architecture, and the other is Vanua Levu.

Bula and Isa Lei – Hi and Bye

Once I landed in Fiji I was first welcomed with the greeting of "Bula" (pronounced boo-lah!). I certainly feel I have arrived somewhere special. By the time I left Fiji, I have heard "Bula!" hundreds of times and will find myself saying it over and over to friends and family who have no idea what I am talking about.



What is it this "Bula!"?

The Fijian people are exceedingly warm and friendly, and they love to express their love of life and their genuine hospitality with enthusiastic and ubiquitous "Bulas!". The literal meaning is "life," and when used as a greeting it implies wishes for continued good health. Bula is also used as a blessing when someone sneezes.

Another surprising and beautiful pair of words is 'Isa Lei' is heard when saying goodbye. Once you are to leave the country, they sing for you, with their beautiful voices and rhythm, the famous song of 'Isa Lei'. It is a traditional Fijian farewell song:

*Isa you are my only treasure
Must you leave me, so lonely and forsaken?
As the roses will miss the sun at dawn,
Every moment my heart for you is yearning. (Chorus)*

*Isa Lei, the purple shadow falling,
Sad the morrow will dawn upon my sorrow,
Oh forget not, when you're far away
Precious moments at Suva.*

*Isa my heart was filled with pleasure
From the moment I heard your tender heart greeting
Mid the sunshine, we spent the hours together,*



*Now so swiftly those happy hours
are fleeting. (Chorus)*

*Over the ocean your island home
is calling
Happy country where roses bloom
and splendour,
Oh if I could but journey there
beside you
Then forever my heart would sing
in rapture. (Chorus)*

Kava – Yaqona Ceremony

My second day and I am lucky to be accepted by the chief of the neighbouring village, Mr. Waisake Lalanabaravi. Penia Ravulo, the security guide of Wananavu, is instructing me about the protocol that is needed: I should buy a small amount of kava to present as a sevusevu (gift). I should dress modestly (no hats, camisoles, tank tops, no shorts or above-the-knee skirts) and cover my legs with a Fijian sarong, which Miri (the Wananavu kind lady) gives me as a present to remember.



In Fiji's villages, custom holds that a visitor needs to ask permission to enter the village and show his friendly intentions, by offering a tangled bundle of kava roots or crushed powder which shows gesture of respect. I can assume that it is like the way a Western guest brings a bottle of wine to the host of a dinner party.

Kava, known locally as yaqona, is a mild analgesic and stress reliever made from the root of the piper plant and is an important part of Fijian culture. It is to show the complex relationship between the host and the hosted. When a visitor has their sevusevu accepted, they become part of the larger village family. By receiving something back – usually sharing in grog (the kava root mixed with water) – the visitor acknowledges this obligation.

Removing my shoes and entering the room, I was seated on a woven grass mat in front of a man, in his sixties, grey hair and smiling welcoming face but still questioning the purpose of my visit. Mr. Waisake Lalanabaravi is one of the chiefs of Fiji and I must get his acceptance for coming to his village by performing the kava ceremony. The drink is made from the root being

pounded to a powder in an oversized mortar and pestle. After being mixed with water and strained through cloth, I accepted my beginner's 'low-tide' sized coconut husk bowl. Drinking the Kava tasted in grassy flavours with a hint of bitter and the bite of pepper. I clapped once and said bula when accepting my bowl. After finishing it in one time, I returned the bowl and was clapping three more times.

Penia explained and served as mediator asking me to introduce myself. After clapping 3 times in a row Mr. Waisake accepted my Kava and I am now like a sister in his clan.





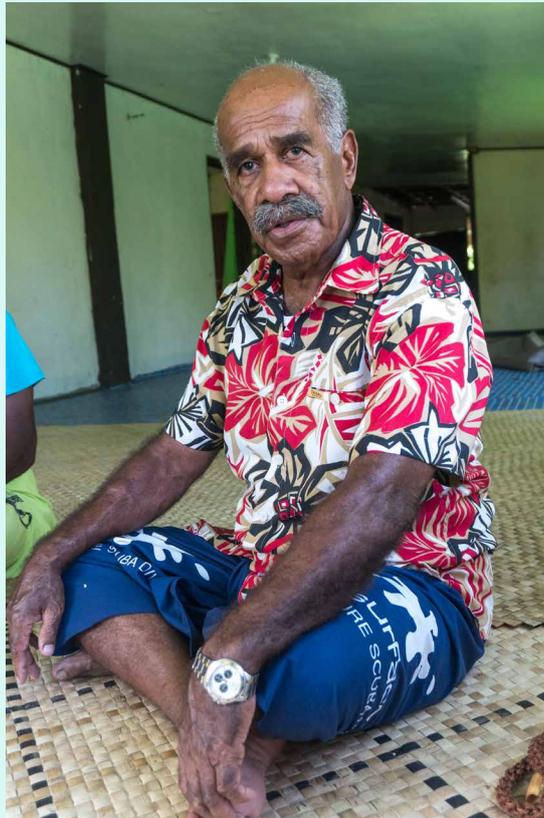
The acceptance means that I am given the permission to ask questions and we had four hours of very interesting discussion. He was fascinated by talking about a real Israeli, coming from the Holy Land and asked a lot of questions about Judaism and Christianity and I was rewarded by many descriptions, presentations, explanations and fully fulfilling my never ending curiosity.

As I learned from him, the Fijian society is traditionally stratified. A hierarchy of chiefs presides over villages, sub-districts, districts and provinces. These administrative divisions generally correspond roughly with the social units of the extended family, clan, tribe and land. Each is presided over by a chief, styled Ratu if male or Adi if female.

To my surprise, Mr. Waisake is telling me that the supreme chief of Fiji is a woman. I am proud to hear it.

Tabua – In Fiji, nothing says ‘I Love You’ like a sperm whale tooth.

Visiting the flea market of Suva (the capital of Fiji), wondering around and watching the local products, inside a dark shopping alley we came across a small hidden simple shop. On one of the shelves we noticed a large polished sperm whale tooth hanging on a rope. This is known in Fiji as a tabua (or tambua) and beside being a sperm whale tooth it has an important cultural role in Fijian society. They were traditionally given as gifts for atonement or esteem (called sevusevu) and were important in negotiations between rival chiefs. A sperm whale’s tooth is often given by a groom and his family to the parents of the future bride when



he asks permission to marry her. The dead men would like to be buried with their tabua, along with war clubs and even their strangled wives, to help them in the afterlife. Tabuas are also given in funerals and births and serve also as a tool to seal an apology.

“I give the tabua, and that means ‘I love you’ from the inside.”

Tabua is roughly translates to “sacred” in Fijian. The valuable relic, associated with good luck and even supernatural powers, has traditionally paved the way for marriages in this nation of more than 300 for many years. With few countries still harvesting whales and laws limiting the international trade of endangered species like the sperm whale and their specimens, the number of tabuas circulating in Fiji is dwindling, causing prices to rise. A single tooth strung with



braided cord as an oversized pendant on a necklace can cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

The Chief, Mr. Waisake Lalanabaravi, when hosting me in his village, was presenting me the tabuas he keeps at his home. He is collecting them for use in the future. He was telling me that his first son, when decided to get married, he gave 15 tabuas, each of them worth 4/500 dollars. His second son he gave 12 tabuas... now he is collecting and saving tabuas for his next son. Most of the tabuas he buys by himself but, as a respected man in the clan, he is also receiving some of them for a good advice or as gratitude.

Despite the high cost, giving tabuas "is very much still alive and a part of our culture," said Chief Waisake. The practice is more common in rural areas, he said, but even in the urban areas, the tradition continues among families.



Just as colourful is the city's heart: the fruit, vegetable and flower market where villagers make the daily journey to sell their produce. But, the most interesting area is the tabua sellers.

During the days of warring tribes, before Fiji became a British colony in the late 1800s, if a chief wanted someone killed and was unable to do it himself, he offered a tabua to another tribe to take care of the matter. This was the case for an unfortunate 19th century British missionary, the Reverend Thomas Baker. According to national legend, the missionary Baker offended a village chief, who then offered a tabua to another tribe to kill Baker. In 2003, the descendants of the killers (that also probably ate him) presented 100 tabuas to the missionary's ancestors in an effort to break what was viewed as a curse on the area.

Observing the variety of the tabuas in the tiny corner shop, a buyer enters the shop and tells us that by buying the tabua he shows that he is "willing to take up this responsibility to become a husband and a father" but he wants to be sure it is a real tooth and not an imitation. Tabuas made from plastic are also circulating, so the lady seller has her ways to identify the fakes: "we use matches to light the tabua, if it melts, that's the fake one."

Today the tabua remains an important item in Fijian life. They are traded regularly as gifts in weddings, birthdays, and at funerals. The tabua is also increasingly used in advertising as a trusted symbol or brand, for example; Fiji Airways has a Tabua Club (frequent flyer) and a Tabua Class for business class. They also feature on the Fijian 20 cent coin.

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 and wrote a book 'Tangled in Time' about it. Here she is expanding her adventure to Fiji.

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<https://www.facebook.com/worldthroughdafnaseyes/>



The shopkeeper lady at the handicraft market in downtown Suva, is sitting behind a tiny stall surrounded by mats, bags and fans woven from pandan leaves. She keeps a supply of tabuas available by buying them from families who run into financial troubles. "Once they get into financial constraints, that is when they have to sell these items," she says: "Keep on recycling, eh? And very good business. The more recycling, the better for us." Buying a tabua before an engagement is also about status: "It means the man's family is quite well off." She pulls off from behind a blue plastic bag containing half a dozen sperm whale teeth and put it on the table. Some were cream. Others had a brown hue. Their size varied from the length of a hand to the length of a forearm. The largest cost about \$1,000.

With about 90,000 people, Suva has the feel of a large town. Colourful buses clog the narrow streets, their windows missing glass to make the humidity a little more bearable.



REGENTS SCHOOL PATTAYA

"Of our 52 graduating students in the class of 2020, 25% will be going on to study at a university listed in the global top 50. All of our graduates will be continuing their studies at great universities all over the world.

I am confident our graduating class of 2020 will make the transition to university with ease and confidence as the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) thoroughly prepares our students for life at university, with a focus on responsibility and self-sufficiency. Our Year 13 students that have graduated at this unusual time are leaving us as reflective, self-aware young people who will truly make a difference in the world, with their unique perspective".

**Sarah Osborne-James,
School Principal**

On 22 May 2020, our graduating class of 2020 celebrated a very different graduation ceremony to the one they were expecting only a few months ago, a virtual graduation. The benefits of hosting an online ceremony were that friends of students and staff were able to watch and participate in the celebrations.

The ceremony included inspiring

words from our head students and guest speakers, as well as musical pieces that were performed by our students showcasing their outstanding abilities. Speeches were followed by our special school awards and the event concluded with a live stream which was opened up to all parents, friends and family, giving everyone the opportunity to clap and congratulate the graduates of 2020.

"Our Year 13 students have dealt with their last year of school in such unusual circumstances with remarkable maturity and humility. Adapting to virtual school and learning new technology whilst coming to terms with the school closure and the impact that has had on their final months of school. We are very proud of them all."

Amos Turner-Wardell, Head of Secondary

Regents International School Pattaya has offered the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) for 16 years, consistently delivering results well above the world average.





"Every time a deadline approached I realised that I am one step closer to graduating high school. But now its time for another big step forward to my dream university, not forgetting to look back to admire all the hard work I committed to and making sure to walk the path ahead of me without fear".

Natnaree, Year 13 student

A key decision for students heading into the Sixth Form is which route to take in order to have access to a wide range of opportunities at university and beyond. The IBDP is one of the most exciting and rigorous academic programmes for students in Year 12 and 13, found in leading schools across the world. What sets the IBDP apart from other qualifications however, is how it provides students with so many of the additional skills top universities are looking for. Students carry out a series of activities relating to creativity, action and service, which helps them to develop stronger interpersonal skills, broaden their experience and become global citizens. The IBDP is recognised and respected by the world's leading universities and evidence suggests IBDP students have a significantly greater likelihood of earning a first class honours degree and improved job prospects.

At Regents we teach a globally respected curriculum to deliver excellent academic outcomes. With over 16 years experience of teaching the IBDP, we enable our students to access the world's leading universities. We combine a British and International curriculum to ensure our students develop truly global, 21st century skills. Our wide range of IBDP and IGCSE subject options allow our students to create stimulating, personalised study programmes.

"After being at Regents for 14 years I've got to say that Year 12 and Year 13 were my favourite years so far. I've learnt many things through my IBDP journey, like how its possible to have fun and remain happy during the tough times of Year 13".

Elizabeth, Year 13 student

We are now open for school visits by appointment. Our admissions team are more than happy to help you learn more about Regents and to guide you through the admissions process for your child.

IBDP results

Average score 34 (vs global average 29.9)

Highest score was 42

6 of our students scored 40 points or more (out of possible 45) which is achieved by only 10% of all IBDP students globally
100% pass rate

Contact Admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th to book an appointment.



Iulia scored an amazing 42 points



Remnants of the past

by Arlene Rafiq

They were expecting great wealth such as gold, silver and spices but what the Spaniards saw when they arrived in the remote province of Ilocos in the Northern part of Luzon island in the Philippines were Chinese merchants trading beads and porcelain with the locals. In the year 1572, the Spaniards under the leadership of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi were well rooted in Manila and were looking for more sites to conquer when they reached this rocky and rugged place. The ideal decision was to leave to find a better location but the seventeen year old explorer, Juan de Salcedo, the grandson of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, together with Augustinian missionaries had other plans. They stayed on and explored the islands and discovered several inlets where inhabitants were living in harmony.

The inhabitants of the island were afraid of the invaders and hid from them. The young conqueror admonished his men to respect the people and take only from them what was necessary. Seeing that the invaders were not hostile,



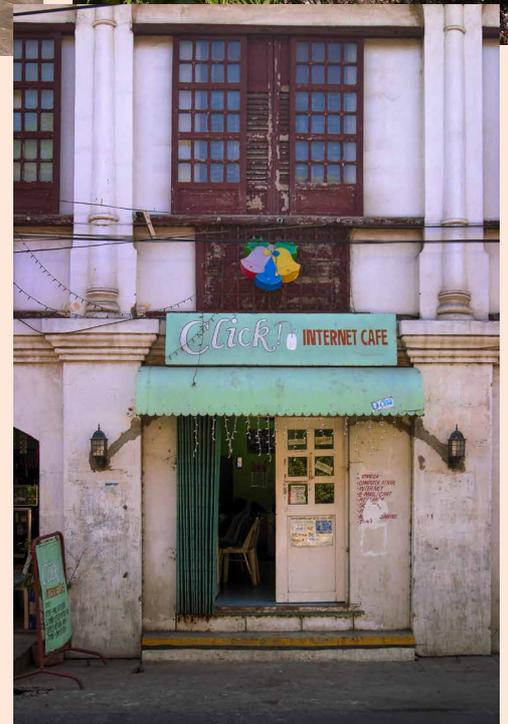
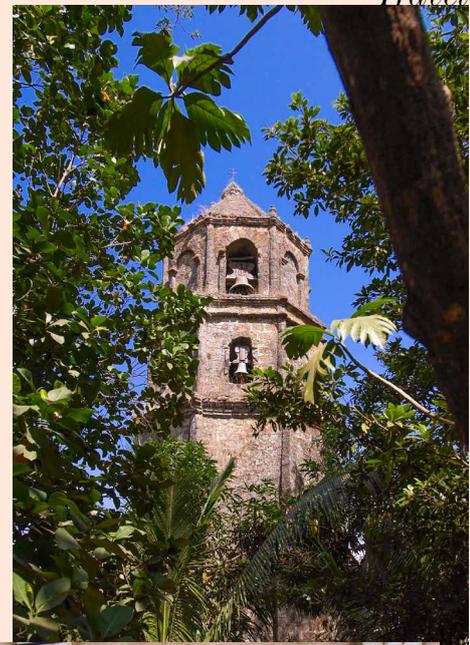
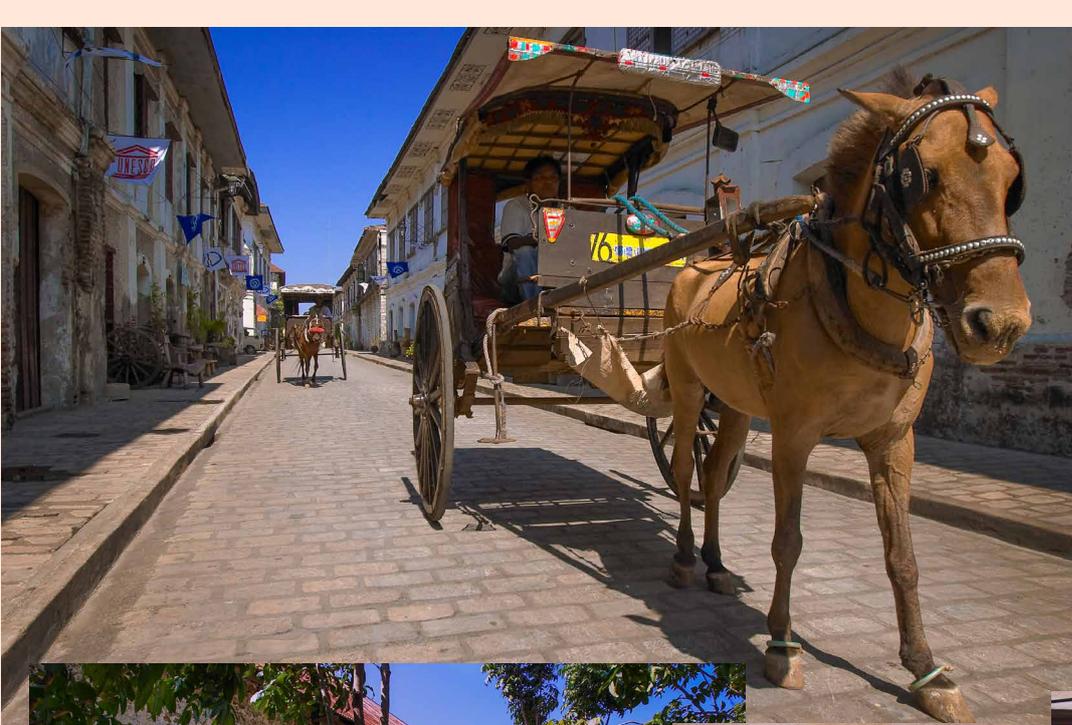
they started coming out from their hiding places to mingle and make friends with the Spaniards.

Meanwhile, the missionaries thought that baptising the locals and converting them to Christianity was far better than any treasures. The Augustinian missionaries believe that their true mission was to spread Christianity. Religious conversions

grew so did the Christian population in the region. The Augustinians worked without haste in building churches and bell towers.

Juan de Salcedo fostered friendship with the locals and established a Spanish city. The colonisation continued but was not completely successful due to abuses by some of the Augustinian friars which drove the locals to revolt against their colonisers. To gain political control over the growing population, a Royal Decree was





signed in 1818 dividing the region in half, Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur. No one could have predicted that one day the rubble of these establishments would be conferred World Heritage status by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation).

With this brief history, I found my first visit to Ilocos Province enthralling and subsequent visits even more interesting and thrilling. My second visit was with friends and we all discovered the charm and beauty of this province through the help of our knowledgeable guide, Arlene Gajeton.

Nowhere in the Philippines is Spanish influence more evident than in Ilocos. Imposing well preserved churches and edifices built as early as the 16th century stand as testaments to the long Spanish colonisation. Although many of our ancestors had negative feelings about the Spanish rule era, the Spanish left behind some positive aspects of their culture. One

example is the famous Paoay Church in Ilocos Norte, a stand out among the province's attractions. This church was completed in 1894 after ninety years of construction and is considered as one of the finest example of baroque architecture in the Philippines.

I mentally draw up an itinerary to rediscover the past: a visit to the museum, talks with the locals and perhaps a stay in one of the period houses. My visit of Vigan, Ilocos Sur, dazes me not because for its old fashioned look but because it has maintained such a strong Spanish identity. Houses built in the 16th century line the streets of the old city. The captivating Castilian architecture is very evident in the hundreds of stone houses still standing in the town's main district. Most of the ancestral homes are in good condition and have been turned into cosy inns, bistros and shops.





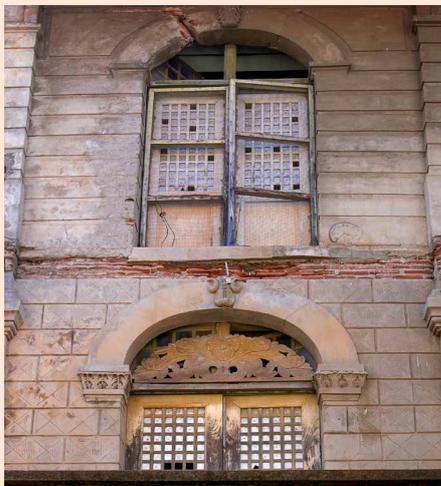
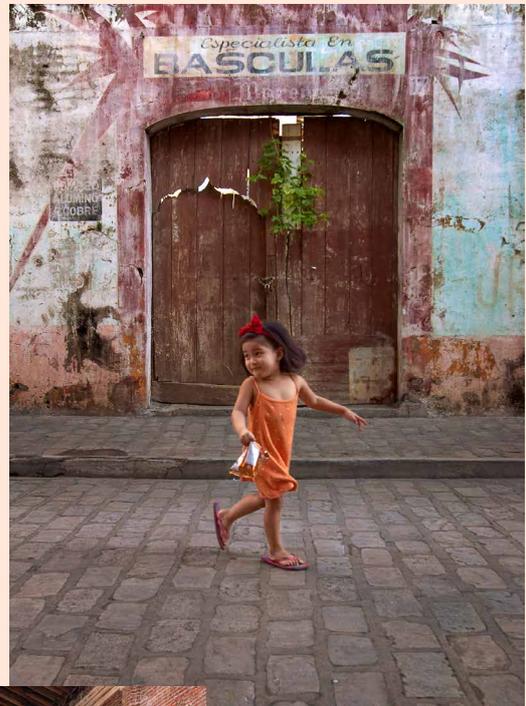
Walking along the cobblestone roads reminds me of Rome. What makes it different are the “calesas” or horse drawn carriages with smiling faces peering out from large windows. It is like stepping back in time and viewing a romantic interlude when our ancestors used to serenade the women to whom they professed love. I remember my grandfather’s story that he used to go with troubadours to serenade some of the beautiful señoritas on their balconies, one of the most romantic remnants of the Spanish legacy. The troubadours had a varied repertoire and usually started with a fast number before going into a smooth Spanish love song. For their trouble, they either receive an overturned bucket of water from irate señorita or a return song from her. The señorita herself was rarely interested, but if she favours the man, she nonetheless basked in the lyrical attention she received.

Back in the present, I feast my eyes on the unique architectural blend of Asian, European and Latin American influences in the buildings. It’s amazing that this very Castilian colonial site used to be the Chinese quarter, a place the Chinese immigrants called home. The Chinese merchants obviously did not settle here because of beads and porcelain but were taken by the charm of the women, married them and remained.

Old Spain is alive in the Ilocos region, coexisting in peace with the local culture. The past and present have entered into a comfortable relationship.

Old edifices are merely shrines of a magnificent cultural ethnicity. I discover Spain not by plan but by chance. Passing through narrow lanes, I find the Heritage Village to be the strongest living symbol of the former colony. I believe that it’s Spain’s best legacy, a place flaunting its Spanish connections. With my friends, we explored the whole site, tracing history through old pieces of furniture, ageing homes and withered faces. At the nearby church, a bell still tolls for a departed soul. It is a custom as old as time informing the village that someone has passed away and that we should pay our last respects.

After almost 400 years of colonial rule, the Spaniards are now gone. I am sure they departed with much hesitancy. I have similar sentiments as I prepare to leave with fond memories. Ilocos, beautiful and charming. Hospitable people with simple lifestyle but endowed with rich and beautiful natural resources. It is being invaded once again by foreigners not to be colonised but to be appreciated and enjoyed. Surely, they will be captured by this unique place as so many others have been in the past.



PLEASE BE KIND TO ALL GOD'S CREATURES

by Meghan Lynch
Photos taken by
Louise O'Brien

We did it. I'll be honest. I won't lie. That experience, you think it's right, you think it's what you might be meant to do. It's not, you learn quickly, some of us too late, some of us early on.

Riding elephants that are tortured to carry roughly 2-3 people with a bamboo seat, made for their back, set to keep you safe as he or she takes you up and down hills, through water, down streets that are hot and polluted. Elephants that are poked and hit with hooks, elephants that are made to move when they don't want to, when they almost can't.

Summer 2020, has us here in Bangkok and spending time on the beautiful, quiet and currently desolate island of Koh Samui, where it's lacking and craving 90% of its population of tourists that drive this usually bustling place.

On one of our many adventures on the island we spent an afternoon at the Ko Samui Elephant Sanctuary. It is the first elephant sanctuary established on Koh Samui. They have since opened one more, where as they say 'the elephants can live with dignity and respect'.



The day of our visit, they were on week three of opening back up since lockdown and with new restrictions. We were the only people there that day. They had just brought back some of the 11 employees they had to let go, just months before. You see, they had to decide whose mouth they would feed, the 7 female elephants they have in their care, who eat 20 hours out of the day or keep their full staff on that wasn't running tours. Our hearts sank, imagining having to make that decision as the person in charge.

I called in the morning to ask about the programme and if there was space for later that day. A few hours later we were sitting, watching and learning about their initiative, how to be safe while walking amidst 7 wild, unchained beautiful creatures and feeding them bags of bananas. These bananas were made possible by our entry fee, with money left, to feed their staff and their families, (and some cats too) they were eternally grateful and were not shy to thank us throughout the day.

Yet, in us, there was a mutual feeling of gratitude.



We were walking in a forest, with little hesitation and some unknowingness to find 7 beautiful elephants that we learned about one by one as we stepped through long grass, sandy pathways. Some of us stood or sat in a covered area while the staff held the elephants gently back until we were allowed to approach them and fill their bellies with Thailand's natural candy; bananas.

For every elephant there was one boy, ages 10 years to 3.5, four of them mine, the other three our friends from Bangkok. The boys listened and carefully fed them, touched their trunks, giggled when they saw the size of mouths and screamed when one or two was sprayed with elephant saliva, as big as most



hopefully continue to be able to be fed them enough and allow themselves the stability in a job they love doing.

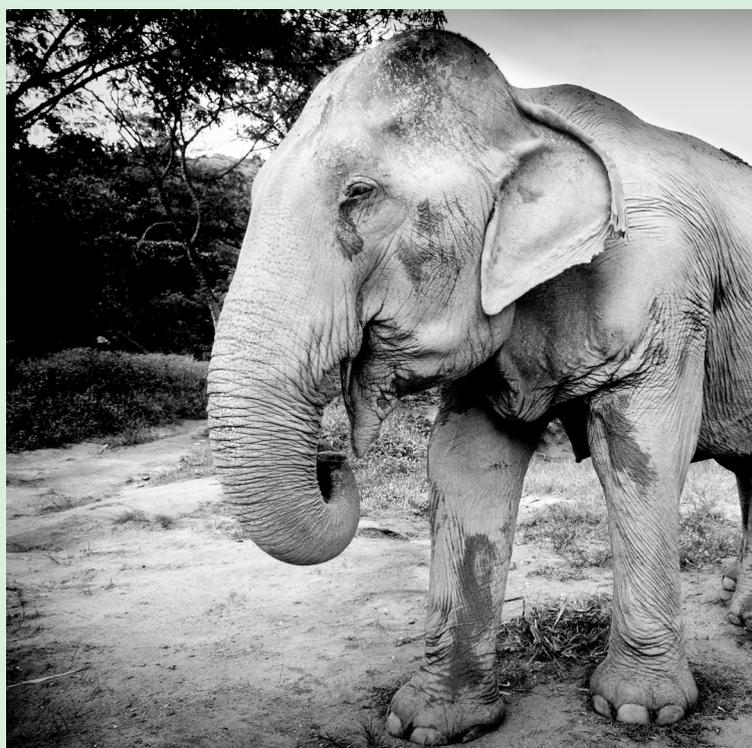
When we set out to have our visit to Koh Samui Elephant Sanctuary we had an open mind, not sure what we would see or experience. In each step was everything a sanctuary for saved animals can and will display. Yet, all the while, seeing and offering additional proof that COVID-19 is having a worldwide effect. That even size and environment and dedication to keep you safe and cared for is not giving you immunity from this beast.

'When an elephant becomes your friend, it is your friend for life'

raindrops. I looked at the children in awe, all safe and secure, I smiled in admiration for the way the experience was run, the passion in our tour guide's voice as she told the tales of their tortured life. Each boy observing, totally switched on, attentive as she spoke, searching for the pain and scars left on the elephants bodies that were put there by someone else in order to follow their rotten rules.

The tour, just 1.5 hours was enough time and information seeking for our lot. The material, and message clear for all, even the littlest tyke. Each of them able to share and feel what they learned and what a life of animal cruelty can do to anyone or thing with a beating heart. They witnessed what saving and putting effort into looked like and how standing up for what you believe in can bring.

This is a sanctuary, at its purest. In a forest that is filled with peace and security, with a team working to keep safe some of the largest creatures in the world, to feed them, and watch them roam free. To let these magnificent beings lay in a playpen-like area to rest for those quick 4 hours a day, and



THAILAND, COVID-19 AND THE WILDLIFE TRADE: FROM GATEWAY TO GUARDIAN

by Steven R. Galster Freeland



Covid-19 was a biological bomb. Its impact has been worse than any terrorist act or natural disaster in the last 100 years. The last pandemic that was more damaging than Covid-19 was the Spanish flu, which infected a third of the world's population and killed up to 50 million people. We are very lucky this time.

What caused Covid-19, and how can we avert another, even worse catastrophe? Was it a bat from a lab? A pangolin from the market in Wuhan? Or both?

It actually does not matter. What does matter is what scientists do agree on: Covid-19 jumped from a wild animal to a person. That means it is a zoonotic disease – one that spread to pandemic proportions. Like several others have in the past that we all know about: HIV, Ebola, SARS, H5N1, MERS. They all jumped from wild animals, sometimes going straight to a person, sometimes via a domestic animal, like a pig, cow, camel, chickens, or other critters.

Zoonotic outbreaks are happening more frequently, and they are getting stronger. Why? The main 2 reasons:

First: Rising commercial wildlife trade, which brings wild animals into closer contact with people.

Second: Destruction of wild habitat, which forces wild animals into human territory. Usually, this destruction of wild habitat is being done to make more space for intensive, industrial farming.



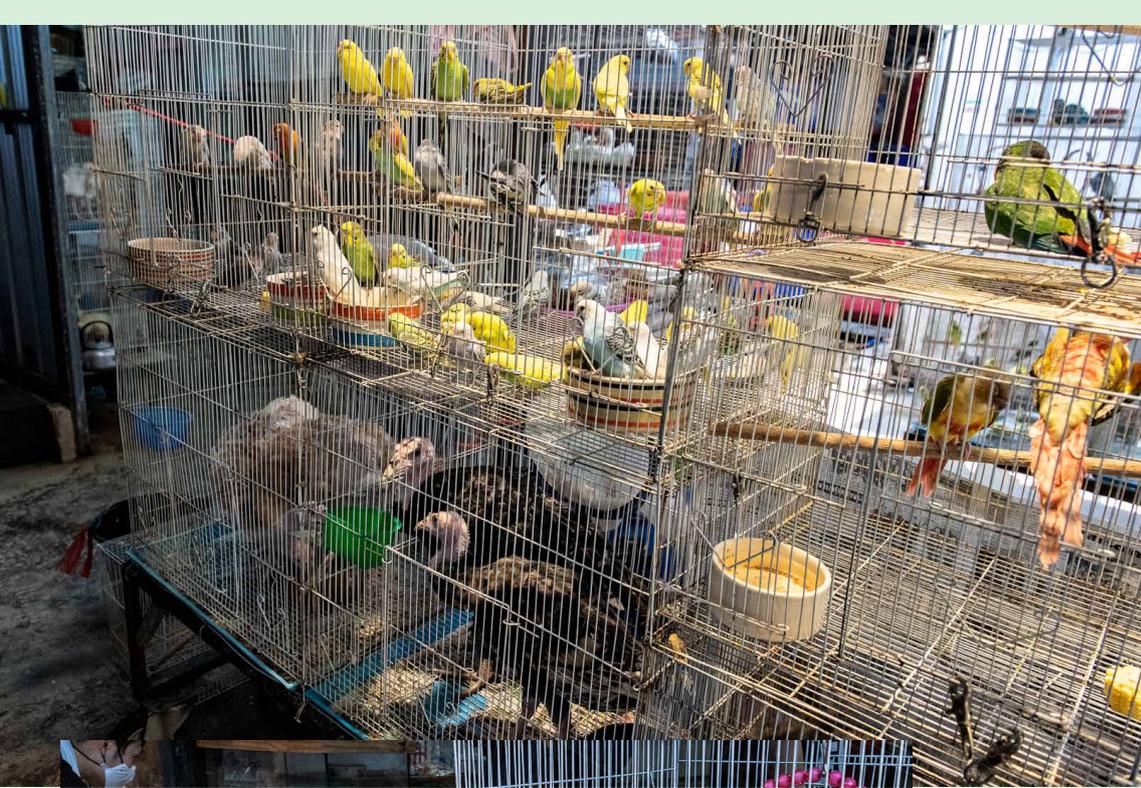
What about a cure?

The world is currently spending enormous effort and funds trying to create a vaccine. We also see costly stimulus and recovery packages offered by governments to put people and economies back on their feet. But these responses amount to expensive BAND-AID's that will need frequent changing - because a new vaccine will likely not work against the next outbreak. Each virus strain is unique. Otherwise, we would be inoculating people now with the vaccine used for SARS (aka Covid-02). We will then have to start all over again.

The only true, lasting vaccine is to treat the root cause of the pandemic: eliminating commercial trade in wild animals; protecting wild habitat; and promoting compassionate, sustainable farming.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rVD9dkT-yc>

Protect nature and nature will protect us.



Thailand's response to Covid-19 has been remarkably good overall. Thailand boasts one of the lowest rates of Covid-19 transmission and deaths in the world. But Thailand has left one door open to another potential bomb occurring right here: its wildlife trade.

Thailand is a global gateway for commercial wildlife trade. Wild animals are still being transported through the country, legally and illegally. And the virus has demonstrated that it does not discriminate between legal and trafficked animals. One example: the recent legal importation of zebras from Africa that brought with them midges that infected and killed nearly 600 horses in Thailand with something called African Horse Sickness. Exotic wild animals from around the world – and from Thai commercial wildlife farms – are still being sold in the country, including at the animal section of Chatuchak market, as well as on various online platforms. One can purchase almost any exotic species from every corner of the globe in Thailand, ranging from zebras to giraffes, orang utans, chimpanzees, tigers, African gray parrots, Scarlet Macaws, Capybaras (the world's largest rodent), iguanas, various turtles, tortoises, snakes, pangolins, and many more.

I am not picking on Thailand. My organisation, the counter-trafficking group Freeland was born in Thailand. We not only love this country, we want to make it a global model. We are campaigning globally to end pandemics (EndPandemics.Earth) along with our allies, including over 30 NGOs and the Thailand based company B.Grimm, which sponsored a 1 minute informational ad that is running on CNN around the world, reaching 600 million people. In fact we are campaigning in my country too, the USA,

which is the 2nd biggest importer of wildlife in the world. But I am focusing here on Thailand for a reason. Pandemics are global, which means we need a global leader. I believe Thailand can be that leader.

There are clear lessons that Thailand can learn from the past to protect its own people and become that global leader. Following the SARS outbreak in 2002-2003, China clamped down on wildlife trade, but ultimately decided to reopen its wildlife markets, while making them "cleaner" through stricter regulations that were designed to stop more zoonotic outbreaks.

Stricter market regulations clearly did not do the trick.

We now know that a zoonotic transmission in one country can impact the world like a viral bomb that may last months or years. Following the Covid-19 outbreak, China decided to close all wildlife markets, and ban trade and consumption of wild animals.





dealers and breeders into a new line of work else through a one time compensation. Pay now, or pay much more later with a new zoonotic outbreak.

Third: Restart and lead an ASEAN wildlife enforcement network (ASEAN-WEN). Wildlife and viruses cross borders. Nations need to collaborate to prevent trafficking and transmissions. Thailand led this active and impactful network for more than 10 years before it paused when international funds dried up. Lets revive ASEAN-WEN.

Finally: Expand and model

Thailand's tiger recovery programme, which is showing promising signs of success. Tigers are amongst the most critically endangered species in the world. Saving tigers from extinction is important in its own right because they are apex predators that help regulate and protect entire ecosystems. But on top of that, a success story for tigers is a boon to wildlife and wild habitat conservation globally. Thailand can sustain and share its successful tiger comeback story with other conservationists to inspire global recovery of wildlife and their habitats.

By taking these steps, Thailand can top off its exemplary performance on Covid-19 and become the "One Health" leader of the world: protecting people, wild animals, and ecosystems from future pandemics.

About the author: Steven R. Galster is Founder and Chairman of Freeland, a Thailand based international NGO that counters wildlife and human trafficking (www.freeland.org). Freeland is spearheading the #EndPandemics campaign (www.endpandemics.earth) with support from B.Grimm.

While these measures are not yet permanent, some Chinese officials are currently considering permanent measures. These stronger steps by China this time around should be sending a clear signal to Thailand and other countries. China's commercial wildlife trade is estimated to be worth \$74 billion a year. Imagine the opposition by wildlife traders. But China's leadership has weighed the costs and benefits, as should the rest of the world. Bloomberg estimates that at the end of the day, Covid-19's economic destruction will top \$xxxxxx trillion. Add to that the millions sick, hundreds of thousands dead, not to mention businesses and schools closed in every corner of the world, and the immeasurable psychological impact on society everywhere.

It's time that we change our relationship with nature. We need a leader to set an example for the world to follow to avoid going through this again. The World Health Organization and United Nations are calling on nations to adopt a "One Health" approach that covers the health of people and nature. But no country has yet converted these recommendations and words into practical firm action. Thailand can be that leader.

Thailand can go from wildlife trade "Gateway" to wildlife "Guardian". How?

First: The government can be the first country in the world to issue a ban on commercial trade in wild animals. Vietnam's Prime Minister recently issued a directive to ban imports of wildlife, which is a big step forward. But Vietnam has not issued a complete and permanent ban on the trade.

Second: The Prime Minister can convene a multi-agency task force to implement the ban, including transitioning legal wild animal





love the colourful flower pots they make from waste plastic, it would be amazing if more entrepreneurs can find solutions to recycle all the plastic which is lying in our oceans and threatening marine life and destroying our planet.

The booth I really enjoyed was the one set up by Fashion Revolution Thailand to make masks from natural dyes using various methods of tie and dye. I made my own mask and dyed it in natural indigo. Chemical dyes used by fast fashion are polluting our water bodies and the idea behind this booth was

ECOTOPIA AT SIAM DISCOVERY

I am always excited to attend events which focus on creating awareness towards a zero waste lifestyle. Ecotopia was an event organised to focus on a green community of mindful people who believe that they can create a better world. Events like this are a reminder that there are many eco conscious entrepreneurs in Bangkok who are eager to mitigate climate change and we as consumers must support them. The money we spend is a vote for the kind of world we want to live in so we must ensure we buy products which are not harmful to the planet and the animals which coexist with us. Human action or inaction will determine the future of our planet.

The event was extremely well organised and I loved all the different booths they had focusing on different aspects of sustainable living. I particularly enjoyed meeting a farmer who showed me a prototype of a kitchen waste composting machine, he had different sizes. I had an idea about the importance of composting kitchen waste but I have always struggled to do it properly so it was interesting to learn things which seem so basic but we have all forgotten.

There was a booth for upcycling plastic. It was interesting to watch the artistic process. Precious Plastic Bangkok which focuses on recycling plastic bottle tops into something useful was also present at the event. I really

to create awareness for people about natural dyes and to be mindful in consuming fast fashion.

My biggest concern is can such events become mainstream? Can eco conscious brands make their prices affordable? I have spoken about this to a few brands and they tell me that prices will come down once demand goes up and those of us who can afford to support these brands must continue to spread awareness and hopefully we can collectively solve the issue and cocreate a better tomorrow for future generations.





A minute on meditation

Calming the mind and boosting wellness during this time of "new normal"

by Tina Haskins Chadha

I'll admit I'd long put meditation in the bucket of "not for me." It seemed too dull, too 'new age-y' and too self-absorbed, I thought. Yet for years I lived in the periphery of meditation's allure. I was a long time yoga practitioner discovering the transformative impact of both the physical and the breath work of yoga back in the mid-1990's at NYC's famed Jivamukti yoga studio. When I later moved to New Delhi, India I deepened my yoga practice and ultimately completed a teacher training programme. Sure, while practicing yoga the concept of chanting and pranayama made sense. There were those calming minutes to focus the breath and quiet the mind, to set an intention for the practice. Yet somehow meditation on its own seemed well... too inward, too unproductive a use of one's time. The idea of extended meditation outside of yoga just struck me as impossible! How to sit still for long periods? How to silence the mind? And to what end?

Then came Covid-19. And the shockingly swift halt of "normal" life. The panic and worry of what might happen here in Thailand and elsewhere. The stressful grind of home schooling children month after month with no end in sight.

The blur of week after week passing socially and physically distanced from so many. We all were in uncharted territory. It was here during this Covid-19 era of "new normal" that I started becoming more curious about meditation. I wondered if it could really be a method to quiet the mind, to reduce anxiety, to provide a sense of calm and peace. Was it even possible to put a pause on the endless chatter of my mind? One afternoon out of the nowhere a memory popped into my mind. 5th grade. Taft Elementary School about 90 kilometres North of New York City. There was a progressive music teacher, whose name I've long forgotten, who had all 20 of us preteens reclining flat on the floor with our eyes closed, curtain drawn and classical music cranked up. She wanted us to really hear the music. It seemed silly and perhaps odd to us 10-year-old kids, but looking back I realised this was an early exercise in mindfulness, in a meditation of focus.

With the extended isolation of Covid-19 and the slower pace as life has begun to resume to this "new normal" would this be the time to really give meditation a shot? I began with inspiration from a few podcasts like "Untangle" and "Meditation Minis" and revisited the writings of author and secular Buddhist Stephen Batchelor. When I realised I could set the standard lower by trying to meditate for even one minute, then three or five minutes, it was an aha moment. The expectation of "meditative perfection" started to crumble. I realised it was inconceivable to expect to sit with a quiet mind and meditate for extended periods and for a beginner that wasn't really how it worked. I also discovered there is



no single path to meditation, no one size fits all. There are literally dozens, even hundreds, of meditation techniques and the only way to find the best for you is to try them. And different types of meditation yield different benefits.

Generally, meditation styles fall into a few categories: Focused Attention Meditation which focuses on a single object during the whole session such as the breath, a mantra, a visualisation or an external object. Then there is the Open Monitoring Meditation where one monitors all aspects of our experiences without judgement or attachment. These can be internal thoughts, feelings, memories or external such as sounds and smells. Mindfulness and Vipassana are considered

to fall into this category. And finally, there is the Effortless Presence Meditation where the attention is not focused on anything at all. This is said to be the deepest state and really something only those experienced can attain.

So, I jumped in and began to give it a shot to discover if a meditation practice for me would be feasible. I literally started with a few minutes. Some experts say meditation is possible even on the busy, rush hour packed BTS train, if that was the case, I could give it a shot in my home locked behind a closed door from two dogs and three children. I started with just a few minutes a day and began to move up in increments of five minutes week by week. I'll confess not every day went smoothly. How many breathes before I'd lose focus? Sometimes it was only one. The wandering, monkey mind is near constant! It was truly exasperating to try to "turn off" the mind's endless reminders, to-do lists and wandering thoughts.

Experts are unanimous on the importance and the exponential benefits of daily practice. I can report it is a work in progress, but there are noticeable benefits that I can feel. And I look forward to these daily minutes. Practice makes perfect doesn't apply to meditation, but what we pay attention to matters. What we practice grows.



Preparing for the inevitable

by Nick Argles

As a single man living in Thailand and now 63 years old I want to make arrangements for when I do check out and I thought that I am perhaps not the only one so I asked the British Embassy what plans I should make. I do not know if writing about it will help anyone else but it will spur me into making plans so as not to burden my next of kin, my daughter Madeleine. She lives in the UK and has three children under 6 so has more than enough on her plate.

What happens on upon death of a foreign subject whilst in Thailand. Who is involved, police, doctors, hospital, embassy, coroner?

There are two scenarios which can apply to the death of a foreign subject in Thailand;

1. Passed away at home
 - police will notify the death to the embassy.
2. Passed away at hospital
 - the hospital will notify the death to the embassy.

The local authorities require a letter from the embassy for the body to be released for funeral arrangements and for official documents regarding death.

What are the options available to a foreign subject in Thailand – burial, cremation, etc.?

Burial, cremation and body repatriation are the available options to a foreign subject in Thailand. However, burial is rare due to the cost. Usually, the family would rather have the body repatriated to the UK or have the body cremated and the ashes sent to the UK.

NA: Cremation for me please but I do not want the ashes sent back – bit too morbid for me and what would my family do with them?



How can one prepare for the inevitable if you have, or do not have family in Thailand?

It would be best to let the family either in the UK or Thailand know your preferences regarding funeral arrangements. However, if they do not have anyone, they could appoint someone they are close with to arrange the funeral with written authorisation.

NA: OK I have prepared a letter in case of my demise – please adhere to requests with dignity.

What costs are involved?

Costs may vary and depend on how a family decides to arrange the funeral. If an undertaker is appointed, then the only payment the family needs to make is for the agreed price to do everything on behalf of the family. If the family decides to arrange a funeral locally by themselves, costs may involve transportation to collect the deceased from the hospital morgue, morgue fee, embalmment fee, and cremation fee which may be charged by the temple where cremation will take place.

NA: OK will arrange and pay for it in advance so no one in the UK need be concerned apart from saying a quiet prayer for me wherever they are when they are informed. I am not afraid of death so when it comes I hope that it will be relatively painless, swift and not involve or injure anyone else.

What about wills? Is a will drawn up by a lawyer in the UK sufficient in Thailand or do you have to have a sworn, witnessed will created here in Thailand by a Thai lawyer?



The family is advised to check with a lawyer and local authorities on the validity of the will issued in the UK since each person may have different circumstances.

NA: I have prepared a will in the UK but now it seems that there is indecision here I will get one prepared here too. I have not got much to leave anyway but I have seen the way Thais squabble and fight over material things.

I certainly do not want the Thai government to get whatever I have left when I go – sorry it's just how I feel.

Is there a checklist of items to consider?

There is a guidance available on GOV.UK with details to help through the practical arrangements a person needs to make.

If there are no dependents or relatives living in Thailand what happens to goods and chattels? How can one make provision because I am sure that people would like to do so rather than all proceeds go in to the Thai government?

Police may consider to leave the deceased's belongings in the house or taking them to store at the police station. A person should make sure that they have a written statement confirming who can manage their belongings.

NA: I have left a list of items that I would like returned to my daughter in the UK and the rest I would be left to my landlady Khun Prateep Ungsongtham Hata who is in my mind the nearest thing I know to a living saint. She heads up the Duang Prateep Foundation 02 249 3553 and I know will selflessly dispose of any goods and chattels left.

My English lawyer in Bangkok is Philip Sweeney of Opus Law p.sweeney@opus-law.com 02 168 7565 a first class English gentleman if I may say so.

My daughter has a copy of this document madeleine-spencer@hotmail.com

MARATHON MAN: EMIL SIRANOVIC

by Kathleen Pokrud,
President of Hong Kong Ladies' Group
in Thailand

People sometimes ask, "Why do so many ordinary people run marathons?" We know that running offers amazing health benefits, but a long distance race of 42 kilometres sounds a self-challenging perseverance test. Expat Life sat down for an interview with long time expatriate Bangkok resident, Emil Siranovic, who has been enjoying this sport for over 30 years. We are here to learn about his journey, not as a professional athlete, but a recreational runner. Anyone who wishes to pick up marathon running as a new personal goal may find some useful tips here. Every runner has a story, here is Emil's.

Three decades ago

In 1988, Emil started running in New York City in a small way by participating in a 5km run in Central Park organised by his office, and then in his New Jersey neighbourhood. He recalled, "I discovered that I enjoyed both the comradeship and the physical exertion of running, something that all office workers could use. In mid-1989 when my work assignment took me to Ningbo, Zhejiang Province in China, I worked on an isolated site with no other company, except for the Chinese engineering staff who spoke very little English. There was nothing to do for entertainment with that countryside location – no TV, no radio, no newspapers, no magazines. Those were the days before WiFi, with no communications other than an occasional phone call to the US and a fax machine for business purposes. The question was how to pass the time apart from working mostly alone? I read books and played CDs (all in very limited quantities) that I had brought with me. So I turned to running in the mornings and evenings through the local farmers' fields, and I discovered that I enjoyed the running and the outings it provided. It allowed me to shift focus from work and find another activity to fill my life. Since I had no other



Angkor Wat H-M 2016



Banyan Tree Vertical Marathon Start 2017

companions, I became a lone runner and have continued to always run alone, but I have seen many people join running groups and realised that this is a much better way to get the most out of the running activity."

Joy of running

Expat Life asked Emil about his training and fitness routine. "I didn't do any special training for my runs of 10km two to three times a week in Lumpini or Benjasiri Park. Many people have asked me why I run in the first place. To put it simply, I feel lucky to have discovered the joy of running. I have many reasons – it helps to keep me fit, and it takes me out into the city parks where I can enjoy the surroundings. I also feel the adrenalin kick in pushing myself as hard as I can.



Vientiane H-M 2018

In this way, I achieved the necessary fitness without excessive stress. Professional athletes have different and more complex routines. This simple routine was just right for someone like me who simply enjoyed the morning outings in the park.” Cities in many Asian countries nowadays hold half marathons. Emil ran several in Thailand, for example in Bangkok, Kanchanaburi at River Kwai, and Chonburi; as well as out-of-country in Cambodia at Angkor Wat, and in Laos at Vientiane and Luan Prabang. Information on many similar

events in other cities and towns in the region is available online.

Full marathons

Full marathons (42.5km) are generally limited to major cities such as Bangkok, Yangon, Da Nang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore in Asia, and London, New York and Boston further abroad. These are much bigger affairs and generally involve several thousand participants. To increase runner numbers and their popularity, the organisers also often tack onto the schedule half marathons and 10km runs. Major cities such as New York and Tokyo have stricter qualifying requirements to enter the race, so not just anybody can take part. In Bangkok there are no special requirements, as Emil echoed, “just the will to challenge yourself and experience the joy of participation.”

Emil recalled his journey to take on a full marathon. “For anyone who enjoys running and has achieved a half marathon level, doing a full marathon is a temptation and a challenge that’s hard to resist. It’s like wanting to climb to the top of Everest. You wonder, “Can I do this?” and rationalise, “It’s only twice the half marathon distance,” and “How hard can it be?” And if you are young enough (say under 50) and fit enough, and enjoy some punishment, with reasonable training over several months it should not be a problem. There is a lot of advice online and written materials are available on how to train and choose a time frame. I encourage anyone interested in such a venture to take the time to research and select a routine that suits your ability and body type.

Emil candidly recollected a few lessons that he learnt along the way, “Do keep in mind that thinking ‘It’s only twice the half marathon distance so it can’t be too hard’ is fooling yourself. In my case, the second half would have many points of near-eternity, especially when I started experiencing leg cramps.



Luang Prabang H-M 2019

As a lone runner, I also appreciate the pleasure of running in large groups, especially with young people in crowds that could be as large as several thousand. The presence of a crowd running all around me - with some slower and some faster - provides an incentive to stretch my limit.” Like many early morning runners, Emil explained that the quiet solitude is a form of “meditation” that he enjoys.

Organised runs

Organised runs in many cities are runs on the streets, in often polluted air and a heavy traffic environment. It helps that all runs are scheduled early in the morning, which makes things better. Over time running has expanded worldwide and there are now many half marathons (21km) in many cities. Emil shared, “I was tempted to try running longer distances as a challenge. I found that with my weekly routine run of 10km, it wasn’t too difficult to run 21km in a reasonable time. I learned that for running a longer distance, the training routine was to just run the usual 10km distance and only occasionally to go beyond that.



However, there are always enjoyable offsetting experiences, such as the time when I was near the end of the race. I felt like I was dying and was focusing on my poor cramping legs when a gorgeous young girl ran up to me and placed a flower wreath around my neck. I forgot my cramping legs and speeded up for the last half kilometre and finished the race with a smile.”

Emil ran five Bangkok Marathons between 2008 and 2015, and now focuses on half marathons, which he regards as “a doable challenge”. He recalled how he was inspired for his first marathon immediately after returning home from a three week trek in the Himalayas to the Mount Everest base camp. “That was a hard trip that involved gruelling daily up-and-down vertical climbs over a distance of 50km, starting at an elevation of 1,900m and later reaching 5,500m, sleeping in icy cold rooms, and eating very meagre rations. As a result, I came back to Bangkok as skin and bones. I thought this would be a good time to attempt a marathon.

I was toughened and lightweight, and thought this would make the run easy. It just goes to show how easy it is to fool yourself, as I discovered that what I thought of as “tough” was really just exhaustion after a long trek, and the marathon turned out to be painfully hard. After I completed 30km and was crossing Rama XIII Bridge I was about ready to quit and get a ride back to the starting point. It was then that I came by an elderly Thai man on the bridge who was watching me struggle and started shouting what was clearly,

“Keep going, you can do it.” It was all in Thai but I did not need words – his actions were easy to understand. At that moment I knew that I could not give up, and I redoubled my effort and went on to finish the race, much the worse for wear, but elated that I had done it. The moral of the story is that you should do a marathon when you are fit and strong and not underweight and exhausted. In the following year, 2009, I was in much better shape and well trained and the run was a joy.”

Another memorable experience Emil encountered was that “Runs can be fun in the least expected ways as I discovered on a half marathon in Vientiane in 2017. After crossing the finishing line, I was approached by two Japanese ladies who thanked me profusely and gave me a gift of a plate of brownies that they had baked the night before and brought to the race. It seems that they were running behind me and near the end of the race they were exhausted and about to give up. Then they saw this old geezer running ahead of them and not stopping, and were inspired by his example to finish the race. I was pleased to have pulled them to the finish.”

General tips for running

As an enthusiastic leisure runner, Emil shares some valuable advice for pursuing this healthy hobby.

- A general tip for running beginners is to enjoy being out in the outdoors environment and look for the pleasure of challenging yourself beyond your norm. Start slow and

build up your ability and strength, and with time both your capacity and pleasure will grow.

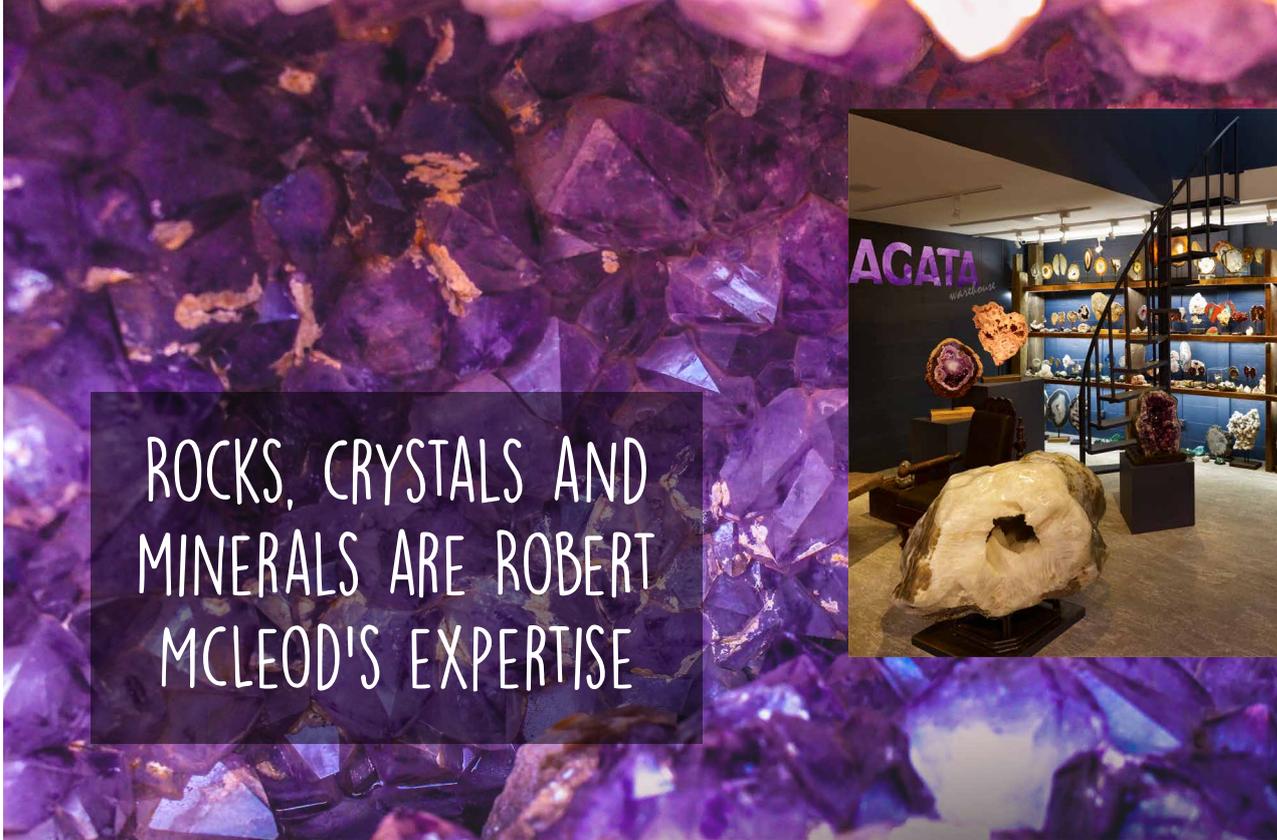
- Kickstart by doing short distances of say 2km and work up to longer distances as your fitness increases. You will find after a short time that doing too little becomes boring and you will want to challenge yourself to do more.
- Start with initial slow jogging and build up from there. You can also increase both your capacity and enjoyment by related activities such as gym work and walking up stairs. I walk up and down 27 floors in my condo. It is a great cardio workout and available at home so there is little excuse not to do it. Buildings such as Baiyoke II Tower (89 storeys) and the Banyan Tree Bangkok (65 storeys) hold annual vertical climbs that are fun to take part in.
- Join a running group to combine social interaction with physical activity. There are many running groups in Bangkok, with information available online.
- Along with the belief in “no pain, no gain”, the compensation is the adrenalin rush that comes from vigorous physical exercise and the achievement of what you did not think was possible.

Running is not for everybody, but Emil concludes that he knows many people who were initially reluctant and thought that they would prefer the easy chair in front of the TV, but changed their minds when they tried it. Let us all start our first running steps!



Bangkok Marathon 2008





ROCKS, CRYSTALS AND MINERALS ARE ROBERT MCLEOD'S EXPERTISE



by Ruth Gerson

Have you ever collected rocks and minerals as a child? I remember marvelling at a geode, the egg-shaped rock that when broken reveals marvellous amethyst crystals, one of many of nature's secrets.

Robert McLeod, an Englishman from Kent, found a niche in the Asian market selling top quality fine crystals of the somewhat obscure creations of mother earth, to a public who is slowly acquainting itself with them. When asked what gave him the idea to delve into this area of rocks, Robert answers that he collected rocks as a child, but what really propelled him in that direction were some photographs that he saw and which captured his imagination.

Robert has a good and trained eye, working as a photographer in Asia and worldwide, starting photographing promotions for hotels and ending with the prestigious *Architectural Digest* magazine. His road to photography is interesting too. After graduating from university while working as a math and chemistry teacher in Japan, he photographed as a hobby underground theatres in Tokyo; these are non-main stream surreal theatres akin to those of the 1930s in France. Robert eventually took one such group of twenty Japanese actors to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival with

immediate success which launched him in Japan overnight, with clients seeking his photographic services. He continued photographing for five years until the massive economic crash of 1991 that required him to move on. The new destination was Thailand where he had expanded his photographic services, enjoying exciting assignments. "That was the heyday of photography" he says. However, nothing lasts forever. With a change of management at the *Architectural Digest* and the advent of digital photography, Robert found his work less desirable than in the past, and he began to look around.

Interestingly, during a photo shoot at a spa in Bangkok Robert saw an amethyst geode that had been bought at a huge expense from a catalogue, and his interest in crystals was reignited. Upon inquiry, he found out that it originated in Uruguay and reached Thailand by the circuitous route via Taiwan, gaining price as it travelled along. He soon realised that there was a good margin of profit to be made in that





After three years he once again consigned his goods to a shop, this time at Gaysorn Plaza. In 2016 Robert decided to branch out and opened the two level shop in the then newly renovated River City naming it Agata Gallery. It is in a prime location at the ground floor of the central atrium with its crystals sparkling at passersby.

When discussing the business aspect of his shop Robert says that fine minerals are still undervalued compared to antiques and other art assets. His customers are worldwide however, his most loyal ones are the Thai. Outstanding on display are the Spanish Pyrite cubes, known as Fool's Gold, as is

the natural formation of a cream colour rock called Gogotte found in Fontainebleau, France formed naturally at the end of the Ice Age. It's smooth intertwining shapes inspired a number of 20th century sculptors including Henry Moore. These silica-sand centred rocks are now very popular with auction houses.

trade, however he was appalled at the highly exaggerated price tag of that particular stone. Robert says that even today, after so many years, he sells the same items at a lower price. And so Robert started his business buying crystals from Uruguay contacting people he knew. From there he went on to Brazil and in time the destinations for hunting these items grew. Today he travels all over the world buying from India, China, Namibia, Madagascar, Peru and more. He also travels to mineral shows looking for rare and unusual pieces, with the biggest show being the one in Tucson, Arizona in the US held in February of each year. His favourite kind of stone is a combination of calcite and amethyst, however the best seller is the amethyst crystal due to its strong and attractive colour and its rather large size in an affordable price.

It is quite a courageous venture to start selling rocks to the uninformed public, investing money with uncertain returns. It seems however that Robert's bold move paid off. Testing the so called "waters" he put his first goods in 2007 on consignment at a shop in Siam Paragon shopping centre. Although sales were successful, the cost of maintaining these items at the upmarket venue became prohibitive.

Robert emphasises that he started this line of work not to seek profit, but out of interest, the only route that he would take. The money is secondary, needed to finance his interest. "I enjoy finding pieces", he says. "It is a competitive business and one must be fast in making decisions, particularly in purchasing new items." Agata Gallery is one of a kind shop in Asia selling the highest quality crystals, equaled only by some shops in New York.

Agata's crystals are on display at River City 3rd floor from the end of July 2020 for the duration of one year.

AGATA GALLERY
Room 188, River City, Talad Noi, Bangkok
Email: robert@robertmcleod.com
www.agatafinecrystals.com

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EXPAT SOLO FEMALE TRAVELLERS:

*Let's go girls!
Seize the day!*

have enjoyed this time... aren't we for instance preparing for a baby boom? Whilst Covid may not be the birth name of choice, I'm certainly hearing of a pug dog in England that is called Covid, or was it Boris?! I forget, oh whatever...

I digress, the point is v on some Thailand domestic adventures. To make it really fun, let's go exploring on our own and give ourselves some precious time to take our own breath, regroup and recharge. We so deserve it!

There has never been a better moment in history to go off on your own. For those of us (happily) marooned in Thailand, we can't leave the country without the fear of whether we'll be able to come back. Why would we want to, when Thailand without tourists is this luxury not to be missed. The prices are good and for many of us, our partners are clamouring for their own me time too.

For those of us living freely and independently there is a whole returning tourism sector that is desperate to welcome you. For those in a relationship and in close quarters during the height of Covid, I'm sure each one needs time on his/her own... we go with our spouses' and partners' blessing!

Did you know that a booking.com survey resulted in a Solo Travel Report that revealed that 72% of American women are taking solo journeys. The biggest demographic was in my age group the 55 years plus. The next biggest was the under 25 years. There is something that I love at this stage of my life getting out there travelling with the under 25 years!

by *Little Wandering Wren*

Last week I took time out from my still 'un busy' schedule here in Thailand, waiting for the world to reopen, for some quality me time.

Are you the same and not entirely sure where the last four months have gone? Have you also been managing Covid issues for your family across several continents and in several time zones? I found most of March, April, May and June

went by in a flash and now it's our summer holidays – not!

Did your original plans for endless lazy days with family in your homeland long disappear? Do not fear Thailand is here!

Much has been written about the golden opportunity to explore Thailand without tourists. Thailand was hoping for 40 million arrivals in 2020. Now the most optimistic research is indicating that it will be the end of 2020 before visitors return in any number. The consensus is, that it will be years before Thailand will reach the glory days of 2019 when 39.8 million foreign visitors spent 1.93 trillion Baht in the country.

It's been exhausting hasn't it? As women, many of us has spent a lot of energy concerned with the welfare of our family wherever they might be. Perhaps you too are spending the nights hoping that the resilience you tried to instil in your (adult) kids would be enough to maintain their sensibilities during this global pandemic and into our second waves. It's hard knowing that if anything goes wrong, there is little that we can do about it. Hands up who needs a break – me!

Stop the world I want to get off!

Travel companies all talk about the rise of the solo female traveller as being one of the biggest areas to watch in travel. I'm wondering what impact the recent months of the pandemic will have on this market?

Hmmm, I'm thinking it's about to explode, what about you? We have all proven that we can spend weeks in social isolation, some of us in testing times locked indoors with our loved ones. Maybe others





It makes me feel youthful again! They say that during Covid, more marriages than ever before dissolved and weakened. If you were one of the lucky ones that actually saw your relationship strengthen, then own that success and travel solo to reinforce the message. If you are one of the unfortunate masses and have now announced your Facebook status to the world as single, embrace going solo. It's the new you and you'd better enjoy it!

Last year I was invited to attend a product test for a Tourism Authority of Thailand e-publication *Me, Myself & Thailand*. We travelled to Nan, one of the five destinations highlighted for solo female travellers to consider, along with Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Kanchanaburi, Kong Khai and Phuket.

I loved all the extensive research and consideration that had gone into this e-book publication. TAT have identified that Solo Female Travellers in Thailand want:

- *To conquer mountains*
- *Search for my soul*
- *Live like a local*
- *Recharge*

Make a difference

So as soon as we were able to travel between provinces I knew I needed to follow up with some solo travel.

Friends had told me about a wonderful beachside boutique hotel called Aleenta Resort and Spa in Pranburi district, that they had enjoyed previously. When I saw that the hotel, just 30 minutes South of Hua Hin, offered a deluxe solo female package,

I knew I had to check it out.

I spent four nights in a beachside villa with my own hammock, Jacuzzi and sun loungers!

My mornings were spent walking along the wide, sandy beach.

Whichever way you walked there was something of interest. I was almost lost in this new world. As I paddled in the warm shallow waters of the Gulf of Thailand, looking for curious seashells and loving the colourful fishing boats. I found myself wanting to walk on and on and on.

I walked 10,000 steps daily, oh how free and liberating it felt after all those pent up weeks inside my apartment block.

I set up my own mini yoga and meditation studio in the room. The room included yoga mats and an iPad which offers a choice of mind, body and soul activities.

I enjoyed long lazy breakfasts, which arrives rather quaintly, on a tiered stand, almost like an afternoon tea experience! It was all calling out to slow down and take your time. So I did. I lazed around reading my book, and in between I set up a little office for some writing. Oh if ever there was a place to get my writing mojo back it was here in Pranburi!

When I felt the need to get out and see the world, I took one of the hotel's free bicycles off to explore. I was up before dawn and the security guard pointed to the left and I ended up on an epic bike ride to the next bay. I found an enchanting temple for a wander, just me and some temple dogs.

I visited the organic farm that the hotel uses for its wonderful restaurant, I love these sorts of things. I am all for nourishing every bit of me, from the inside out! Whilst there we spotted the butterfly pea used for the welcome drink and all manner of Thai herbs

used in my Thai herbal medicine ball, later in the week.

I could have tried kite surfing, famous in the area, but for me the spa was calling. My afternoons were spent resting and rejuvenating with pampering massages and body scrubs in the open-air spa area to the gentle sound of the ocean waves.

The General Manager Alle kindly took me out to show me the area. Do you know Pranburi?

It's impressive and about to become the next big thing! Once the high-speed train link from Bangkok opens, and the marina are completed, and a proposed ferry direct from Pattaya starts to operate, it will shine in the region. (The ferry car park is ready and waiting...)

It is definitely worth the extra drive on from the crowds of Hua Hin. At present all the drive-to locations from Bangkok are doing well. Pranburi was three hours travel time door-to-door to my Sukhumvit apartment bypassing Hua Hin.

Thank you Aleenta and all the staff in Pranburi. I loved my stay with you.

I hope that maybe I've inspired you to consider some solo travel. Much as I love the companionship of travelling with my husband and friends and family. My solo trips are so memorable, I cherish these days away just me, my book and my dreams! And maybe you will too.



L'ORÉAL'S SUSTAINABILITY EFFORT DRIVEN IN ALL VALUE CHAINS

by *Ines Caldiera CEO Thailand*

L'Oréal Group has been in the forefront of sustainability and its efforts have been recognised at the global level by well-respected institutions such as the United Nations and CDP. The company's firm commitment to sustainability started in 2013 with a programme called "Sharing beauty with all", whose aim is to engage the whole value chain – from product design to distribution, including production processes and the sourcing of raw materials – to address its impact. The group's sustainability work seek to address four pillars of sustainability: innovation, production, consumption and community.

The "Sharing beauty with all" programme has clear targets set for 2020. Some significant progress has been made from 2013 onward – including the reduction of environmental footprint across its plants and distribution centres. The company already exceeded its goal by reducing CO2 emissions by 77% in 2018 as production rose by 38%.

On the target to improve the environmental or social profile of 100% of its products by 2020, the company achieved 85% of its goal last year. The focus is on reducing the environmental footprint of its product formulas by sourcing raw materials in a responsible, sustainable way with respect for biodiversity. The optimisation of product packaging is also a high priority: by 2025, 50% of its products' plastic components will be recycled or bio-sourced and 100% of the group's plastic packaging will be refillable, reusable, recyclable or compostable. With the group's commitment to innovate and develop more sustainable products worldwide, L'Oréal Thailand is able offer to consumers in Thailand more sustainable choices for consumption.

Some examples of products with improved environmental footprint available for Thai consumers include the L'Oréal Paris Botanicals haircare range and Kerastase Aura Botanica, all of which come in eco-friendly packaging. The bottle is 100% composed of recycled plastic (except for the cap and pump) and can in turn be sorted and recycled after use. Some packaging is also designed to be both desirable and sustainable. For example, the jar used for the luxury-range facial care product Lancôme Absolué L'Extrait delivers elegant visual appeal while also being refillable. With the new design being 39% lighter than before, using this refillable Lancôme jar and two refills represents a packaging weight reduction of



58% compared to using three conventional products.

L'Oréal Group is also collaborating with partners on many innovations to ensure it has access to the best technologies to improve packaging. The Sustainable Packaging Initiative for CosMEtics, for instance, seeks to introduce a common methodology in cosmetics product packaging to reduce environmental footprint. The company also collaborates with partners to adopt innovations in the form of bio-based and recyclable paper bottles, and even co-creates a consortium to promote the industrialisation of enzymatic bio-recycling technology with an aim to create a more sustainable world based on circular economy principles.

In terms of sustainability and safety of ingredients, L'Oréal is transparent about information on our products and ingredients. The company have a website, inside-our-products.loreal.com, that is made for consumers to give answers to questions about its products and ingredients. The website contains informative contents on key ingredients such as sun filters and palm oil.

L'Oréal's endeavour is to go beyond the regulations and answer to its consumers' expectations and the trends it observes. The company often anticipates the regulatory evolutions by removing, several years in advance, some ingredients from its formulas, forbidden later on. For example, in January 2014, L'Oréal committed to eliminate all plastic microbeads from its rinse off products before the end of 2017. This commitment was achieved in January 2017, almost one year before the regulation required our industry to do so.

Supporting the community is also a key aspect of this programme, and L'Oréal Thailand is contributing actively to this global target. By 2020, the company expects 100,000 people to discover new job opportunities through



programmes such as *Solidarity Sourcing* or *Beauty For a Better Life*. In Thailand, over 200 underprivileged people have received support from the two programmes, enabling them to generate steady income. L'Oréal Thailand is ambitious to support more beneficiaries in the coming years.

L'Oréal has embarked on a fundamental transformation towards a more sustainable model and we are proud of the progress we have been making. In Thailand, we contribute to the group's sustainability targets –

particularly in reducing environmental footprint from our LEED certified distribution centre and helping underprivileged people have access to work. We collaborate with our suppliers through the Solidarity Sourcing Programme to hire people excluded from the workforce, such as the elderly and the disabled. We also help underprivileged groups develop hairdressing skills from our *Beauty for A Better Life* training programme so that they can become a hairdresser and have a stable profession. We have also been working on improving areas of our point of sales materials and retail. Clear guidelines have been adopted to ensure eco-POS and sustainable retail.

L'Oréal Group remains fully committed to this collective effort as a matter of urgency. 2020 marks the end of the first series of “*Sharing beauty with all*” targets and will also be a turning point in terms of sustainable development as the company will unveil its new programmes and commitments for 2030 later this year. The new targets will be based on the Science Based Targets initiative's framework to reaffirm its commitment in taking action on the climate, and in line with the 2°C trajectory defined by the Paris Agreement. This sustainability programme – along with its strong commitment to ethics, policy of promoting diversity and inclusion, and philanthropic activities – enabled the group to contribute to 14 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals defined by the United Nations in 2015.

As climate change increasingly becomes a reality, it is important that everyone take part in tackling this great environmental challenge. Our tangible, ambitious targets show how committed we are to sustainability, and we hope that these goals will be able to inspire others to help preserve our planet.

Through its transparent communications, L'Oréal has provided data on its corporate social and environmental responsibility strategy, challenges, and results in three reports: The Registration Document; L'Oréal's annual report to the United Nations Global Compact (UN Global Compact); and the Sharing Beauty With All Progress Report. More than ever in 2018, L'Oréal's performance enabled the group to be recognised by the most demanding global organisations in this area.

In 2019, for the fourth year running, L'Oréal achieved an 'A' rating in all three of the rankings conducted by the CDP for its efforts on climate protection, sustainable water management, and fighting against deforestation. L'Oréal is the only company in the world to have been recognised for achieving the highest level of performance for three consecutive years. In 2015, L'Oréal was recognised as a 'Global Compact LEAD' company by the United Nations and action on climate change was stepped up by committing to zero net emissions by 2050.



CAPOEIRA IN MY LIFE

by *Waleska Berquão*

Capoeira is an expression that mixes Afro and Brazilian cultures. It works in different instances of art and body, such as music, dance and sport. Despite the fact that it doesn't have a single concept. It could be considered a sport, a fight or a cultural manifestation. However, the benefits that the practice has for health are clear, such as reducing stress and weight, controlling blood pressure and improving the cardiovascular system. Depending as Capoeira is shown, it can have the vision of sport or philosophical question.

Being an apprentice of Capoeira for 16 years now, when it was introduced me by great Mestre* named Joaozinho da Figueira* In Brazil, I am passionate about the results and pleasure that Capoeira gives me in my life. I practice Capoeira in happy moments and also in not so happy moments of my life. I will explain this ambiguity. I have psychologically assimilated Capoeira in my life as a way of expression, instead of sport. When I play in the low moments, I let all sad feelings be released from my mind although it means fight and force. Whilst in the happy moments, I am play, it works like celebration and achievements of my life.

Capoeira is strongly driven by the rhythm of the music which is extremely important to dictate the pace of the fight and even determine some of the blows that can be taken. In addition, music is an important cultural component, as it tells about the past and history. Capoeira is a very special feeling to me!

The body connects with the mind, and the result could not be better, an amazing synchronisation force, *ginga** and



defence. It uses all parts of the body, and allows it to function on the ground or through the air with kicks.

There are two main types of Capoeira: Angola and Regional. Regional Capoeira, incorporates elements from other martial fights, creating a sequence of strokes and a teaching methodology. It also features faster movements and has a uniform that consists of white trousers and a white top. Angolan Capoeira, on the other hand, was created as a reaction of some Mestres* of Capoeira, especially. This type of Capoeira is considered to be the traditional one, with slower movements and is not interpreted as a sport, but as a cultural manifestation. Angolan Capoeira does not have a uniform. Regional Capoeira, on the other hand, does.

Identifying the exact origins of Capoeira is extremely difficult, as there are no written documents about it. So far, what is known is that it did not have a single place of origin, as it appeared in many places in Brazil where black Africans settled. In each location it acquired distinct characteristics,



some of which became better known and became references. One of the most influential African manifestations for the emergence of Capoeira is N'golo, which exists in Southern Angola.

Capoeira was a weapon that blacks exposed when they had no other alternatives. They used it either to defend the quilombo* or to escape slavery. Thus, it appeared in a contest of clashes and meant the challenge to the slave system.

The risks when practicing are low, as there is not much direct contact between the people participating in the roda*, that is, the kicks and other blows do not reach the opponent.

Capoeira benefits

1. It contributes to weight loss: Capoeira is an aerobic activity and therefore helps in burning calories. One hour can burn about 700 calories.

2. Reduces stress: Capoeira has music, fighting and aerobic activity. This combination is perfect for reducing stress. The person transfers stress to the moment of the fight, the music helps to relax and the aerobic activities release endorphins that provide the feeling of wellbeing.

3. Improves the cardiovascular system: The practice, as well as other aerobic exercises, makes the heart work more efficiently without having to make great efforts. Blood flows better; arteries and vessels are healthier. All of this prevents the risk of cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attacks, high cholesterol, stroke and hypertension.

4. Improves flexibility: Capoeira involves kicks, jumps and other movements that contribute greatly to improving flexibility.

5. Stimulating popular culture: As mentioned before, Capoeira is not just a fight, it is also a cultural manifestation. For this reason, when practicing Capoeira one also learns about the history and culture of Brazil, especially Afro-Brazilian.

*ginga: the most basic movement of Capoeira, aimed at placing the right hand forward and the right leg backwards (and redo the process with the left side). It is from this movement that other blows take place.

*quilombo: secret place where the escaped slaves stayed or went, usually covered or hidden in the woods

*roda: a circle formed by people (in most cases Capoeiristas) singing and clapping with hands under the sound of Capoeira music.

*Mestre : person considered master because has graduation archived for a lifetime dedicated to Capoeira

*Mestres: plural of Mestre

*Joaozinho da Figueira: he was my first Mestre of Capoeira. He is the founder of Capoeira Mar Azul.

More information:

<https://www.marazul.co.uk>



The Fearless Leader:

HOW CHARGING YOUR FEARS CAN HELP YOU NAVIGATE THROUGH ANYTHING THAT LIFE THROWS YOUR WAY

by Isabel Valle

There are moments in life when you feel under attack. It could be a batch of bad decisions, unfortunate events, epic failures, health issues, financial struggles, stress and overwhelm at work, sleepless nights, family or friends' grave illnesses... or even a global pandemic which gives little signs of easing up. Sometimes, it seems as if most life domains work in synch to charge at you, and it is frankly difficult to navigate such times.

The last few of years have seemed that way to me. I have struggled with health issues, such as leaky gut and adrenal fatigue. My husband had to leave us and move to another country for work, and I was left in Bangkok alone, with my two amazing children, who unfortunately took to their dad's departure with great disappointment. A very sick mum – living far away in Spain. My daughter's trust issues as a result of bullying. My son's heartbreak by his dad's departure. The prospect of moving to a very expensive country without the "expat" cushioning of benefits... add to that my – timely –

decision to embark on a big mentorship programme to help me up my game and develop my business to a whole new level, and what you find is a real scramble of a person trying to get through my days the best way possible.

I am not going to lie to you. There have been days where all I could get done in order to get through my day was breathing. I am up and down like a yoyo, pushing through, constantly demanding more of me, giving out more, doing more, then crashing and recovering for a bit, only to jump back onto the vicious cycle.

Not easy to have to juggle so many balls at once. But I want to tell you one thing. I am not sorry that this is happening to me. On the contrary. I know that every challenge that I face, every obstacle I stumble across, brings me closer to becoming the type of person I want to be. Every hurdle, every disappointment, every mistake brings with it new learnings, fresh new insights as to what I'm capable of, and even more determination that, no matter what comes my way, I will conquer it with the continuous courage and decisiveness that I put into my life. Because if I don't, what would be the cost of succumbing to it all?

It was over a decade ago that I decided to claim a leader's seat and let go of my victim's role, a position I had played very well for the majority of my life.

In going through a huge transformation – from the inside out – I built resources within myself that I never knew I had. And from that moment on, I made a commitment to myself that, no matter what life threw at me, I would charge up and face it head on.

It wasn't long after that commitment, that I believe the universe decided to test me, and sent me on a quest to



demonstrate whether I would show up as a fearless leader or I'd run away.

During that time, I was living in Brunei Darussalam, in the Borneo jungle, where I would spend hours daily running through the jungles. It was on one of those days, a particularly quiet one, that I decided to go for my weekly Saturday 22km loop. Towards the end of my run, something happened, that would allow me to cement my commitment to charging to fear.

I was only about 2km away from reaching the main city, people and buildings, when, out of nowhere, I was faced with a pack of wild dogs charging aggressively at me.

Wild dogs usually travel together, and they often have rendezvous sites like wolves. I happened to be unfortunate

enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and these dogs were determined to get to me.

We've all heard that if an unfamiliar dog approaches you, to not run, panic or make loud noises. And if the dog knocks you down, to curl into a ball with your head tucked under your fists. Well, I can tell you now that at that time, that advice became insignificant.

Very quickly I could assess who the alpha dog was, charging straight at me, and the other three dogs started to spread out, and I knew that they were going to try to circle around me, whilst the dominant dog of the pack would approach me head on.

I knew I had one chance at changing the situation I was in, and that under no circumstances could I let those dogs get behind me, or that would be it. I also knew that I couldn't run for my life, since I had just ran over 20km and my legs were ready to give up.

Intuitively, I knew that I needed to focus on the alpha dog of the pack, and that if I could scare the leader off, the rest would follow. Unfortunately, I wasn't carrying any sticks, nor did I have time to find a rock or something to throw at them. My best bet was my hydration pack, so I quickly took it off and, at that moment, I decided that charging my worst fears was the only way out – and so I did.





Tapping into strength and courage I didn't know I had, I bravely decided to face the alpha dog and charge at it, speeding towards it face on. I ran as if there was no option but to win the race, to give my all, and I screamed so loud that I couldn't even hear the angry dogs barking anymore. For a second or two, I thought that was it, if it came to the alpha dog and me crossing paths, I would lose, yet at that moment I had nothing to lose, so I decided to give myself to the charge.

Just a second before crashing with the leader of the pack, it suddenly stopped, and I could see the confusion and disbelief in the dog's face. I believe that it understood that no matter what, I would show up in the fight fully, and at the very last moment it decided to stop and back away. The other dogs followed, and they ran deep into the jungle until all there was left was the feeling that my heart was going to come out of my mouth.

It took me a moment to come back to a present state. I felt the need to shake uncontrollably and let go of all the adrenaline build up that still persisted in my body.

I thought about running back to civilisation, but I was beat. There was nothing left to give in me, and I slowly walked back home.

Once I reached home, I passed out. It took me a good few weeks to be able to reflect about that incident and to come out with some nuggets of wisdom that would allow me to release the trauma and move forward.

With time I understood that in the face of fears or obstacles, charging ahead is truly the only way. I have since

tried to adopt a "fearless leader" mentality, so that, no matter what gets on the way, I will be here ready to face it.

Life is what you make of it. It won't always show you its best parts. There will undoubtedly be times when life will almost be unbearable, and, during those times, look within, tap into the strength and courage we all possess within ourselves, and charge ahead, for soon life will show you some of the best sunrises yet.

To the fearless leader within you, awaken your power, the time is now.

Here's to your success!

Isabel x

***About the author:** Isabel is an experienced Peak Performance Strategist with over 20 years of international work experience holding senior positions within the hospitality industry in countries around the world, as well as Executive and Leadership coaching, mentoring and training. She specialises in high performance strategy, leadership development and building organisational culture to help leaders and their teams learn, grow and succeed. Isabel is passionate about helping empower business leaders with the mindset, performance, skills and strategies that they need to get ahead.*

More available on www.isabelvalle.com

Little glands with lots of power

by Karina Stewart

The last months weren't easy, right? The ever changing news, uncertainty about the future and the constant feeling of anxiety have taken a toll to the point where even the strongest amongst us feel stressed and exhausted. Meditation and breathing exercises can help but what if they don't seem to calm your nerves anymore? Then stress overload can take us to adrenal burnout. You have probably heard about it: in short, the adrenal glands, which sit just above the kidneys, are hormone producers. As well as secreting hormones like oestrogen and testosterone, they are also the production house for the stress response hormones, adrenalin and cortisol.

Under normal stress conditions, the adrenal glands in a healthy individual are able to adequately regulate hormone secretions. However, with severe or prolonged stress, the adrenals can take a beating. Essentially, what happens is that the adrenal glands go into overdrive, trying to keep up with the body's need for adrenalin. Eventually, this wears the adrenals down and they become under active. It may begin with mild symptoms of adrenal fatigue, but over time can lead to severely debilitating adrenal burnout.

Adrenal burnout is a syndrome rather than a disease. It is a combination of different symptoms that can vary from person to person.

Some of these symptoms include:

- Constant fatigue that is not relieved by rest
- Insomnia
- Low blood pressure and/or blood sugar levels
- Back and joint pain
- Decreased immunity – susceptibility to colds, flus, infections
- Emotional symptoms such as apathy, despair, anxiety and irritability

Excessive stress is the main cause. In normal times that would include working too much, sleeping too little and the constant demands of a high stress lifestyle. But with everything that is going on around us, our adrenals are also compromised. Although it can affect anybody, those most at risk are Type A personalities who are seen as highly productive and highly successful; the sort of people who burn the midnight oil, never switch off their phone, stay awake until the kids to come home late at night, answer emails on Sundays, take care of a relative and cram their day with an endless list of 'to do's'. Pushing limits is natural for Type A personalities, and they often find it difficult to slow down and stop 'doing'.

People with adrenal imbalance often reach for stimulants like caffeine and sugar to 'keep them going'. This can further damage the adrenals, so this temporary energy boost only aggravates the problem.



Adrenal burnout is not something that can be fixed with a few good night's sleep. It is a deep imbalance of the body's energy producing system, and rest alone is not enough to restore balance. The good news is that you are not alone and that there are ways to recover. First, you need to consider both the physical and emotional aspects. Adrenal burnout is a lifestyle illness fuelled by cultural values and a personal psychological disposition; a lifestyle approach is needed to deal with it. Diet is very important, as the body's nutritional needs increase under stress. Things like excessive carbs and stimulants and insufficient protein can further stress the adrenals. Nutritional supplements may be required, and holistic healing therapies can help to restore both your physical and emotional condition.

It is also important to address the emotional and psychological issues and stressors. It has been said that if you want something different, you need to do things differently. In the case of adrenal imbalance, this is not only true for your recovery but also for your ongoing health. And now skip the cappuccino and make yourself a nice cup of Mulberry tea, which is high in naturally occurring 'GABA', a neurotransmitter that slows down the impulses on the nervous system, calms us down and promotes sleep.

Now isn't that already a good start?

About the author: Karina Stewart, a Princeton Graduate and Master of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (MATCM), is together with her husband John and founder of Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary and Holistic Spa on Koh Samui.



Overcoming mummy guilt

by Gale Ruttanaphon

When I gave birth to my daughter and made the transition to motherhood, I was still trying to grapple with my own concept of what a "good" mother means. What should a mother do and not do to be considered "good", because I know I wanted to be a good mum for my daughter. I remember feeling guilty and ashamed for leaving my daughter with a nanny to go for my own exercise. Then I asked myself why should I feel bad? I felt bad, because I was having an internal battle with myself.

My internal battle

My love for exercise started when I was in the final year of high school, going through a stressful period of preparing for a university entrance exam in Australia. Truth be told, I started running because I didn't want to get fat. I was studying and eating all day long and it was starting to show. I quickly realised that not only did exercise help me destress, it gave me more energy, it made me stronger, and I was pleasantly surprised at the distances I was able to cover! I was proud of myself - I never thought I had an athletic streak in me. I kept up with exercise right through to my pregnancy. I remember going to a gym class the day before my daughter was born and feeling great about the session.

After I gave birth to my daughter, I felt disconnected to my postpartum body, I didn't like what I was seeing in the mirror. My belly was wobbly, I felt weak, I didn't look right. I wanted to do something about my body, and get back to exercise, but in my mind I had an overwhelming sense of

guilt. The voice inside my head kept asking "what kind of a selfish mum are you leaving your baby to go exercise?" I felt so confused and ashamed - where was all this guilt coming from? I felt compelled to be with my daughter and look after her, but I also wanted to go exercise and look after myself. I was torn in two.

Our society praises selflessness and decries selfishness. The message is loud and clear - mum has to be selfless. A good mother cares first for her babies, then her partner, then herself. Therefore, self-care gets equated with selfishness. When a mum takes time off and does something for herself, she's selfish, she's not a good mother.

For the longest time, I smothered the side of me that wanted to look after myself, and I stayed back with my daughter to be a good selfless mum that I ought to be. But slowly I grew unhappy, and resentful. Unhappy because I felt drained and exhausted like a cup half-empty. Resentful because even though I wanted to be "selfless", I still desperately needed a little time out, so I felt "forced" to give from my already half empty cup.

Fear of selfishness syndrome

Selflessness doesn't come naturally to me, it comes with a level of exhaustion, anxiety and unhappiness. Then it dawned on me that I was suppressing the urge to look after myself simply out of the "fear of selfishness". I was afraid what other people would think of me. This feels like the exact opposite of giving from the heart which selflessness embodies. The fear of selfishness asserts that I need to do whatever it takes to be there for other people, especially my children, even when I feel overwhelmed and worn out. Because of this, the fear of selfishness carries the energy of shame and guilt. I felt bad leaving my daughter to go exercise, and equally bad not going. I felt trapped without a choice. The realisation that a good mother comes from within NOT from others marked



Sharing my belief

– creating My Mummy First

I founded My Mummy First during my maternity leave, because I believe mums deserve to be looked after too. I was inspired to create a company that focuses on the mum, and the mum only. Through exercise and fitness, I found other mums out there that felt the way I did. Through this common connection I realised my superpower, I can make fitness fun. I get to work with the most amazing women who show me how wonderful and powerful motherhood truly is. My Mummy First is a company, but it's really a community of mums that

my turning point. It made me want to search for my own definition of what being a good mother means. I truly believe we cannot adequately care for others if we do not care for ourselves first.

Put on your oxygen mask first before helping others

The truth is a mother also needs her downtime, for me there's a time for self-care and there's a time for selflessness. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive. By recognising when to be generous and when to be self-attentive, you create boundaries that will help you. Help protect you from over extending yourself and help protect others from the resentment that can form when you overextend for them. You wear yourself thin when you act out of fear of being selfish. Just as the cabin crew say in the flight safety briefing – "Put on your oxygen mask first before helping others". You are no good to anyone if you run out of oxygen. To me, the distinction between selflessness and self-care is not black and white. We can divide our time to do both. We spend 1 hr on ourselves, the remaining 23 hours we can still be good and devoted mums. We can be a selfless mum and we can also be a mum who takes care of herself. We don't need to exclusively choose one or the other.

Self-nurturing is an essential prerequisite for good parenting. As your child gets older, you need to set a good example for him or her. Your child needs to see a mum who respects and looks after herself. This is not selfishness; this is self-respect and good role modelling. There's no need to lose your sense of self in the process of mothering. Don't let your identity disappear in the guise of motherhood. I strongly believe in practicing self-nurturing daily!

Make sure you have space for your own needs. Nurture yourself by doing something each day that you want – go exercise, get a manicure, read a book, dress up and get out. I promise your baby will be just fine with your husband, your mum, or your nanny. Thailand is a great place to get help, it's affordable and never too far away.

support, celebrate and lift each other up so we can all become the best version of ourselves.

Be good to yourself – give yourself the love and respect you deserve. You'll be a better parent, a better partner, and a happier mum. This I truly believe.

Gale Ruttanaphon – Graduate Purdue University, Masters Sydney University, ACE Certified Trainer with Pre/Post Natal Specialisation, Corporate Speaker, Life Coach, Mother of two.
Website: www.mymummyfirst.com





An American in Bangkok running the khlong

by Meghan Lynch

There's this place, there's actually at the most recent count 1,682 of them. You can see them, smell them and hear about them throughout Thailand. They are a means of transportation, floating markets and sewage disposal. They may appeal to you, interest you or make your stomach turn. They are a part of Thailand's history, their economy, their life, their tourism. You can take a ride any time of day to see what they look and feel like, see what is along them and in them.

They are Thailand's khlongs. On most of the khlongs, especially the smaller ones, there are houses, communities, families and little convenience stores. You can travel on them by water and see them from there or access them by foot, where there are concrete footpaths with railings for walking, bicycle riding, a motorbike can even pass through. You can stop and walk into a little convenience store and buy water, or order and sit and eat a bowl of noodles under a covered area that someone has worked hard to create their home and business, on the house's front steps.

I've come to know a few of the khlongs in my neighbourhood by being gifted 'that friend'. She's the kind of friend everyone needs. She's honest, helpful, supportive and kind. She is the one that has a solution to a problem you didn't even know you had. The one who knows someone, who knows someone, who can fix this or that or take you to the place that no one knows about. Anytime I'd find myself in a space with her, at the pool, having a coffee, she'd ask me how things were going, we'd find a natural rhythm of conversation,

full of ease and genuine nature.

I met this friend when I first arrived in Thailand, six years ago. One day, I found myself telling her how running in the Mu Baan at 5:30 in the morning was lovely, it was also getting boring, I was feeling like a hamster running around the wheel, same view, same steps, same feel, over and over even with a change in music genre. She asked me if I'd run along the khlong yet? The khlong, what is a khlong I answered? With that she was off, sharing the way to get there, why it was just outside our village down the street. She informed me of the other's she knew who ran it in the village and how it was an experience in itself to see the community, built around the paved, uneven, at times unsteady paths.

My first few jogs along the khlong were with a friend who ran there most mornings, she was faster than I, realising that quite quickly, I decided to learn her routes and ended up going out on my own because as runner's code goes, if you hold someone back and can't keep up, it might not be a match, no hard feelings.

Over the last 6 years (with some breaks for a pregnancy and newborn baby phase) I have found myself on the paved, uneven and busy walkways that lean up against the khlong. I duck under bridges, slide left or right to dodge a motorbike, slow down for a family walking to work or school and politely say 'hello' in Thai as my signal to let them know I am there and may I pass them, ever so politely. I have jumped over snakes and rooster poo. All too often I've just missed kicking a cute little duck or two that jumps out in front of me.

I enter the khlong and it feels alive, even on the days when everyone is still asleep. With sounds of boats and bikes,

I wake a monitor lizard who then slithers scared, down off the wall and into the water. I watch fishing poles cast into the dirty water to serve as breakfast. The community is warm and kind. They smile, throw up a peace sign or a thumbs up. They clap for us and say good job in Thai. Sometimes they laugh at the crazy farang lady running in such heat while they are sitting relaxing on their makeshift front porch.

There is a hussle on certain days during specific times. It is busier on the waterway, with all types of boats passing through, empty long tail boats, the trash collection boat, the grocery delivery boat, that stops and beeps and the locals come to the edge and he delivers their weekly order or sudden need. There is the boat packed with melting ice stopping off to deliver and load the pickup truck that waits to spend their morning on the busy roads delivering ice to local stores before it melts.

When Bangkok began talking about a lockdown I found myself running along the khlong one morning, thinking what this would mean for them. What would they be preparing for, how would a lockdown impact them. The one thing I knew those early days in March was they wouldn't be out shopping for toilet paper and most likely not worrying if there were enough devices for their kids to learn online. But what would they be worried for?

I learned quickly. As Covid-19 was still undetermined in Thailand and cases were rising a bit. I took my last run on a Sunday afternoon along the khlong in March. The walkways were busier than usual, I was dodging more men fishing, and there were more babies in Daddy's strong arms than I had ever seen. I suddenly realised it meant parents would be home, living in those small and cosy, tight and warm houses along the water because their work had sent them back, by no choice of theirs. They were now parenting, protecting and entertaining their families. A lot like the scene in our village as well, Dad's playing basketball, Dad's riding bikes and holding babies and toddler's hands. It was the same, yet it wasn't.

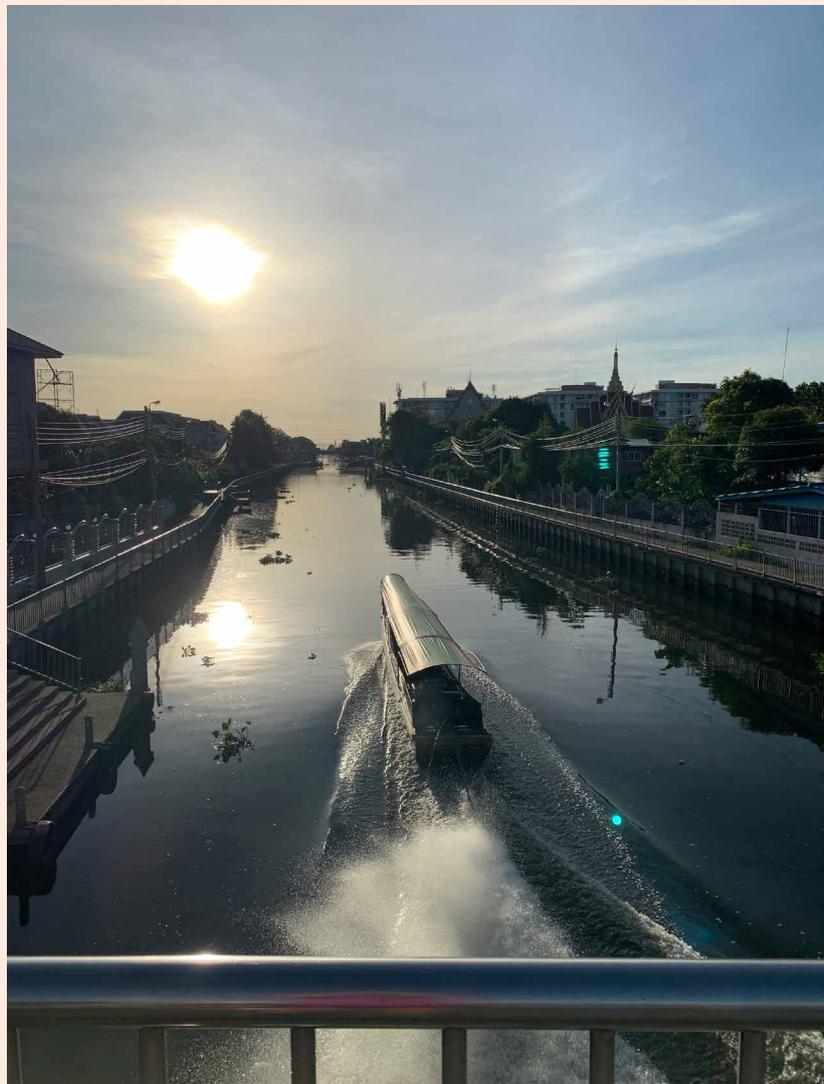
For months we stayed in our village, determined to follow the rules and show our son's what that actually looked like. My mind wandered to the families on the khlong often, the families who lived, on our nicknamed "Breakfast Ally" where breakfast was sold and men sat out and drank coffee on a picnic table. To my widowed pal with well spoken English at the far end of the khlong, he was busy working to renovate his home when we last spoke (as I caught my breath), was he able to, did he have the materials coming to him from his friend's who had boats?

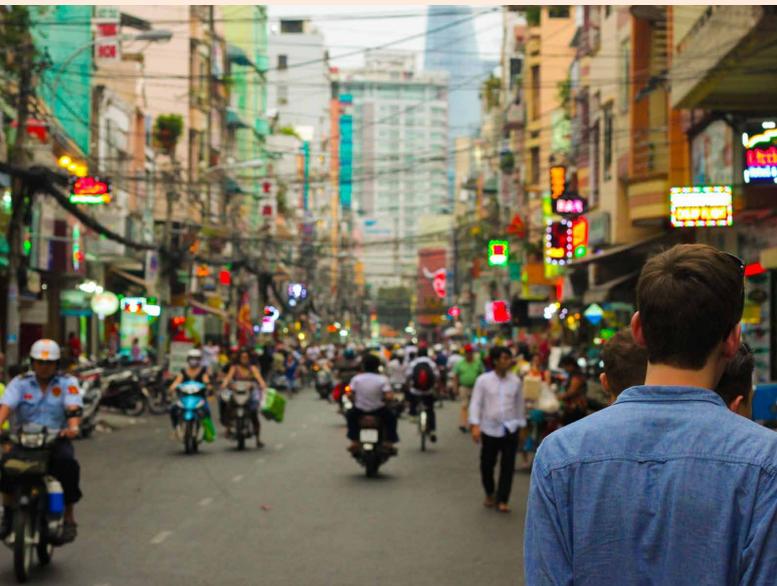
When restrictions eased in Thailand Pete and I agreed it was potentially ok to head back out and run the streets of Bangkok and our beloved khlong. My first run was filled with emotion, I was alone, it was early. It had been such a long time since I had taken in the environment and smell that is not always refreshing yet invigorating somehow. As I ran, the focus less on pace and distance, more on checking in and looking at the houses and the community. It's not as if I was able to see that everyone was still safe and happy, honestly it left me with more wonderment than before. As I continued on and saw the

fishermen, the babies back in their Mama's arms, telling me Dad was back at work that was all I needed to see.

A few weeks and runs later I ran into my pal at the far end of the khlong and my heart nearly jumped out of my chest and my belly bounced to the sky. He was there, talking to a man selling something from his boat. They were deep in conversation, I stood patiently and waited for them to finish. We greeted each other and he told me how happy he was because today was the first day in three months that his friend was able to come and sell his fruit along the khlong. He had been genuinely worried for his friend and unable to contact him during lockdown. After he finished the purchase they exchanged a heartfelt "see you soon." Then it was my turn and my friend and I caught up over what the last three months had been like for him and his community over a delicious, just purchased, piece of Thai fruit called Longan. He told me that all of this was hard but losing his wife 10 years ago was harder and that he tried his very best every day to be positive and make her proud.

Before I left him and told him how thrilled I was to see him, we took a selfie because I honestly never want to forget that moment we shared. While I've been writing this article for weeks it suddenly helped me bring it to its closing paragraphs and utmost meaning, which was clearly the universe's doing. A story of what the khlong has brought to me as a previously bored runner, to a girl living amongst culture and communities that offer richness and kindness at every bumpy, uneven and lively step.





Roger Crutchley

We are speaking with Roger Crutchley, long serving Bangkok Post PostScript columnist, and world famous raconteur.

What brought you Thailand?

It was all a mistake. In January 1969, I set off from London in a clapped out bus for an overland trip to New Delhi, hoping to go on to Australia. Things didn't quite turn out that way. I had no intention of coming to Thailand. The bus broke down in the Afghanistan desert and I broke down in Calcutta, with just enough money for a plane ticket to Bangkok, arriving in April 1969. I eventually got to Australia 27 years later, possibly qualifying for the slowest ever journey from London to Sydney.

What has changed the most here?

When I arrived there were no high rises in Bangkok. In 1970 the Dusit Thani hotel became the tallest building with 23 storeys. Malls have now taken over from cinemas as the best places to enjoy the cheap air conditioning. People also stand in queues, which didn't happen before. I miss the traditional sounds of the Sois: the old night watchman striking the bell every hour after midnight; the noodle vendor with a booming voice on his bicycle cart; the ice cream seller with his gentle tinkling bell. One thing I don't miss is those old

Bluebird rattletrap taxis with holes in the floor and no air conditioning. It's also years since I've been ambushed by street kids in Bangkok shouting: "Hey you, one baht". I kind of miss that... well, no I don't really.

What has changed the least?

The Thai people have not changed as much as some might claim. Certainly, they are a little more materialistic but still friendly, polite and helpful. I wouldn't have stayed here 50 years if that wasn't the case. For many years I was fortunate in having a reliable maid who readers of the Bangkok Post would know as Ms. Yasothon. She sadly passed away back in 2003, but her husband, Noi, is still looking after our house and garden. He is a lovely fellow and has become a good friend and doing a magnificent job with our garden.

Of all the people you have interviewed who was the most interesting?

I've only interviewed sportspeople and one that stands out is the late All Blacks rugby star Jonah Lomu. He was inspirational both on and off the pitch as he bravely fought a losing battle against kidney disease. He was a lovely, cheerful fellow and one of the most humble sportsmen I ever met. Interviewing my childhood hero, England football star Sir Bobby Charlton was also a wonderful experience. Charlton's World Cup winning teammate, hat trick hero, Sir Geoff Hurst, was also a most enjoyable interview. Then there was Australian cricketer, Sir Dennis Lillee, whose first words to me were: "G'day mate, fancy a beer?"

How has Thailand changed you?

I have changed from Young Crutch to Old Crutch, from Skinny Crutch to

Tubby Crutch, from Carefree Crutch to A Trifle Grumpy Crutch. It is important to accept you are in a country with a very different culture. In the early days, I had to stop myself saying: "We don't do it like that in England."

What are the most interesting places to visit here?

Anywhere without hordes of tourists. Alas, there are few such places left (before the coronavirus), although rural Thailand, especially the Northeast is okay with me. I avoid returning to places like Koh Phi Phi and Phuket that I visited when they were pristine but have since been overrun. In the old days, I enjoyed exploring remote areas with a good friend and colleague Tony Waltham.

Where do you get your weekly Bangkok Post column inspiration from?

The dog. If I'm stuck, he usually comes up with a good idea. He is also a good listener in my more fragile moments.

What do you do for enjoyment?

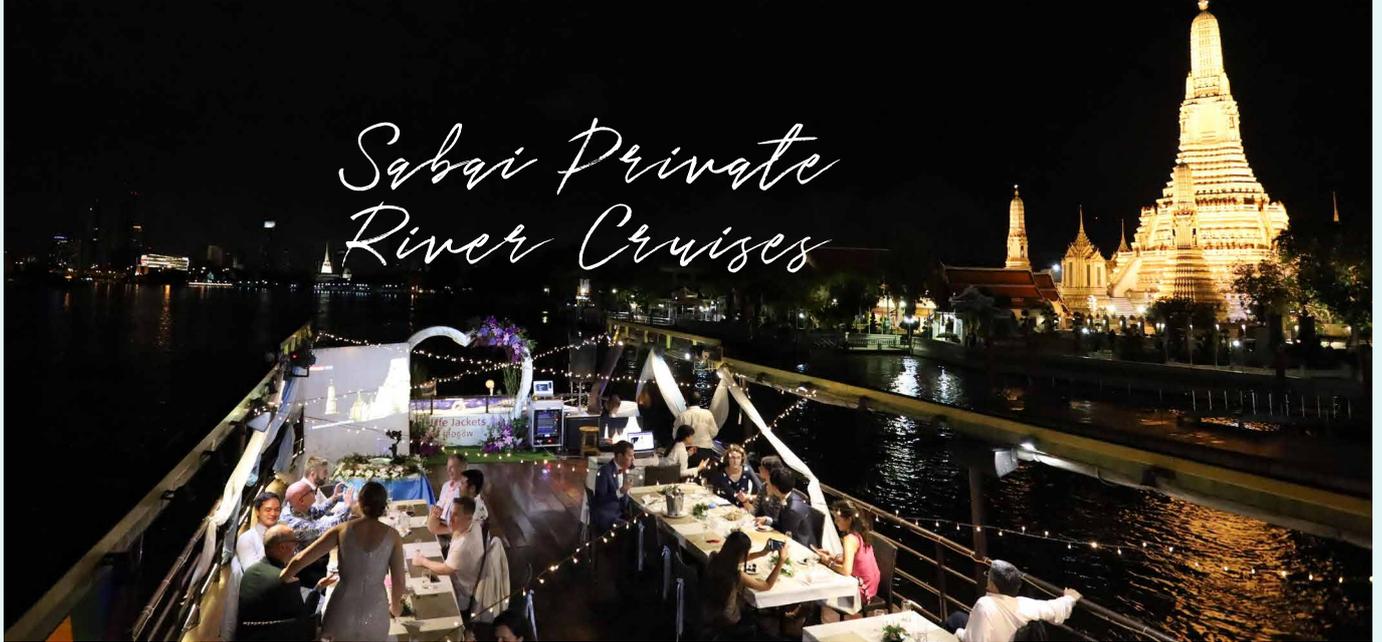
Listen to modern jazz, which these days isn't very "modern": John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Jimmy Smith, and many others. It's very therapeutic and the dog likes it too. I also love sitting in our small garden watching the birds and squirrels at play, plus the odd frog. It's wonderful natural entertainment.

What do you see the future is for Thailand?

I knew there would be one question I couldn't answer. During my time here I've experienced assorted coups and upheavals and somehow Thailand has always landed on its feet. I just hope that continues to be the case and things remain stable.

What do you see the future is for Old Crutch?

With a bit of luck, I'll probably just fade away.



Sabai Private River Cruises

If a city is located on a river, you can be sure that the buildings on the riverbank will reveal a fascinating history. From trading warehouses originally supplied by sailing ships, to monuments of national pride, to defensive military fortifications. Think London, Paris, New York, Amsterdam, Budapest, Hong Kong and many others. This is because as well as being a hive of frenetic activity they have some of the most beautiful buildings in the city to observe, especially at night.

Bangkok is no different, perhaps even more so, the network of canals that used to connect various centres earned the reputation for the city as being the Venice of the East. Water transport was so dominant that the first road bridge across the river was only built in 1932 (Saphan Put). This fact is particularly significant in architecture, because buildings were constructed with river access being the primary 'front door' and therefore looking grandest facing the river. Yet to many people living in

Bangkok, the closest contact they have with the Chao Phraya River is a glimpse from a bridge.

Most people think river cruises around the world are all the same, fortunately they are not, and for a number of reasons, Bangkok, offers one of the best dinner cruise experiences. First of all, the weather has to be kind. Second the river should not be too big or too small, third and perhaps most importantly, the nation has to have had sufficient wealth and history to construct significant monuments in its past. Bangkok ticks all these boxes.

Imagine sitting in a comfortable seat at the dining table, chatting with friends drinking quality wines, and eating the finest foods, as spectacular views reveal themselves as your cruise boat meanders up river. Once you reach Wat Arun and the Grand Palace, you will understand why the Chao Phraya River is known as the River of Kings

After a good dinner, in this wondrous environment, you will be

relaxed and ready to party. There's no party like a party on a boat. Dance the night away to great music. The night will be memorable, and friendships deepened.

Sabai Cruise – Private Party Cruises, established in 2005 and run by an English speaking family offers private charter cruises to mark special occasions or celebrations – weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, business functions or Christmas and New Year company events.

They make it very easy to host your own event, starting with a minimum group size of 15 up to 125 guests, cruises are fully catered and at a reasonable price. Their two boats Sabai (40 guests max) and Sanook (125 guests max) are double-deckers with retractable roofs, guests dine open air, on the upper deck to maximise river views. All cruises are private charters usually 3 hours but can be as long as you like. Boats have their own kitchen and private chef so food is high quality, customers can bring their own alcohol no extra charge.

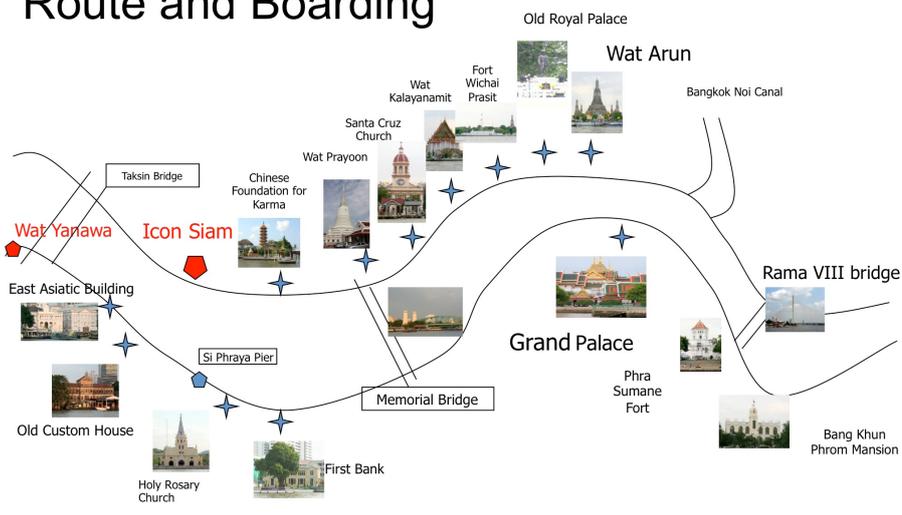
For more information please view www.sabaicruise.com

They are also selling special promotion tickets to see in the New Year: Bangkok New Years Cruise: Countdown 2021 December 31, 2020 9:00pm-12:30am January 1, 2021

info@sabaicruise.com or 085-074-8181

Line: ivarscott (English language)
pumviranee (Thai language)

Route and Boarding



The editor's favourite offers

Banyan Tree Bangkok

An iconic destination for leisure and business travellers, the hotel boasts unparalleled panoramic cityscapes, elegantly decorated guest rooms. You may also choose to pamper yourself with a spa session or indulge in a rejuvenating massage at the Banyan Tree Spa, and experience our luxurious dining venues which include a world-renowned *al fresco* roof top dining venue, Vertigo & Moon Bar.

For the Expat Life offer, we would like to promote our truly luxury staycation package which is bookable for stays until 31 March 2021. (blackout date applied, 24, 25, 30, 31 Dec 2020, 1 Jan 2021, 12, 13, 14 Feb 2021). Mention Expat Life to get this offer!

The details are as follows:

- 4 course premium set menu for two guests
- Sunset drinks for two guests at Moon Bar
- One night stay in 1-bedroom suite
- Breakfast for two guests
- Late check out until 4pm

www.banyantree.com



Banyan Tree

Kamalaya Ko Samui

A relaxing wellbeing break for Expat Life in Thailand readers

Kamalaya is an award winning Wellness Sanctuary and Holistic Spa surrounded by nature on the peaceful southern coast of Koh Samui. Whether you need to reduce stress, create new healthy eating and exercise resolutions or reconnect with your inner strength, our team of wellness experts and warm hearted hosts are here to support you.

Flexible Offer

Free yourself of restrictions and experience our haven of relaxation. Enjoy 45% off your preferred room type or villa, dining and wellness treatments and many other extras. Mention Expat Life to get this offer!

Book online at www.kamalaya.com or call us at 077 429 800



Kamalaya

Holiday Inn Pattaya



Holiday Inn Pattaya

Escape to the Holiday Inn Pattaya. Family hotel right opposite the beach. Seeking an adventure, want to relax – we are ready for you.

- Ocean view 2,999B
- Superior Ocean View 3,399B
- Breakfast 2 people
- 20% discount on all food
- Kids under 12 eat/stay free!
- 90 min massage 999B
- Now – 29 Dec 2020

Mention Expat Life to get this offer!

038 725 555 reservations.

holidayinnpattaya@ihg.com

<https://pattaya.holidayinn.com>

X2 Pattaya Oceanphere

Pattaya's only collection of luxury private pool villas under an international brand, X2 Pattaya Oceanphere offers a 5 stars experience complete with inhouse bar, restaurant, spa, and fitness. These elements are brought to life in an exceptional setting. It's time to discover



X2 Pattaya Oceanphere

and explore the coastal lifestyle at your own pace. Mention Expat Life to get this offer!

<https://www.x2pattayaoceanphere.com/>

Avani+ Ko Samui

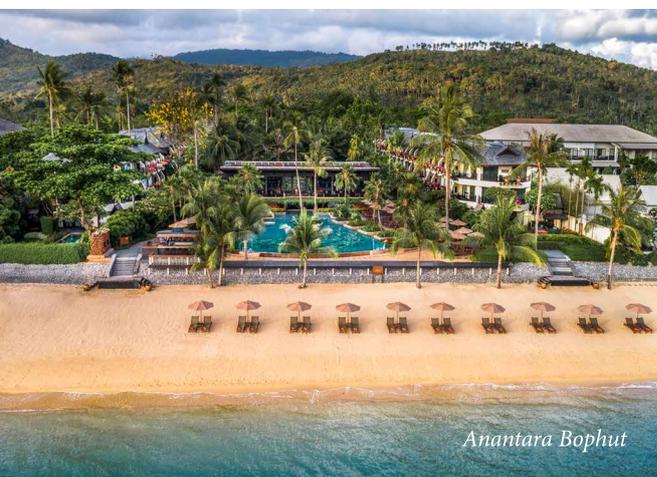


Avani+ Samui

Escape to the sunset side of Samui. Nestled in Phang Ka bay on the island's Southwest coast, your beachfront retreat awaits. Dine on by the infinity pool. Sip sundowners on the roof. Chill in the spa or head out and explore. Mention Expat Life to get this offer!

<https://www.avanihotels.com/en/samui>

Anantara Bout Ko Samui



Anantara Bophut

Anantara Bophut Koh Samui Resort is a tropical playground of adventure and tranquility. A wide stretch of

golden sands fronts the resort. Energise with water sports, Muay Thai and family outings. Retreat to the garden spa and indulge in rituals for two. Stroll to the nearby Fisherman's Village and delve into laidback island life. Mention Expat Life to get this offer!

<https://www.anantara.com/en/bophut-koh-samui>

Anantara Rasananda Koh Phangan

Far from Koh Phangan's full moon parties, Anantara Rasananda Koh Phangan Villas is all about barefoot luxury. Thong Nai Pan Noi Beach – the island's best and one of Southeast Asia's nicest – is just outside the 64 secluded villas and suites, which are designed with private plunge pools and Thai aesthetics. Mention Expat Life to get this offer!



Anantara Rasananda

Hyatt Regency Bangkok

Triple upgrade,
Triple pleasure,
Triple benefits

Triple the happiness for your next city escape in the heart of Bangkok at Hyatt Regency Bangkok Sukhumvit. Enjoy triple upgrade from Standard to Club Deluxe and from Deluxe to Suite, then triple the pleasure with flexible arrival

& departure time, extended breakfast hours until 1pm, and 1,500B dining credit.



Hyatt Regency Bangkok

Along with triple benefits of free extra bed and breakfast for up to 3 children, club lounge access, and complimentary beverage items in the mini-bar. Starts from 4,900B++ Only. Available now until 20 December 2020. Mention Expat Life to get this offer!

Book now at 02 098 1234 or

bkkhr-rsvn@hyatt.com

Hyattregencybangkoksukhumvit.com

*Other hotel terms & conditions applied

Movenpick Resort Khao Yai

Movenpick Resort Khao Yai is a breathtaking luxury and picturesque resort. Situated in the great natural scene of Khao Yai with only 2.30 hours driving from Bangkok. It is comprised of hotel buildings and villas with spacious space. The resort is inspired and designed

in Tuscan style. As it is amidst one of the world's most fascinating geological and ecological location, its landscape presents 18 holes link style golf and Panacee wellness centres.

Mention Expat Life to get this offer!

<https://all.accor.com/hotel/B4K4>



Movenpick Resort Khao Yai

Bangkok's best hotel afternoon teatime

by Lori Blackburn

As the story goes, teatime began in 19th century England when trendsetter, Anna the Duchess of Bedford, invited her friends to a clandestine snack to quell their hunger before dinner. Since guilty pleasures are hard to resist, every society lady was soon hosting her own afternoon tea.

This upper class indulgence eventually became an everyday tradition which made its way from Britain to Bangkok, complete with pastry laden trays, fine teas, and savoury delights galore. After all, teatime turns an ordinary afternoon into a celebration, so it's easy to see why we love this indulgent affair.

Since Bangkok offers a dizzying array of afternoon teas, choosing the perfect one can be tricky. Luckily, we have gathered Bangkok's best contenders to suit various occasions and moods.



Sindhorn Kempinski Hotel

This popular British pastime has gotten a fresh spin thanks to Bangkok's talented chefs and beautiful locations. Each tea service has its own unique vibe, so you'll always enjoy a new experience. Pinkies ready? Discover where to sip in style. We are sharing tea services with the finest flavours, newest offerings, and most inspiring ambiance.

Sindhorn Kempinski Hotel

- Three teatimes in an enchanted garden

Where: Fancy an indoor picnic? Well, you are in for a treat! The Lobby Lounge evokes an airy urban greenhouse where decadent tea services make bustling Bangkok seem worlds away. Relax amongst cascading greenery and arched windows which bask you in oodles of natural light. Afterwards, walk off each delicious calorie strolling the gardens.

Website: www.kempinski.com/en/bangkok/sindhorn-hotel/

What: Choose between three distinctive tea sets: Classic. Vegan. Thai. Each concept shares thoughtfully prepared bites such as an indulgent caramel praline and chocolate plaisir, vegan grilled asparagus and chickpea on beet chips, or Thai steamed fish dumplings.

When: 2-5pm, daily. Friday-Sunday you can order the classic Chevaa afternoon tea presented in a handcrafted tree and served in two styles: The Indulgence (think innovative updates on European pastries) and the Guilt Free (vegan set) for all you plant based foodies.





When: Afternoon tea is served daily from 2-6pm. The Afternoon Delight promo continues through December 2020.

Why: “The Afternoon Delight is a relaxing, joyful retreat for both women and men. It is worth noting that the spa uses Total Body Tonic massage oil known for its antibacterial qualities and a beautiful niche brand, Biologique Recherche, for facial services. I will definitely return.” – Tina Derkse, International Makeup Artist
www.savourbytina.com

“I loved the calm atmosphere as I entered past the lily ponds. The teatime was a fun mix of colourful flowers, attentive service, and elegant presentation of treats.” – Neeranuj Wongwasin, jewellery designer

The Thai afternoon tea is served all week with gourmet bites from Michelin starred Saneh Jaan.

Why: “Teatime in the Lobby Lounge is a wonderful place to connect socially or meet for a classy business meeting. It truly is a culinary journey. I loved escaping within the lush landscapes, chic décor, and architecture. It’s an oasis in the heart of busy Bangkok.” – Amy Patcharaporn Anantasuk, Real Estate Broker

“What a breath of fresh air! We started with an eye-catching lemon sorbet. The bright flavours introduced this extraordinary experience. I would recommend it because of the beautiful setting, high standard of food, and value-for-money. You also can’t beat perfectly baked scones with cream and jam.” – Nicky Kim, Chef

How much: 750++ B per person

How Much: Afternoon Delight package is 1,800B net per person (90 minute massage + afternoon tea set)
// Classic afternoon tea set (Mon-Fri) is 850++B per set for two people //

Afternoon tea buffet (Sat-Sun) is 950++B per person

Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel

– Afternoon Delight: A teatime and spa retreat

Where: The Anantara Siam invites you to pamper yourself with their Afternoon Delight package. In addition to a 90 minute massage at the world class spa, you’ll enjoy a sumptuous Mariage Frères Afternoon Tea nestled within the lobby’s plush couches, frescoed ceilings, and floral arrangements. Did we mention the live piano music? You might just float out.

Website: <https://www.anantara.com/en/siam-bangkok>

What: Pssst... this is an amazing deal! Choose to spa before or after your tea service. The self-care continues with a classic English spread featuring dainty finger foods and Mariage Frères tea with Thai inspired blends made exclusively for the Anantara Siam. Sip an Eléphant Blanc black tea as you pluck blueberry crumble tarts and tuna ekura blinis from the tiered tray. Bliss!





Rosewood Bangkok – teatime with a fancy French twist

Where: Bring your cravings for exceptional French pastries to the afternoon tea at Rosewood Bangkok. This “English affair with French flair” features a rotating selection of delectable creations from their award winning executive pastry chef, Florian Couteau who recently won Iron Chef Thailand. The Rosewood’s stylish serenity provides the perfect backdrop for standout bites that are both chic and scrumptious.

Website: www.rosewoodhotels.com/en/bangkok

What: Gather your besties for a degustation menu filled with goodies like mandarin sorbet with candied citrus and finger sandwiches stuffed with blue crab, preserved lemon, and smoked salt.



If you’re still parched after the extravagant service, Champagne is on offer. Oh, how civilised!

When: Wednesday – Sunday from 3-5:30pm. Nan Bei is the weekday venue. Lakorn European Brasserie is the weekend setting.

Why: “This was the perfect afternoon. I loved the exquisite sweet to savoury options. Each confection introduced a new taste and texture. The melt-in-your-mouth Rum Baba cake with Chalong Bay Rum and fresh matcha and vanilla cream was unbelievable. The charming bottle of coconut syrup that accompanied my ginger tea was a simple, thoughtful addition. Details create memorable dining experiences.” – Ellyn Louise Ahlemeyer, Author and Acupuncturist

“This sophisticated, but relaxed teatime felt like being in a Parisian hotel with an Asian twist. The city views are impressive while the artwork from notable Thai artists was the perfect complement to the edible art that we were served.” – Rachel Pickel, Lawyer

How much: 950++ B per person

Hyatt Regency Bangkok Sukhumvit: History, flavours and flowers tea service

Where: You will have plenty to talk about as you explore Bangkok’s vibrant history at the Sukhumvit Gallery afternoon tea. The past meets the present through vintage photographs, modern art, and bold flavours. Wander the photography exhibit to learn about the fascinating history of Sukhumvit Road, the city’s most important thoroughfare. Tea is served amongst historic images. Compare the sights of old Sukhumvit Road with the new as you gaze through big windows at today’s cityscape overlooking the most modern thing Sukhumvit has to offer – the BTS skytrain.

Website: www.hyatt.com/hyatt-regency-bangkok-sukhumvit/bkkhr





What: Take a tasty peek into Bangkok's history at this Thai inspired teatime. It was designed by renowned floral artist, Sakul Inthakul, who cleverly infuses contemporary Thai art into the tea trays and flowers. Sample savoury throwbacks to Thai childhood favourites including curry puffs as well as new takes on Thai tapas such as sa-koo-sai-moo. Save room for sweets like mango based petit fours which are served with organic coffee or tea from farms in Chiang Mai and Tak.

When: 2-5pm, daily

Why: "This experience stands out for blending traditional Thai roots with modern influences. Teatime is served on a custom-made tray depicting a bridge along Sukhumvit Road, which you'll see in the gallery's photos. The traditional Thai "mali" flowers represent Sukhumvit's bustling energy. Each detail shares Sukhumvit's story. I want to bring my parents here. It's also a great deal for the price."

- Swita Charanasomboon, Marketing Director APAC

How Much: 950++B per set for two people

Banyan Tree Bangkok: An oriental high tea in the sky

Where: Make your way to the aptly named Vertigo Too on the 60th floor where an expansive skyline provides a dramatic backdrop to the orient high tea. Delightful delicacies riff on Chinese flavours. If possible, snag a window seat for a birds eye view of Bangkok. It gives a whole new meaning to the term "high tea." Enjoy the groovy, live acoustic music. You might just find yourself singing along.

Website: www.banyantree.com/en/thailand/bangkok

What: Teatime begins with bottles of tea leaves to awaken your senses. Simply smell and select your blend. Get ready for a lighthearted tea service with a sense of humour that extends throughout the East meets West theme. Numerous dishes arrive in a big dim sum basket that's sure to put a smile on your face. The playful presentation continues with a menu tucked inside a lucky, red hong bao envelope. What fun! The distinctly Chinese nibbles include pork dumplings with



seared foie gras, crispy duck salad rolls with Beijing sauce, and red bean Belgian waffles with Chantilly creme and black sesame paste.

When: Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4pm

Why: "Come for the peaceful surroundings, picturesque views, and exotic teatime. The presentation in the massive dim sum steamer was a nice touch. It switched up your average teatime to a creatively engaging meal. I especially enjoyed the egg tart which was not too sweet and had a lovely pastry crust. The entire experience was fantastic."

- Amy Wondurack, Senior eCommerce Manager

How Much: 888++B per set for two people.





THE FATE OF THAI EXPATS

by *Little Wandering Wren*

I am an expat, a blogger and world wanderer who became “stranded” in Thailand due the outbreak of Covid-19. Was it by choice? Yes!!!

Those of us remaining in Thailand have now been here for many months. When the Big C (Covid-19) came around and borders started to close, we did not flee back to our country of origin. We stayed at personal and family expense, knowing also that if our ageing relatives in far off lands needed us, there would be little we could do except rely on the generosity of others.

Why did we stay? Many of us stayed because of jobs, to provide support and leadership to those who brought us here. Most of us bunkered down for the unknown, trusting Thailand, not knowing what would happen at the time of this deadly pandemic. Although it had lasted longer than many of us had expected, we are fortunate to be able to go about our lives.

Our “new normal” is weird. We can do almost all of the things we used to do, except we cannot easily return to see family and friends in our countries of origin.

Or if we do, we risk many weeks of quarantine, huge expense and the stress of trying to return to Thailand.

We can run in Lumpini Park, we can shop at EmQuartier, we meet friends for coffee and nice lunches. I can travel freely at weekends to wherever we want in Thailand, thanks to a company car and the Air Asia unlimited pass. For me it has been a very, very privileged Bangkok

lifestyle. I have lost count of the number of people around the world who have said they want my life!

Some expats, ourselves included, are not here on expatriate contracts but on local contracts. That makes us sort of locals, who arrived on a one way ticket from Australia. No wonder ‘home’ has blurred into a difficult question. And when asked at the moment “Where do you come from?” We answer firmly “Bangkok!”

I say to those moaning foreigners that you read about, if you don’t like the place then leave. Go back to Brexit Britain, Europe in crisis, America in turmoil or Australia/ New Zealand in its second wave of lockdowns.

I can not say it loud enough, or strong enough, I am so fortunate to be here in Thailand.

We are committed to Thailand, make us part of the solution

We expats are here to contribute towards our chosen lives in Thailand. It is sad when we feel we are not part of the solution, but maybe seen as part of a problem.

The pandemic is having such a sad impact on the economy and in particular my area of interest as a travel writer. It was always our intention to support domestic tourism right from those early days of Covid-19 lockdown. We are now approaching our 40th hotel stay since February, we have taken tours and we visit attractions across Thailand.

Accessing the support of expats in the Thai domestic travel revival

Embrace us, love us and lets work out together on the domestic tourism front and more, to help our chosen homeland at its time of need.



Don't worry or be concerned about having us stay – in your taxis, in your countryside, in your shopping malls, or running in your marathon races.

This means don't cancel my booking because you are afraid that I might arrive to stay with Covid-19. Yes! This actually happened.

- Plan and trust in your own Covid-19 protocols to pick out anyone arriving who is unwell from wherever they arrive.
- Educate your staff on Thailand's current situation regarding International arrivals. As I understand, unless at the government invitation, and even then... all inbound arrivals will undergo a 14 day quarantine.

Yes, we may be arriving with a foreign passport, but we are no more, or less, likely to have Covid-19 than your last guest.

Yes, you can check exactly when our last entry into Thailand date was, in my case 12 February 2020. No, I have not been able to leave the country since then. No, thank you, I do not need collecting from international arrivals in Phuket!

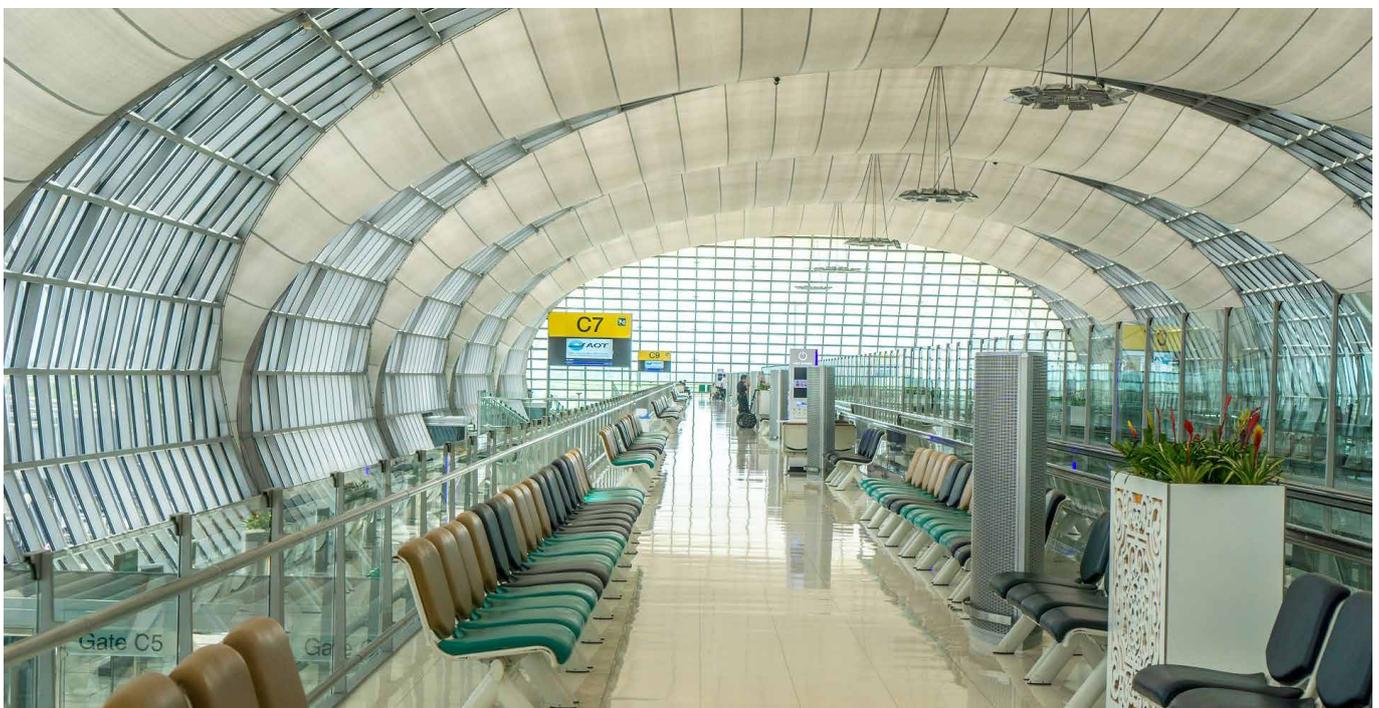
Thai's changing attitudes towards expats

I don't like the word 'xenophobia' but I do want to explain this.

We are getting more and more examples in our daily lives where we feel at 'best' uncomfortable in Thailand, and at worst we are unwelcome.

I have had experience of Thai passengers not wanting to sit next to us on crowded planes... Taxi drivers refusing to pick us up because of Covid-19 concerns.

Fortunately, our countryside bike tour went ahead, because the villagers were pre-briefed that the farang would be cycling through and that we were long stay people in the country.





The issue seems to be that as expats, no one can distinguish us from new arrivals and the inherent risks they may bring. Understandably everyone, ourselves included, are edgy knowing that all new reported Covid cases into Thailand have come on returnees from overseas. This situation is surely only going to worsen as Thailand looks to reopen borders?

Find a way that us farang can contribute

We would love to be included in the **Thailand Together government supported travel campaign**. We applaud the suggestion made by the President of the Thailand Hotels Association to extend this initiative to grant expatriates the same residents privileges.

It has been suggested that there are between 500,000 expats residing here in Thailand. Reports show that typically expatriates spend considerably more per head than the average Thai traveller.

We pay Thai tax, employ Thai staff, we live here as locals. We enjoy travel, we generally spend well, we have holidays accrued, and we are unlikely to go on any of the overseas family visits and holidays we had planned... Encourage us to get off the beaten track in Thailand.

Let's start a hashtag **#AmazingExpatsThailand** that lets us show you our contributions to local tourism and where we have been.

Look at Richard Barrow's Facebook page **#mythailandbucketlist**. There is a huge number of foreigners here in Thailand who contribute immensely and shine a light on incredible places to visit. The excitement for us to get out and explore Thailand is building.

We would love to do this and it could help domestic travel as well.

Look to the silver market!

TAT try to focus on the 'silver market' (I detest the word that refers to those over 50). There has been much talk of trying to attract the young millennials, believed to be adventurous and the first to return to travel. However, the older population with grown kids at uni or beyond have a far greater disposable income. We also have time. We have so much holiday time accrued and saved for family visits overseas, but does not look like it will happen this year. Covid helped us realise that we need to seize the moment. We, the silver market, are beginning to see – how do we phrase this delicately – that time is pressing!

Look at the female traveller market

All the women I know in Thailand are travelling big time! We are seeing a rise as was forecasted for the **solo female travel market**. **Girls' trips** away to Chiang Mai, Phuket and Nan are all big topics of conversations within the groups I attend. Thailand is ideal for this market, it's safe and it's fun and with so much to see and do.

There is the added benefit when the women in Thailand travel. They often return to great places they have found with family and friends.

We also have a constant stream of family, friends and overseas countryfolk come and stay in Thailand on recommendation from us so we act as referrers and influencers.

Change of attitude

Let us expats help you maintain and revive the wonderful travel industry and hospitality for which Thailand has been known across the world.

A small slice of paradise - Hua Hin



by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

Back in 1824, according to historical lore, the agricultural areas around Phetchaburi were hit with a severe drought. Some farmers were forced to migrate South. They discovered a stretch of beach with dazzling white sands and rows of rocks along the shoreline. With fertile land and abundant fishing, they settled in a village they called 'Samoe Riang' (or 'Row of Rocks').

Later the area became known as 'Laem Hin' (or Stony Cape).

This small slice of paradise remained hidden to outsiders for many decades. In 1909, a British Canadian railway engineer and the Chief of the Southern Railway Division, named Henry Gittens, was surveying a rail line to the South in the general Laem Hin area. He also found a white pristine beach while searching for a suitable railway station. Gittens reported his findings of this unknown beach paradise to his superior, H.R.H. Prince Purachatra, Commander of the Royal State Railways. Soon the word spread to the other royal and noble households. By the time Hua Hin railway station opened in 1911 the area was quickly becoming popular and attracted Thai visitors.

The first royal member to build a residence was H.R.H. Prince Nares. He named his resort home 'Sansamran-Sukaves'. It was located on the South side of Laem Hin village. He gave it the name Hua Hin to differentiate it from the village. Soon the name Hua Hin came to mean the entire beach resort district. Due to its many natural charms, Hua Hin slowly became a vacation destination for many royal members, including the monarch himself, and other noble families. At the same time small wooden houses were built, called Sukaves Bungalows. These residences received many royal guests. King Rama VI also quickly saw the area's potential in wishing to develop Hua Hin into a major tourism destination.

In 1917, the Royal State Railway Department procured a plot of land on the stony cape and built multiple wooden houses. By 1921, the rail connection between Bangkok and Malacca was completed. That meant there would be

a demand for an adequate overnight stay facility in Hua Hin. To serve this clientele, the Railway Hotel was built. Then the luxury hotel, Hotel Hua Hin, was built in 1922. Also opened at the same time were tennis courts and Thailand's first golf course, the Royal Hua Hin Golf Course. In 1924, King Rama VI's summer palace was completed. Named 'Marukhathayawan Palace', it was located on a beach halfway between Cha-am and Hua Hin. The palace was built using golden teak and a gingerbread architectural style with Thai influences. This palace is now open to visitors.

King Rama VII often visited Hua Hin and borrowed his uncle's, H.R.H. Prince Nares, Sukaves residence. In 1928, he decided to build a resort residence for H.M. Queen Rambhaibhannee using his own private funds. The palace was called 'Phra Ratchawang Klai Kangwon'. 'Klai Kangwon' means 'far from worries'. The palace was constructed in a Mediterranean style with a Thai influence. Within the palace grounds are four



royal mansions with names that rhyme: Piemsuk, Plukkasem, Erb Preme and Emme Predi.

Hua Hin was the location of one of the most dramatic events in Thai history. While out at the Royal Golf Course on 24 June 1932, King Rama VII received a message that stated a bloodless coup had occurred which changed the absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. He replied the next day that he had granted his permission for constitutional authority to be transferred to the Thai people. It was a wise decision that avoided bloodshed.

After these dramatic political events, Hua Hin gradually progressed through the decades developing into a popular public resort for many Thais and was less focused on being a royal retreat. Although unaffected by the events of WWII, Hua Hin saw little tourism due to wartime transportation restrictions.

Starting in the early 1950s, Hua Hin gradually started to become the extremely popular resort it is today. During the reign of H.M. King Rama IX, King Bhumibhol and Queen Sirikit often visited Hua Hin. During H.M.'s vacation time, he spent many visits to remote villages and bringing care and comfort to those less fortunate. In fact, the first initiated Royal Project was a drought alleviation initiative in a small community South of Hua Hin. Subsequently, there were hundreds of similar projects improving the standard of living for Thailand's citizens.

Hua Hin has always retained its charms and scenic attractions for visitors.



Drawdown solutions

*Reprinted from the Thai Enquirer
by Nanticha Ocharoenchai (Lynn) and Sean Davy*

Thailand is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change and its impacts. Located on the equator and as part of the Mekong River Basin, the impacts are already being felt – beginning with the most vulnerable.

This year, the region experienced the worst drought in almost half a century, affecting growing seasons, damaging crops and contributing to one of the worst wildfire seasons in a lifetime.

Meanwhile, Bangkok is sinking up to two centimetres every year, and more than 10% of the Thai population now live in places likely to be underwater by 2050. While the government seems to be lagging far behind in progress, potential solutions already exist.

Project drawdown

In March, scientists published the “Drawdown Review 2020”, “the most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warming”. The project gathered 100 top climate solutions reviewed and analysed by a coalition of researchers, scientists, entrepreneurs and advocates across the globe.

To help the world reach “drawdown” – defined as the point in which greenhouse gas emissions plateau and decline – the research proposes practical models and policy improvements from existing technologies.

Why? Because there is no single silver bullet for climate change. To mitigate and adapt to climate change, a broad range of solutions in various sectors and industries have to be taken into account.

The top of the list consists mainly of systemic changes related to renewable energy, land use, food production, carbon sinks (such as forests, agricultural crops and peatlands), refrigerant management (cooling and insulation), as well as education and healthcare.

Some other examples include increasing solar power generation, reducing food waste, restoring tropical forests, as well as improving girls’ education and enhancing family planning.

National context needed for global solutions

The Drawdown Review proposed an expansive range of solutions but also cover a broad list of global methodologies.

To effectively address climate change, these plans will need to be contextual, and most importantly, local. Fortunately, Thailand has great potential for development.

Currently, Thailand produces about 15% of its total energy from renewables and plans to increase this to 30% by 2036 as part of its Alternative Energy Development Plan. The energy systems are in need of extensive development and there are clear opportunities for renewable energy pathways for future development.

Whilst Thailand is not a super emitter by the likes of China or the USA, it is still in the top 25 highest emitters of CO² in the world, which is concerning given the country’s size.

Cognisant of a need for action, in 2015, Thailand submitted its first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement which promised to reduce net GHG emissions by 20% of 2030 Business and Usual Levels.

This may seem ambitious to some, but the targets are not even a decrease of current levels; in fact, these targets would put net CO² emission levels at over double, and close to triple, the country’s most recently published current emission figures.

More ambitious targets and action are needed by Thailand to help the world reach even a 2°C scenario. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated that world emissions need to be reduced by 45% of current levels by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 to reach 1.5°C – the more ambitious and necessary of the temperature targets.



While countries like China, the USA, and those who have already gone through carbon intensive development periods certainly hold the weight of this responsibility, achieving these targets requires the whole world – including Thailand – to play their part in becoming carbon neutral and not increasing current emission levels.

What must Thailand do?

From analysing the 100 proposed solutions, we have selected 20 as the best solutions for Thailand, ordered by possible effectiveness.

This is by no means an official list, and while Project Drawdown is a collaborative effort from a coalition of climate scientists, the solutions selected and presented below were done by a single climate scientist with specialities in climate change development and policy.

1. Refrigerant management

Over 50% of Thailand's electricity is used for refrigeration and cooling, according to RAC NAMA Thailand, a company committed to the mitigation of refrigeration in the country.

This reliance on refrigerants accounts for 20% of the country's GHG emissions. Widely used refrigerants like HFCs have a 1,000 to 9,000 times higher capacity to warm the climate than carbon dioxide.

The demand for these refrigerants are only expected to increase by 2030 – but the careful management of these products can have a powerful positive impact on our emission rates. It should be said that better insulation in buildings in Thailand would also drastically reduce the need for refrigerants.

2. Utility scale solar photovoltaics

Solar power has the highest potential in achieving 100% clean energy, according to the country's Renewable Energy Outlook produced by the International Renewable Energy Agency and the Ministry of Energy.

With so much sunlight year round, a relatively flat geography, and plenty of available land, Thailand is very well suited to solar power generation though it only accounted for

0.5% of the country's energy profile in 2016.

3. Concentrated solar power

The main difference between concentrated solar power and solar photovoltaics (PV) is that while PV directly converts sunlight into electricity, concentrated solar power uses heat generated by the sun to power steam turbines, similar to the core technology of fossil fuel generation.

While it doesn't have the same potential as solar PV, the high levels of heat in Thailand – with Bangkok being the hottest city in the world – makes it an ideal environment for this technology.

However, its dependence on clear skies makes concentrated solar power unsuitable for the rainy season. But because it stores heat rather than electricity, this technology is capable of generating electricity even after sunset.

4. Health and education

Health and education is the single best way to improve the amount of climate action taken in Thailand. There's a reason it is so high on the list of effective solutions generated by Project Drawdown.

It not only educates people on the importance of climate action, illustrating its close ties to people's human rights but empowers women to family plan keeping the birthrate down.

Any individual person has a large climate footprint which is why having a child is one of the most carbon intensive actions a person can take.

This recommendation primarily pertains to population growth – Thailand's birth rate of 1.53 births per woman is much lower than the global average of 2.42 and only continues to drop.

However, the birthrate can still be further reduced, and climate education does have a great impact on mitigation efforts and thus should be highly valued.

5. Biomass power

The energy sector is Thailand's greatest emitter and that is why it has the greatest potential for improvement.



8. Improved rice production

Rice production is responsible for at least 10% of global agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and 9-19% of methane emissions.

Methane is a greenhouse gas with 34 times the warming effect of carbon dioxide. By improving rice production, Thailand can grow rice more efficiently, sequester carbon, and decrease methane emissions through improved wetting and drying methods, better nutrients, more climate friendly plant varieties, and by using techniques to avoid tillage while seeding.

Every year, Thailand has a terrible burning season which consistently puts Chiang Mai as the worst ranked city for air quality in the world every year, posing a public health concern and threatening human rights.

According to a joint report by the International Renewable Energy Agency and The Ministry of Energy, Thailand's greatest renewable energy potential by far lies in solid biomass – which is any plant or animal material used for energy production.

In Thailand, the most common sources for biomass are agricultural plant matter such as palm fronds, rice husks, sugar cane bagasse, or corn cobs. The burning of these materials can power traditional steam power plants. However, the burning of biomass creates carbon emissions and is more of a 'bridge' alternative to help countries transition to 100% clean energy than it is a permanent, sustainable solution.

6. Reduced food waste

Reducing food waste is the solution with the highest potential impact in Project Drawdown's global estimates – due to the high greenhouse gas intensity and land use emissions in food production and animal agriculture.

Although, this food waste often occurs in highly developed countries – reports indicate that 64% of Thailand's waste is composed of food.

7. Onshore wind power

Thailand has relatively low wind speeds – however, depending on the wind power technology used, onshore wind power still holds great potential.

According to the Renewable Energy Outlook, though it has about half the potential of solar power, it still makes for the second best option to achieve 100% clean energy.

Because Thailand is one of the largest producers of rice in the world, these methods can have a big scale impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

9. Plant rich diets

Because of the amount of emissions produced by animal agriculture, plant rich diets have been shown to be a very effective way to reduce people's impact on the environment, as suggested by many reports and studies which all claim that avoiding meat and dairy was the single biggest way an individual can reduce their environmental impact.

Though these recommendations have more bearing in highly developed countries with high animal protein intake, it can still have a great impact in Thailand where meat consumption is on the rise.

10. Alternative refrigerants

The fluorinated gases used in our refrigerants have a potent, significant greenhouse effect.

With the amount of refrigerant usage in Thailand, the country can greatly lower its emissions by not only managing its consumption and disposal, but also shifting to alternative refrigerants such as ammonia or captured carbon dioxide.

11. Forest protection

Forests are one of the most effective ways to sequester carbon, being one of the significant ways Thailand continues to keep emissions down. The country has long had a goal of 40% forest cover, making it crucial to hold the government accountable to this goal and perhaps even increasing it as urban development and intensive agriculture expands.

12. Distributed solar photovoltaics

Rooftop Solar PV is a market that remains largely untapped in Thailand. Distributed solar photovoltaics – the bulk of which is rooftop solar panels – are a powerful way for consumers to take energy production into their own hands, giving households and companies the ability to generate electricity for profit.

Over the years, the price of solar energy technology has dropped considerably and continues to do so. In rural or remote areas, solar PVs can also provide access to electricity, bypassing the need for large scale power grids.

13. Improved clean cooking stoves

Around 30% of Thailand's households still use traditional biomass fuel for cooking, which is still listed as a major source for the renewable energy in Thailand.

But annually, well over 4 million people die as a result of these fuels due to its indoor air pollution. Traditional biomass also produces 2-5% of the world's greenhouse gasses, which makes clean cooking stoves a practical and promising solution to not only reduce climate impacts but also save lives.

14. Public transit

Public transit is used quite widely across Bangkok and Thailand, but still highly lacks the infrastructure to be truly effective.

Though these transit systems are consistently packed, traffic in Bangkok is still one of the worst in the world. The transportation sector is the highest emitting sector in Thailand.

Building on existing infrastructures to increase capacity, energy use, access, comfort, speed and other improvements could easily help promote Thailand's public transit and drastically reduce the number of cars on the road, and in turn drastically reduce Thailand's emissions as well as air pollution.

15. Tropical forest restoration

This solution is only further down on the list because our existing forest must be protected before it can be restored. Despite Thailand's goal of achieving 40% forest cover, set in 1975, forest cover has actually gone from 53.5% cover in 1961 to 31.6% in 2014.

Continued pressure has slowed this downward movement

almost to stagnation, but deforestation slowly continues. Tropical forests are extremely crucial for our climate and environment, serving as vital carbon sinks and ecosystems, thus making it a top priority for climate action.

16. Electric cars

Much of Thailand uses cars that emit huge amounts of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane – highly toxic contributors to climate change and greenhouse gases.

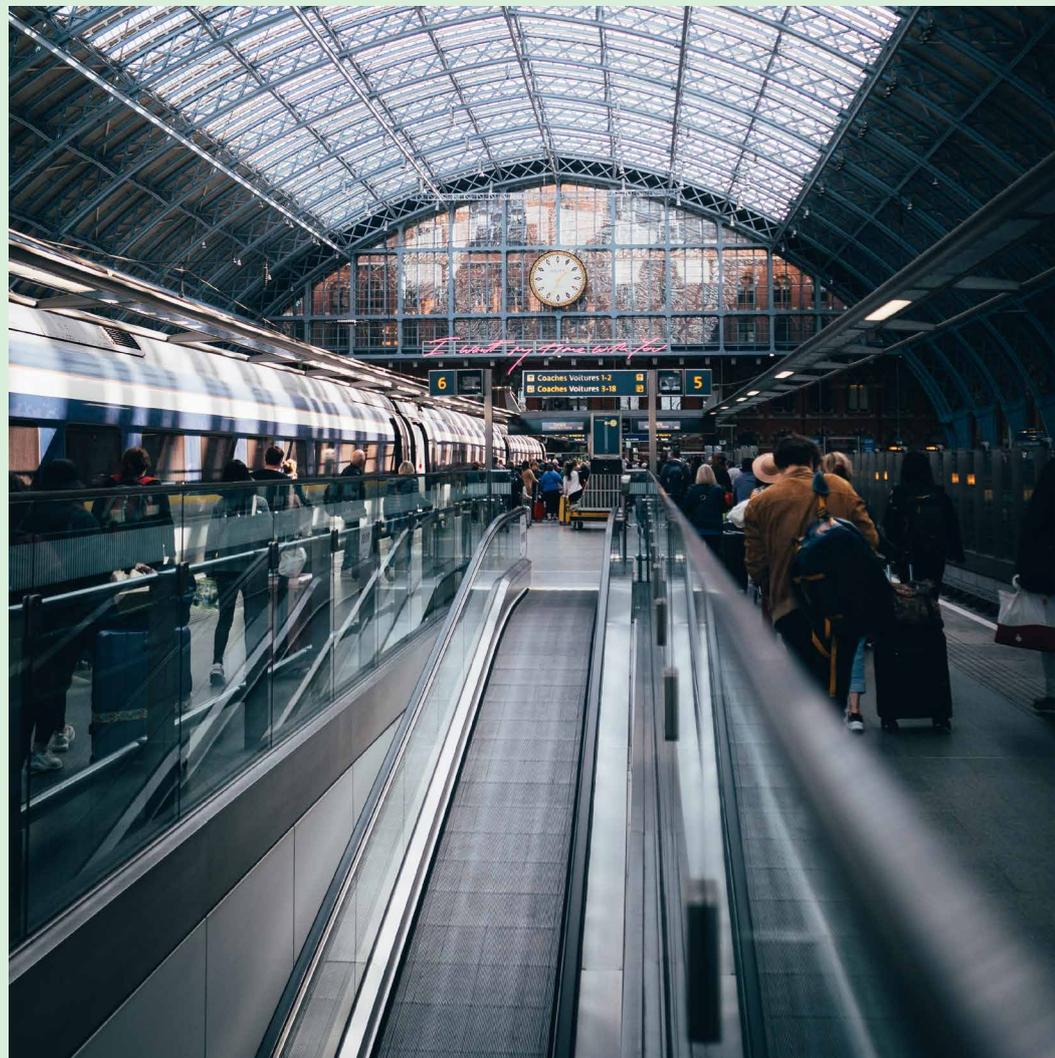
While producing more cars may not be the answer to our problems, electric cars can vastly reduce emissions and improve air quality, especially in big cities like Bangkok.

17. Biochar production

Biochar, produced by slowly baking biomass through a process called pyrolysis, can sequester large amounts of carbon and help enrich soil.

This is a viable solution for Thailand because of the huge amounts of biomass we have.

As previously mentioned, biomass should be treated as a transitory form of energy. The same material cannot go through the both processes, thus while biomass is the more powerful recommendation as of right now, biochar can continue to put these materials to good use sequestering carbon, once biomass production begins to be phased out by cleaner forms of energy.



18. Peatland protection and rewetting

Peatlands are a type of wetlands made up of partially decayed organic matter that has immense carbon storage capacity – despite only covering only 3% of the world’s surface, they store more carbon than anything but oceans and store one third of the world’s soil carbon.

However, if not protected, this carbon sink can turn into a big carbon emitter. There is a substantial amount of peatland in Thailand – around 45,300 to 64,500 hectares – all of which needs to be protected.

19. Recycling

The infrastructure and culture for recycling in Thailand still lags far behind.

Recycling is an important way to curb emissions from manufacturing and landfills. However, what’s more important than recycling is to avoid the consumption of single use products altogether – policy for this should be quite easy to implement if finally taken seriously.

20. Alternative cement

Cement is the second most consumed resource on the planet after water – accounting for an estimated 8% of global emissions.

While the top five highest producers – dominated by China and India – produce 71% of the world’s cement, Thailand is still among the top 15 in an industry that spans 160 countries.

The most common form of concrete is a combination of crushed limestone and aluminosilicate clay that is roasted in a kiln, a process which is extremely harmful to both human and ecological health. Alternative cements can reduce emissions by using materials like volcanic ash or industrial waste products that upsurge the most carbon and energy intensive process in cement production.

Though Thailand is beginning to take big steps toward cleaner production, it still has a long way to go as one of the largest producers of cement.

To push for more climate action in Thailand and work towards implementing these proposed solutions require individual change and governmental pressure.

Equipped with the knowledge of what has to be done and how we might achieve it, we can put more concrete pressure on the government and the people around us to act.

The technology and methods to actualise the change we need to save our planet exists. The twenty solutions listed may not all necessarily be the most applicable in our context, but the Drawdown Project has presented us with viable options that are being implemented in the world right now.

The next step is to call for these technologies and methods to be invested by our government and other



relevant organisations – that they be put into policy, and that those around us demand the same.

Perhaps for many of you, climate change has sat on the back burner, particularly with the current political situation.

However, there is no denying that climate change should continue to be a priority issue for all of us.

Without immediate and drastic change over the next few decades, billions, particularly the most vulnerable, will suffer. We implore you to take to the streets, demand action from the government, get involved in your local community, or even just spread awareness about these issues and solutions.

Drawdown Review

A renewable energy outlook for Thailand published by IRENA:

https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2017/Nov/IRENA_Outlook_Thailand_2017.pdf

https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/NationalReports/Documents/52047631_Thailand-NC3-1-Thailand%20TNC.pdf (page 32 Most up to date emission portfolio from Thailand by the UNFCCC - also divided into sectors and GHG)



Pattaya - success in excess

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

Pattaya Beach, the largest and most important seaside resort area in Asia, had a modest beginning more than six decades ago. It is unimaginable the meteoric rise that Pattaya has experienced since its humble beginning as a sleepy fishing village. Nothing more than a flat, slightly curving bay with a stretch of fine beach sand and sparkling water along the eastern shore of the Gulf of Thailand, it was simply an inlet for local fishermen. However, Pattaya has become the true international byword for bright sunshine, clear skies, overdoses of fun, lurid entertainment, sex in excess, and hearty-partying on a worldwide basis.

Named after the monsoonal winds that blow from the Southwest to the Northeast at the start of the rainy season, Pattaya first became famous in Thai history as the general area where General Phraya Tak (later King Taksin) regrouped his army after the fall of the former Siamese capital of Ayutthaya in 1767. From this lowest ebb in the country's fortunes, General Phraya Tak moved to quickly retake the Kingdom from invaders and permanently expel them. Things have been on a virtually continuous uphill climb for Thailand – and Pattaya – ever since.

The earliest tale on the beginning of Pattaya as a rollicking, rock-'em, sock-'em, phenomenal, gaudy tourist resort is mired in the hazy mists of ancient history. From most sources, it has been stated that maybe 100 GIs on leave status, riding 4-5 trucks, showed up on 29 June 1959 from Korat Thai Air Force Base in Nakhon Ratchasima. They rented the resort home (or houses) on what is now 'Walking Street' from a Khun Phraya Sunthorn. (Some sources say this seminal event happened in April 1961 or June 1962). All except the first U.S. Air Force personnel didn't even arrive at Khorat Thai Air Force Base until April 1962 and there were just 15 of them. This fact makes all these tales (and dates) highly unlikely. In any event, at least by 1964, when the first bar was recorded to have opened in Pattaya, there were at least some tourists. These visitors were the ones who supposedly initiated the word-of-mouth on Pattaya's many charms and laidback, relaxing attractions. But the word was very slow to be spread

due to international travel and tourism was still in infancy as far as Thailand was concerned.

It wasn't actually until the Vietnam War (1965-1975) started, and Royal Thai Naval Air Base at U-Tapao nearby Pattaya was greatly expanded to accommodate American B-52 bombers in October 1965 in support of the air war, that Pattaya really found itself finally on the map as a local, but highly popular, tourist resort. First for American military troops and soon after for other expats drawn down from Bangkok. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. government declared Thailand as an official Rest & Recreation (R&R) centre for the troops serving in Vietnam with airline flights coming directly from Saigon to Bangkok. These R&R centres also included Bangkok and Pattaya.

Pattaya's first downturn was marked with the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 and the withdrawal of all U.S. military forces from the country by June 1976. Pattaya fell back into a slumbering, almost forgotten sleepy fishing village again with only a few stray tourists. However, Pattaya's many attractions could not be long suppressed. The resort slowly started a spectacular rise with exponential growth in tourist visits each year, with a few missteps and backward steps along the way including the end of the Cold War and the regional economic collapse in 1997.

Over half a century, Pattaya, like Thailand, has ridden the rollercoaster of economic ups and downs through the decades. Pattaya has been affected by business downturns even more so as you have to eat, but you don't necessarily have to spend your money having fun when life gets tough. Although some local pundits always call every financial slump the death knell of the resort beach, the long time expat residents and local denizens just simply shake their heads in amusement with a knowingly smile. They have repeatedly seen that Pattaya always stages a roaring comeback, if some what altered in appearance, ever bigger, better, bolder – and badder – than ever, as soon as after the economic rubble gets finally cleared. Pattaya is an authentic symbol of success in excess. Pattaya – in short – is never short of hopes for a better day (or a way-over-the-top, roaringly great time for all).



OURLAND: A NATURE CONSERVATION EFFORT IN KANCHANABURI

by Aparna Sharma

I visited Ourland with my eleven year old daughter. I was looking for an authentic experience near Bangkok to connect deeper with nature and learn about different aspects of nature conservation. I mentioned this to a friend and she suggested Ourland, this place gave me such a memorable experience. It is not a candy floss eco friendly resort, this is as real as real gets. It's run by a person who is genuinely interested in conserving nature.

When I spoke to the owner, he mentioned that the idea was to take commercial land and return it to nature by letting flora and fauna thrive there. He wanted to create a space which focuses on developing and sustaining an eco friendly lifestyle which is technologically advanced. This is located in the last wildlife corridor through which animals can pass between the lower half of Salakhpra Wildlife Sanctuary which is Thailand's oldest wildlife sanctuary. It is located on the edge of Kwa Yai river and my favourite activity was to float down the river.

This was the first time I tried that activity, I was nervous but Vijo (the owner) who took care of my daughter and I made me feel extremely comfortable. He assured me that there is nothing to worry about and it will be a memorable experience. There were so many colourful and beautiful birds by the river but I could not take any pictures because I was not able to take my phone with me while I was floating down



the river. I had no clue about this activity so I did not take my waterproof GoPro with me. I wish I had, I could have captured some beautiful images.

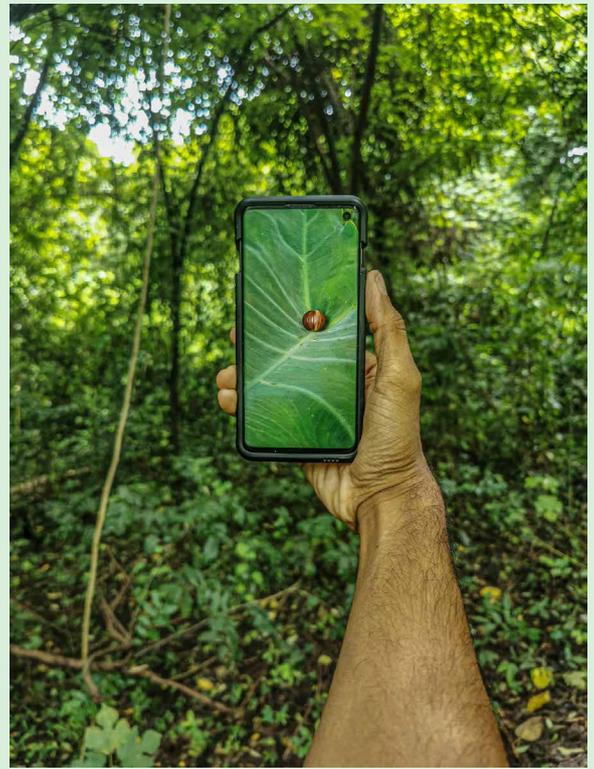
It's only three hours drive from Bangkok so I can go back anytime. On our way back to Bangkok, my daughter was asking me, 'Mommy, can we go back again soon.' The connection with nature is so addicting that the place entices you to visit again.

We were fortunate to see a baby elephant when we visited, we gave it a bath and we also cooked food for an older elephant which did not have teeth so we had to ensure that the rice was cooked to a soft consistency. My daughter also cut banana leaves to feed the elephant, she loved that activity.

The conversation with Vijo on how elephants that are rescued usually live up to 100 years compared to 60 years for elephants who are in the wild really got me thinking on how much it must be costing these elephant sanctuaries to feed these elephants 300kgs a day. I am always amazed to see how friendly and loving elephants in captivity are, I have visited a few of these places and always loved my experience with elephants. There is so much compassion in their eyes and it is completely unethical to use them for trekking. The elephants in this sanctuary are usually rescued from trekking camps which use them as a

vehicle for humans to sit and ride.

One of the main activities of Ourland is snake education, my daughter absolutely loved that experience. Honestly, I found it so creepy in the beginning but I was okay towards the end of the day. It's important to understand that these snakes in Ourland were not taken directly from the wild, they were given to the owner and he specifically told me that we must never take out an animal from the



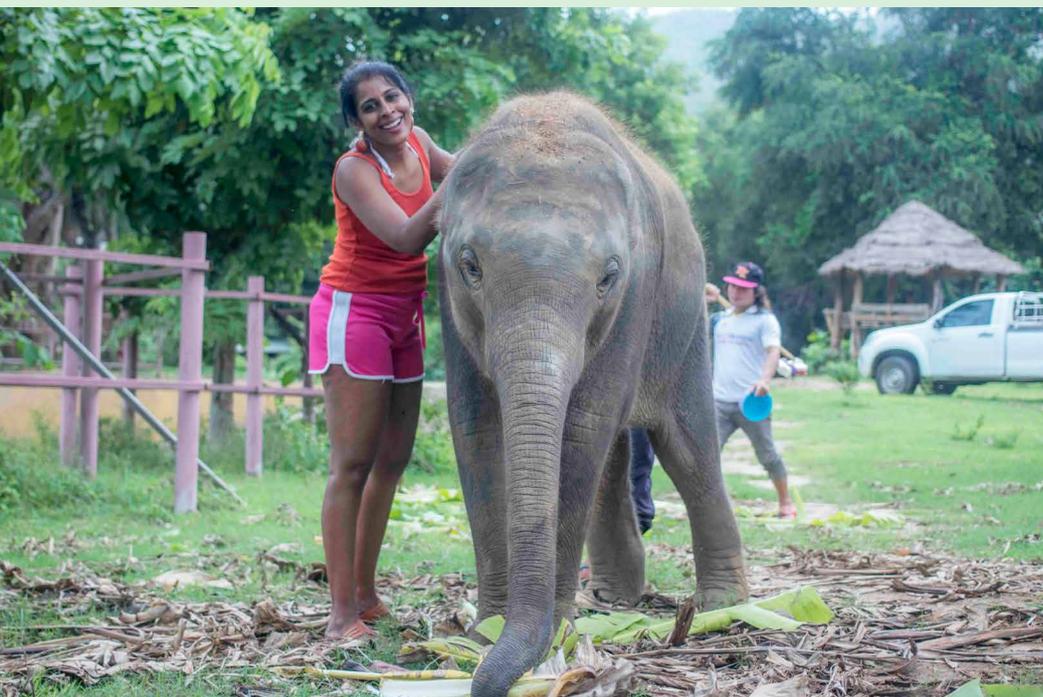
wild and we should not breed the wild animals which are in captivity. As we humans evolve, there is so much to learn and I am happy I found this beautiful place which not only gave me and my daughter a wonderful experience, we also learnt so much.

Ourland is situated in the middle of a forest and they focus on wildlife tracking, organic farming, wood construction, snake education, honey hunting and much more. We got a taste of all these activities. Ourland also works with the local communities to enhance understanding and acceptance towards conservation.

This includes:

- Collaborating with local communities to address Human Elephant Conflict (HEC)
- Working with local orphanages to inspire children to take active leadership in nature conservation
- Serving as a meditation centre that allows groups who prefer the safe haven of a jungle over the hustle and bustle of the city

In a nutshell, at Ourland they are creating a new way of life, where nature is respected and conservation is seen as the crucial link between progress and tranquility. All this is viewed through a scientific lens to better understand how we can continue to coexist with nature with the least possible damage. The details of their packages are on their website, www.ourlandthailand.com





Diary of the ordinary during a pandemic – part 1: Fire on the opposite shore

by Rie Atagi

Beginning of January

I heard news of a new virus, COVID-19, so called Corona virus, in Wuhan, China. Shameful, I know, but it was another sad news happening somewhere in the world. Fire on the opposite shore. It stuck in the back of my mind only because the news reported this virus could spread across borders since the Lunar New Year holiday, the Chinese biggest celebration, was coming near and a massive Chinese tourist flow was expected.

January 30

We went to Singapore for the weekend to cheer for our son's sports tournament. Covid-19 was a concern, but there were only a handful of cases in Singapore, and the tournament proceeded as scheduled. I heard there would be a screening of foreign visitors at the Changi airport but didn't notice any difference from previous visits, except hand sanitisers were available for public use here and there.

I expected the Singaporeans to be more protective, but the media was probably exaggerating the threat. Only some people on Orchard Road were wearing masks, most were not. I had given my son, who had left earlier with the team, a mask

to wear on the plane. I wonder if he wore it. Probably not.

February 3

My dance teacher came from Japan for a workshop in Bangkok. She said she felt uneasy to travel due to the Covid-19 outbreak, but I think PM 2.5 is much worse and threatening than Covid-19. I feel my throat is a bit itchy, perhaps due to PM 2.5.

February 5

I went to voice training with my friend for the first time. It was fun to sing aloud, but I felt a

bit hesitant when the teacher asked me to hold a pen in my mouth as a part of practice. It was my own pen, but it could still be covered with germs. I think I should carry a wipe-off now just in case.

February 17

My high school son started a week of "Global Citizens Week" where students participate in community services elsewhere in the world. However, due to the concern of the Covid-19 spread, all overseas trips had been cancelled and switched to domestic travel. I guess school is taking a "safety first" policy, but I think they are being over cautious. By the way, commuting in a bus full of kids – will that be safe enough? I guess so.

February 20

My dance teacher informed us of the cancelation of the next workshop in March. Since Japan is on the list of "countries with ongoing local transmission," those who travelled from Japan need to be "under observation (supervision without quarantine)" whatever that means.

Thai schools are not receiving any visitors from Japan. I was helping to organise the Japanese teachers and high school students visits to Thai schools, but both were cancelled. I have five events cancelled for the next two weeks. What a bummer!

February 21

I went to Karaoke with my friend for a follow up voice training practice. It was funny she sprayed anti-bacterial spray

since regular flu takes away a much larger number of lives every year.

March 6

My son's school called back those students who had been quarantined due to the trip to France, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan, since the Ministry of Public Health removed them from the list of high-risk countries. Yet, the Thai Ministry of Education still required them to complete their self-quarantine period. Accordingly, school was closed until March 16th. Miscommunication and inconsistency of policies amongst agencies happen, but this was very disappointing. My boy is a senior. He should be studying and enjoying his last high school days to its fullest.

March 9

School informed us it will stay closed until March 23rd, since 14 days quarantine was required after 6th. I heard many students who had been to Japan during the mid-term break were allowed back at school. The newspaper reports many new infected cases in Thailand from those who had been to Japan. I heard my friend's husband who works for a Japanese company was

avoided by others when riding the elevator in the office building. I am a Japanese but haven't gone back for more than a year. I feel I should wear a sign!

March 11

The WHO declared Covid-19 as a pandemic. Tension was heightening. Following China, Italy's infection was overshooting. The fire on the opposite shore was blazing.

However, only 59 cases and one death were detected so far in Thailand. Perhaps the tropical weather is helping. My husband said he is closing the office, switching to telework. I don't think the situation is that serious. He found out his colleague had a dinner with a Singaporean friend who tested positive and his driver shared a public bathroom with someone who tested positive. Tele-work is fine, but I think he is overreacting.

March 12

The president of my daughter's college in Florida announced school would move to virtual learning, starting March 23, which was when spring break ended, through the rest of the semester. I could feel his pain in this decision making. I heard some colleges in the Northeast were switching to online teaching, but I didn't expect this in Florida.



everywhere and wiped off everything we may touch before starting. "All set." She smiled. What if we are the carriers??

February 23

Prior to the mid-term break (Feb 24-28), my son's school sent us a letter that the Thai Ministry of Education would require a mandatory 14 days self-quarantine for anyone returning to Thailand from China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. My friend cancelled her family trip to the US since her plane was to stop over at Narita for a couple of hours. The quarantine was required for travellers transiting at these places as well. "Ridiculous," I thought.

March 3

My son's school opened one day late after the mid-term break since teachers needed to prepare for those students self-quarantined. During the break, some countries were removed from and added on the list of high-risk areas requiring self-quarantine. Accordingly, some had to quarantine unexpectedly when they got back from the trip.

Quarantine was required even when a family member of the same household returned from these places. Some of my friends said their husbands were staying in a hotel after the business trips, so that their kids could go to school. Such dedication. I don't know why this virus is so threatening,

Yet no time for lament. We need to decide what to do since students are expected to vacate their dormitories in two days. She has nowhere to stay. She has grandparents and some aunts in Michigan. Can we ask them to host her? They would be happy to help, but the news said this Covid-19 could be fatal for the aged and those with existing respiratory diseases. We cannot risk them. School said students could ask for special permission to stay on campus, but there will be no activities on campus. She is inclined to take this option, but only a handful of students will remain on campus. Can she cope with the uncertainty and loneliness alone?

March 14

In the end, we decided to have her come home. At this point, neither the US nor Thailand is any safer to stay, but at least she will be with us in Thailand. She needs a stable place to study, even virtually, for another two months, and you never know how long this situation will last. Considering her need to pack up and avoid the flights transiting in high-risk areas, the most economical flight we could get is scheduled to arrive on the 18th.

I have been very worried about her for the last couple of days. Congested airports and closed airplanes are not very ideal to be in for thirty-plus hours. There is no way of knowing the invisible virus spreading among the travellers. I heard four out of five infected have either mild or no symptoms. I kept telling myself, even if she gets infected, she would be fine since she is still very young and fit.

Another concern was immigration. Thailand has detected thirty-plus new cases per day for the last few days. Tighter measures to restrict the people entering the Kingdom have been discussed. I understand any traveller including my own daughter can be a carrier of the virus, but I just wish they will let her in.

When she texted “On the way to the airport,” I learned that new measures including a medical certificate to prove negative for infection and health insurance over 100,000B to cover the medical cost were introduced. It didn’t say when to be implemented. She doesn’t have them. We may be able to buy the insurance online, but there is no way to obtain the medical certificate now. If she is rejected to enter, where should she go? Go back to the US? It’s very far and she has nowhere to stay. I got panicked and started looking for a place in Japan. Japan still seems to be relaxed with protection measures, and she shouldn’t have a problem entering. I could join her later, if necessary. I wonder if she has brought her Japanese passport with her. Finally, the Covid-19 is no longer “fire on the opposite shore” but has become a threat to us.

March 17

The Thai Ministry of Education announced all schools will be closed until further notice. Just a day before my daughter’s arrival. For the last three days, I have been busy looking for a place for her to self-quarantine, since the US was added to the list of high-risk areas, so that my son could go to school when it is supposed to re-open on the 23rd. After a frantic search, I found a sublet of nearby apartment. “Lucky indeed,” I thought. But after all, we didn’t have to rent this place. My son won’t be going to school anyway. Oh well, better be safe than sorry. She may actually be a carrier of the virus.

I went to the supermarket to stock-up on some food for a family of four. There was a temperature check at the entrance. It was not very pleasant to be aimed at your head with a gun-like thermometer, even though it’s visibly plastic. There was no toilet paper and canned foods on the shelf.

March 18

My husband went to pick her up at the airport. He sent a photo of the airport. It was empty. Very spooky. The bulletin board showed more than half the flights were cancelled. What a relief to see a photo of her arrival. I was exhausted of worrying about her: Are all her connecting flights flying as scheduled? Can she go through all screenings at the airports? Can she enter the country without a problem? However, when she arrived home, she seemed totally carefree. Why is mother the only one always worried about everything?

March 20

My days seems to be spent either cooking or reading about



the Covid-19 news. The situation is getting worse. It is like watching a horror movie, only real.

I've studied about the Covid-19. Why is it such a big deal? How different is it from a regular flu? What are the best options to stop the spread? How effective are the prevention measures?

I have learned that the world is trying to slow down the spread, so that our medical care system will not collapse before the vaccine/medicine is developed or herd immunity is reached. There are some infected (called "super-spreaders"), who have the potential of spreading the virus to more people than someone with the regular flu could, but these super-spreaders cannot be identified in advance. Trying to avoid closed areas, congested areas, and congregated areas can help to stop the spread. Accordingly, schools are closed, many events are cancelled, and public transportation including flights have started to be on hold.

However, I got confused as well. In the beginning, the news reported the aged and those with existing respiratory diseases were the high-risk group, but young people including babies are dying. They said this virus wouldn't be transferred to animals, but some pets were infected. Some say wearing masks is a must, but some say it is not effective. Some countries in the Northern hemisphere are saying this will end soon when the weather gets warm. But Thailand in perpetual summer cannot stop the spread. Schools are being closed, but some argue school closure is not effective. I did try to read "experts" opinions rather than politicians' but not sure who is saying the right thing and what to believe.

March 21

The Bangkok governor announced closure of facilities except life necessities such as supermarkets, pharmacies, hospitals, and chemists until April 12. Shopping malls and department stores will be closed, and restaurants are allowed only for take-out. I went shopping for some food. The lady in front of me had three packs of 24 rolls of toilet papers. I was appalled but simultaneously, I thought, "should I get one pack as well?" When I texted the story to my friend, she said, "Oh my God, the first thing, first." and went to dye her hair. I heard the salon will operate until midnight today. Maybe I should have gone as well...

March 22

Thai immigration started to implement the protective measures of medical certificates and insurance today, or at least that's what I heard. Originally, they said it would start on Friday. They then delayed it to Sunday,

but my friend's son couldn't check in at the airport in Canada on Friday for his flight to Thailand. They announce the change of regulations daily, and you never know how and when they are enforced in practice.

This week, my friends, whose children are studying abroad, have texted each other non-stop to keep us updated. We were in panic. Some purchased an earlier flight, giving up a later one. Some got a medical certificate, not with proof of being infection negative, but hoping it will do some good: It is practically impossible to get the certificate since only those who show symptoms can be tested. It is times like this we feel like outsiders in this country. We tell our kids to "come home", but our "home" is not legally supported.

March 25

A state of emergency is to be announced tomorrow. I wonder how many times I have faced a state of emergency in Thailand. Perhaps this is the third time. Every time, I was amazed that our life of the ordinary somehow went on, like business as usual. Behind a serious historical event, a life of the ordinary was still the same as the day before, at least on its surface.

I went downtown to do the last shopping. It only took half an hour to get there, less than half the usual time. The city view from the highway was much clearer. Obviously, less traffic means less pollution, but no one talks about PM 2.5 lately. In downtown, I found a secondhand bookshop that was open. I was not sure why it could stay open but went in anyway. I felt like I was a criminal but bought more than 10 books as fast as possible. I think bookshops should be considered a necessity, especially when we are homebound.

I heard the protective measures of needing proof of being infection negative and insurance are not required anymore to check in for a flight until March 31. What a roller-coaster.





Combat decision fatigue and how to make the right decisions every time

by Isabel Valle

Making decisions, even small ones, can wear us down over time. Every day we make endless decisions about what we eat and wear, what we work on, what we do with our spare time. By bedtime, the average person has made 35,000 decisions! Every decision requires time and energy, and depletes our willpower. Add to that our addiction to fill our days being busy for the sake of being busy, and you my friend have got a great recipe for disaster. Regardless of how strong you are, your ability to make the best choices can eventually run out.

When many of the business leaders come to me initially, they talk about feeling drained, stressed, scattered, irritable, having physical fatigue, increased anxiety, tension headaches and even digestive issues, which makes them feel unproductive and overwhelmed for the majority of their day, even though they try to eat healthy, exercise and sleep well. If that's you, I dare say you may not actually have physical fatigue, what you may have is called decision fatigue, and it affects us way more than you realise.

You may not be consciously aware of being tired, but you're low on mental energy. The more choices you make throughout the day, the harder each one becomes for your

brain, and eventually it looks for shortcuts. This may cause you to become reckless in your decision making, acting impulsively instead of thinking things through. Or you may simply do nothing, which can create bigger problems in the long run.

Over the last few months I have witnessed so many of my clients having to completely adapt and reinvent who they are, what they do and how they go about moving forward, trying to set themselves up for success amid a global pandemic which gives little signs to ease up. The level of unpredictable complexity we are now facing has made many of us reevaluate our options, explore new avenues, and try to come up with new pathways to help us stay afloat in today's volatile environment.

For some, the prospect of a stable job or business has been taken away, with nearly half the global workforce at risk of losing income due to COVID-19 alone, according to the International Labour Organisation.

For those who remain employed or in business, comes a period of intense evaluation of business practices, reinventing the wheel, entire new ways of creating value in the marketplace and never thought of ways in which to lead people to deliver results.

Today, we are faced by a world where millions of businesses globally are barely breathing. These are the real faces of the world of work. If we don't learn to adapt and make critical decisions to help us navigate through this period of unprecedented history, many will simply perish.

Millions of tiny decisions throughout our day can drain our willpower and mental resources – if we let them.

Here's something you need to know. Decision fatigue is caused by being forced to make too many decisions over a fixed period of time. There comes a point where good choices

and thoughtful decision making cannot be expected from the depleted brain. This relates to all kinds of decisions, and the exhaustion leaves people open to making poor decisions, whether in their business, their health or their relationships, making us hasty or stopping us from making decisions all together.

But fear not, by changing your habits and setting up the right routines, you can decrease anxiety and conserve your energy for the decisions that really matter. Learning how to manage your decision making can help you avoid feeling drained and conserve your mental capacities, much needed at a time like this!

Some signs of decision fatigue include procrastination, impulsivity, avoidance and indecision. If this sounds like you, take notice. It is a great concern what happens to our capacity to make good decisions when our brains are out of fuel.

Luckily, there are plenty of ways you can keep this from happening. Learn how you can combat decision fatigue, replenish your willpower and boost your productivity during a decision heavy day with these simple steps:

Make less decisions

Making too many decisions will stress you out. Take minor decisions off your plate, which take a lot of decision energy. If you get overwhelmed by lunch menus, take your lunch to work. Prepare your work clothes the night before.

By making fewer decisions, you'll be giving your brain a standing chance to recharge and recover. Many laugh at my schedules, to-do lists, weekly food menus and shopping lists, but I'm the one laughing – they keep me on track, streamline my choices, which helps me stay ahead of my week and what happens in it, taking the guess out of how I run my days and weeks. Scale back and find ways to simplify your life as much as possible.

Hobbies, activities and volunteering are all great and wonderful things to do, but if you've reached the point where you're overwhelmed, it's time to drop the excess commitments in your life. Self-care must come first.

Delegate decisions

I see many struggle with delegating – whether tasks or decisions to others. Many of us feel we must do it all to get it done properly or because we don't have time to train others to do it as well as us, but at what cost? You can delegate decisions the same way you delegate tasks. If you keep complaining about how much you have on your plate, it's time to give responsibility to others for some decision making.

Stop micromanaging and do yourself a favour – you're not the only person that can get things done, have confidence that others will also deliver.

Pass some decision making to employees, spouses, children, friends and family members. Others can pick good options too. And it doesn't always have to be perfect. There are way more important things in life, like knowing what decisions to pass on. Letting others be part of the decision making can be very empowering for others and shows that you trust them. So help them help you!



Follow a process

Being systematic about important or difficult decisions can help you become more decisive. This will help you analyse your choices by understanding options available, potential obstacles, and evidence to back up your decision. Having a consistent model to follow can also help you clear up confusion and keep your emotions at bay, so you can objectively weigh in options. For instance, a simple example would be:

- identify problem
- gather information
- identify opportunities
- identify potential obstacles
- weigh the evidence
- choose best option
- take action
- review decision

“Good decisions come from experience. Experience comes from making bad decisions” – Mark Twain

Create an easy to follow process that works for you.

Make priority decisions in the morning

We carry the weight of the world on our shoulders, constantly thinking about what needs to be done. Do yourself a favour and write all that's pending inside your head down on paper, where it can be kept safe and can be tackled accordingly. Once you've written them down, put them in order of priority and tackle the most pressing ones first. That way, your most important decisions will be done when your energy is still at its highest.

For most of us – even night owls – the best time of day is in the morning – that's when we make accurate and thoughtful decisions. By afternoon, most people hit a plateau, and as the day wears on decision fatigue sets in, and we start making riskier decisions.

Don't risk making snappy decisions. If you are feeling overwhelmed about making a decision, create micro-deadlines that force you to act early and not keep pondering your choices. Better to space out decisions over time than to make critical decisions at the eleventh hour.

Avoid analysis paralysis

Stop second guessing yourself. We often get trapped in the mindset that everything we do needs to be perfect, and this puts a lot of pressure on us to make the “right” choice, because a “wrong” choice could somehow ruin something. The truth is, in most cases, there is no right or wrong choice, you can only go with the information you have at the time and hope for the best.

The most important aspect in decision making is to review your decision early to confirm whether it was the right one, or to recalibrate as needed if it wasn't. So stop wasting time trying to come up with the perfect solution. It simply doesn't exist. The more decisions you make, the more experienced and comfortable you'll get at it.

You cannot make progress without making decisions

Do you want to know how to make the right decision every time?

If you're feeling torn about making a decision ask yourself: do I feel expansive when I think about this or contracted? Pay attention to the answer. If you feel an instant sense of dread or heaviness or something in your body just going “no”, or you actually notice your body subtly moving back, those can all fall under the umbrella of feeling contracted. On the other hand, you might ask yourself do I want to do this, and all of a sudden inside you notice a very subtle shift where something feels lighter, something feels brighter, even a sense of excitement. Perhaps your physical body actually moves forward. Or even if it sounds a little scary, something in you just feels bigger. That would be an example of something that is expansive. These are all clues that your intuitive intelligence give you. Learn to notice those clues if you want to feel at peace with the decisions you make. Contraction for me is a big no and expansion is a big yes. Try it for yourself.

Beyond tapping into your intuitive intelligence, you can also ask yourself: what's the worst thing that can happen if I do this? You'd be surprised how many people don't take the time to really drill down into the worst case scenario.





Once you do, ask yourself: How exactly, specifically, would I deal with it? Is it a matter of losing some money, could you lose your job or your business? You know, sometimes the worst thing that could happen is that you'd be embarrassed by making a mistake. If it's beyond what you're willing to risk, then there's your answer. Don't do it.

If still in doubt, move onto the next step, which is looking on the flip side and imagining what could be the best case scenario.

Think through what are all the possible payoffs that might come from saying yes to this decision? Will you learn a tremendous amount about yourself? Are there financial/creative/freedom upsides that can only come if you take a chance and say yes?

Finally, if after considering the above steps you still find yourself unsure about which decision to make, it's time to move into action. Because for certain decisions to become clear, you must first experience them.

You have to find a way to experience it. So I want you to ask yourself, is there some way that I can test drive this opportunity?

Can I take a first step? Can I take a class? Can I do a test run in some way? Can I try it on a small scale, even if it's just an experiment?

So for example, the first time I considered running marathons, I could hardly run 100 metres without tripping my back. It seemed impossible, and yet I couldn't get the idea out of my head. Before committing to getting myself through the process of training for long distance running, I experimented with smaller milestones. My first kilometre, my fastest 5km time, ways to keep my back strong through the pounding on the road, etc.

By the time I committed to the full process, I knew it was the right decision, and having experienced my growth, there was no resistance to the process at all, no matter how hard or scary it was. Trying something out before you go all in will help you get clear quickly and effectively.

On a final note, let me add a different perspective about decision making. Nothing is permanent. Most things you can stop, evolve or reverse. Even if the decision you make is wrong, or is not working out the way you

thought it would, you can always catch it and change it.

Now I'd love to hear from you. Tell me: Do you have a decision you've been avoiding making lately? What's your favourite method for decision making? How do you distinguish what the right decisions are for you?

About the author:

Isabel is an experienced Peak Performance Strategist with over 20 years of international work experience holding senior positions within the hospitality industry in countries around the world, as well as Executive and Leadership coaching, mentoring and training.

She specialises in high performance strategy, leadership development and building organisational culture to help leaders and their teams learn, grow and succeed.

Isabel is passionate about helping empower business leaders with the mindset, performance, skills and strategies that they need to get ahead.

More available on www.isabelvalle.com





Time to get real about work/life balance

by Isabel Valle, Peak Performance Strategist

Are we getting it all wrong?

I believe that for far too long we've been stuck as a society into a particular set of thinking about how we work and live. It is time to get real, to break from those so called "work/life" issues, and start creating a different type of integration to live our best lives.

There is no doubt that most of us are time starved and overstretched, and are feeling the pressure of unrealistic expectations as we go about our days by the conflicting demands of our work and life, making us feel overwhelmed, stressed out and stuck. We live under the illusion that committing to insane demands and long working hours will one day save our day, however this strategy to get us to perform and stay on top of it all couldn't be more wrong.

Studies have shown that productivity drops steeply after a 50 hour work week, and drops off a cliff after 55 hours – a far cry from the 70-80 hours week I used to do working in hotels. Exhausted employees are not only unproductive, but also more prone to costly errors, accidents and sickness. It is paramount to bring more awareness to employers to highlight the fact that hours can be reduced without loss of input. We need to realise the fact that longer working hours does not improve productivity – healthy, well restored employees do.

The culture of overwork has well known personal consequences. Working more than 55 hours a week raises the risk of heart attack and stroke. People who work longer hours tend to be more anxious and depressed, and their sleep suffers. According to Schulte at Harvard Business Review, people's IQ actually drops 13 points when in a state of tunnel vision busyness.

However, if your work culture is organised around effective work, and values employees who have full lives outside of work, you will stand a far better chance of

attracting and retaining employees who are highly engaged, motivated and willing to give their best at work, which will undoubtedly translate into a healthier, more successful business, and a healthier bottom line. Promoting a healthy work/life balance in your business will also lead to increased productivity, a happier workforce, staff feeling valued and less likely to leave, reducing staff turnover and minimising recruitment costs.

Let's get real: Work/life balance is an unhealthy myth. We all have limited energy, and following Elon Musk's working week of 120 hours is simply unrealistic. Instead, we must allocate time wisely, depending on priorities and circumstances. Inevitably, some things will be neglected when important matters demand our attention, and we need to account for those times and be ok with it.

One of the first points that I'd like to suggest in how to create a shift in the way we think about work/life balance, is to actually change the language itself. The word balance implies "equal", and balancing work and life matters equally is simply idealistic. Work is in fact a part of life, not something separate, and as such it fits in under the greater umbrella. We must therefore start by using a different type of language to depict this balancing act.

I love how Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, uses the phrase "work/life harmony" instead. Bezos believes happiness at work makes him happy at home, and vice versa. Words such as harmony, blend or integration imply that work and life are intertwined. Therefore, we must accept reality and come up with some strategies to prioritise within our blended lifestyle, as well as eliminating the work/life combination from our vocabularies altogether and to recognise that life is what's happening and work is one of the things you do in life.

Everything we do has a cost and consequences. The sooner we make peace with it, the quicker we'll be able to create a work/life integration plan that works for us. Having it all – at once – may push us down a road of unrealistic

expectations where we feel like failures for not being able to attain the impossible. Some of the most successful people that I've interviewed in the topic have all told me they will only focus on the top 2 or 3 domains of their life at most at any given time.

Time does not discriminate. We all have the same hours in a day, and with some intentional planning you can fit a lot in it. But the truth is that finding the right harmony between work and life is not easy, and it will require commitment and doing the thing that you set out to do. At times, you may not have enough time to hang out or relax, or even have a decent sleep, and that doesn't mean the goal isn't worth it. If you apply a year long calendar view, make sure at times you can afford to, you book time with friends and family gatherings. Life is going to change constantly, and at times giving to work a little more than life is not necessarily unhealthy if it does allow you to work towards your dreams.

In fact, at different ages and stages of our lives, we need different things and have various demands on our time. Sometimes there isn't enough work, while at other points there's too much. In the grand scheme, there is something resembling a balance. But in the short term, less so.

Another aspect in this topic that I'd like to highlight is about how everyone should be wary when considering their busyness. I hear it all the time: "I'm so busy". Just how busy are we really? Although we love saying we're busy, many of us are just distracted. It could be that much of the busyness we flaunt like a status symbol is just a result of wasting time procrastinating and pretending – checking social media and email. I could argue that the more complex your tasks, the more you focus, the more is done in a condensed period. I firmly believe that with the right focus, we can get to work smarter, not harder, and generate better results this way for a richer, more fulfilling life.

When it comes to work/life balance – or however you want to call it, you must define it yourself. What balance looks like differs for everyone. A CEO with twin toddlers might want a different schedule than one with teens. So don't



assume that what works for someone else should be your aim. It's not a one-size-fits-all. Think through your own priorities and how time outside work can be attained. Everybody does it differently, so know what would work for you and make it happen. Who says you can't do something that most people don't? I've had clients come to a coaching session whilst breastfeeding their babies, I had a port-a-cot for my baby in my office, I know of some leaders that will bring their families travelling with them if going longer than a week, etc. Opportunities are endless! Balance doesn't mean "equal." Sometimes, either work or your personal life takes more weight, depending on what's going on at the moment – and that's ok.

Work/life integration is a very personal journey. You teach people how to treat you. If you are responding to email 24 hours a day, then that's going to be the expectation. So take responsibility for creating a work life that works for you.

A word of caution though – you need to remember that you are not an emergency room doctor. Be careful how much urgency you allow every email and action. Because employees are now so accessible all the time, there becomes this false sense of importance over everything, because everybody has constant access to you and to each other all the time, and everything is urgent. Is it really? Part of it is being able to have a healthy filter. Let emails slide until the morning. Your time is precious, so make it a priority to remove any non-essential items.

Work/life integration tips for people who want to have it all

Step up your self-care routine:

Activities that increase your health and happiness will help you be more effective and productive in every aspect of your life. Prioritise sleep by trying to get 7-8 hrs of sleep a night. Make time for nutritious meals.





Exercise whenever you can to combat disease. Treat yourself to a spa and unwind. Spend time with people who make you laugh and leave you feeling energised. Make time for hobbies that relieve stress and fill you with passion and joy. I am not reinventing the wheel here. You know what needs to be done, so go ahead and commit to applying some of these in your own life.

Plan your top 3 daily

Become a productivity pro by planning ahead of time (the night before or early in the morning) the top 3 things that you must accomplish that day. Be realistic and ensure that no matter what gets in the way, you get those 3 things crossed from your list. Before you know it, you'll be working smarter, not harder, and accomplishing much more.

Delegate

If you're so involved in your business that you feel you really can't be gone, even for a day, it's time to learn to delegate. Contrary to what you might believe, you aren't the only one who can handle many of the tasks you currently spend time on. Your team members will feel empowered if you shuffle additional responsibilities to them, and you'll finally get to relax.

Minimise distractions

If you are serious about doing work that matters, you are going to have to get real about your distractions of choice (social media, Netflix, drinking, greasy food, late nights, procrastination, etc). Take responsibility for owning what keeps you away from being and doing your best, and work on reducing the amount of time you spend on it. We all get the same amount of time in a day. High achievers focus better on what they want to achieve, rather than giving into their distraction of choice.

Organise yourself by decluttering

A messy external space often overloads the brain and leads to burnout. Become more focused and productive by cleaning up and creating an environment that allows you to work smarter, not harder.

Overcome personal disorganisation by decluttering information and paperwork as well as time and tasks.

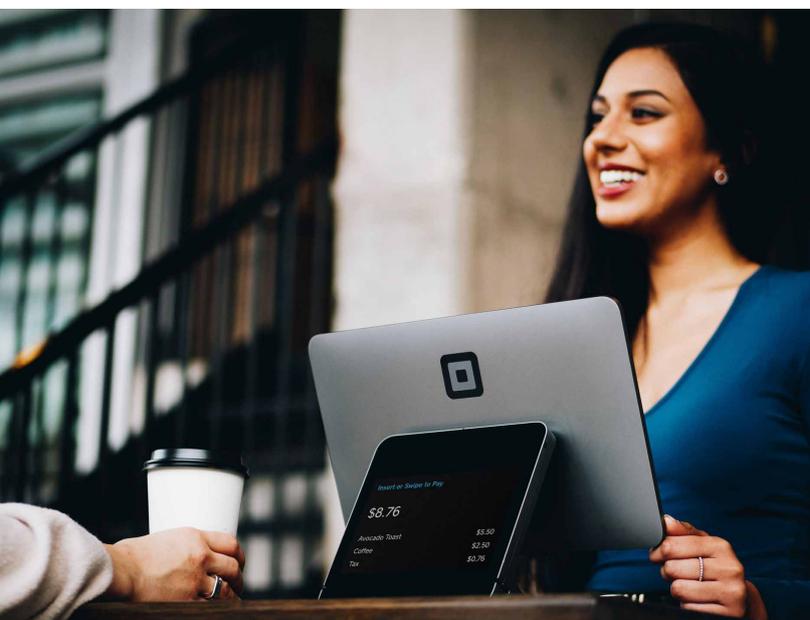
Think consciously about how to spend your time, decide which tasks matter most to you and your organisation, and then drop or outsource the rest. By doing this, you can reduce your involvement in low value tasks. You can actually cut your desk work by an average of six hours a week, shave meeting time by an average of two hours a week, and free up nearly a fifth of your time (an average of one full day a week). By doing this, you'll make more time for what matters in your life.

Imagine you had one full day a week to fill as you seem fit, giving time and energy for all parts of your life so nothing is left behind – perhaps balance does stand a chance after all!

Use calendar blocks for laser focus

You have a calendar, so use it. Schedule specific blocks of uninterrupted time for your most important tasks. When you are working, work hard and focus. You scheduled this work time, so give it your all. You wouldn't want one of your employees or one of your suppliers to do a half done job on your assignment, so don't do it to your clients. Block out distractions and keep on task. Focus and avoid sabotaging yourself and your most precious commodity – your time.

Also schedule important personal activities, such as special dinners, school events, sporting events, fun events





with friends, your kids or your spouse or just exercise time. Scheduling this time may sound like overkill, but trust me, it works. It removes the guilt over being with your family instead of working in your business. It's on your schedule after all – so you are being productive and not ignoring your family. It's a win-win! And remember, you are in charge of your own schedule. You don't have to be tied to the 9-5 time limitations. If you need two hours in the middle of the day to attend your child's talent show – you have that freedom. Just remember to replace those two hours somewhere else on your schedule.

Set boundaries

If customers or colleagues think it's ok to call you at 11pm if they need something, they will. Set firm boundaries around when you are, and aren't, available. Doing so will help you relax when you're off the clock and avoid burnout, while also helping others avoid unmet expectations. Limit your work hours. Work never ends, and if you're looking to finish everything, you'll never stop. Working long hours isn't good for anyone — you, your family or your colleagues. Sheryl Sandberg spent years leaving work at 5:30pm to have dinner with her children. If she can do it, why can't you? Do not overextend yourself. Learn to say thank you, but no for both personal and professional requests. If it doesn't fit into your schedule, then the answer is "No." The time you spend on your work or business needs to produce income, and the time with your family or personal time needs to be quality time.

The bottom line is, we all want to enjoy life and to find that ever elusive balance. Some days are better than others, but if your goal is to enjoy your career, your clients, your family, and your time, then remember, you have the power to make that happen. You don't have to take yourself too seriously – just use your time more effectively to accomplish both goals.

Work/life integration is not a system of having your work and life take exactly the same amount of hours or focus. It's a way of making sure that both your work priorities and your personal priorities are being met. Sometimes that means more work hours, and other times it means less.

Newer times demand new thinking. Now it's up to all

of us to get real, to think bigger, and begin to make the real changes we all need in order to live our best life.

About the author: Isabel is an experienced Peak Performance Strategist with over 20 years of international work experience holding senior positions within the hospitality industry in countries around the world, as well as Executive and Leadership coaching, mentoring and training. She specialises in high performance strategy, leadership development and building organisational culture to help leaders and their teams learn, grow and succeed. Isabel is passionate about helping empower business leaders with the mindset, performance, skills and strategies that they need to get ahead.

More available on www.isabelvalle.com

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Khun Soonruth Bunyamanee editor of the Bangkok Post



We speak today with Dr. Bunyamanee, editor of the Bangkok Post.

What brought you to the Bangkok Post?

The pride and reputation of the Bangkok Post attracted me 26 years ago when I was a reporter at the Thai News Agency.

The Bangkok Post's reputation is widely known. The newspaper is well recognised locally and internationally. As Thai is the national language of Thailand, spoken by almost all of the population, it was particularly challenging to me to join this renowned English language newspaper, one of the only two major ones in the country at the time.

What are the biggest changes that you have seen in Thailand over the years?

The biggest change is the economy. Thailand's economy and economic environment have developed dramatically over the past 25 years. Thailand's financial system used to be one of the world's weakest systems in 1997. Thailand is now today amongst the top nations with the largest foreign reserves. The Thai banking system remained resilient with high levels of capital funds and loan loss provisions to withstand a potential adverse impact from economic uncertainty.

What has stayed the same?

Thai politics remain unchanged. Power games in political parties continue to compete for ministerial seats and are the same as that happened decades ago. The country and the people's interests seem to have less priority than their own interests in the eyes of many politicians.



Having no true friends and permanent enemies is the dictum that is more than true in the case of Thai politics. Politicians can join together despite that they used to be political rivals if their interests can be settled by sharing.

All print journalism is going through wrenching changes now. What do you see is the future of the Bangkok Post?

Yes, like all other daily newspapers across the world, the Bangkok Post also bears the brunt of impact from technology disruption and the change of reader behaviour. With our subscription base, the future of the newspaper remains intact. Despite difficulty in the industry, we have

entered into a partnership with other international media, including the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, to increase the newspapers value to our readers.

Still, we are forced to go online and diversify our businesses. Currently, the Bangkok Post is not only a newspaper. We are a news content provider through various platforms, staying in print and digital including various social media. In the side of business development, more projects are being explored.

What are the biggest changes you have seen at the Bangkok Post?

The biggest changes are our channels to offer news and information to our readers. We have produced the newspaper for 74 years. Now, our digital platforms have seen a marked expansion within the last decade. The Bangkok Post's website page views are surging. It reached 84.73 million in 2019 and was accessed by around 16.68 million people. As of Q2 this year, the page views jumped to 17 million per month.



What has stayed the same?

Organisation culture and the mindset of people do not change fast enough to capture the fast changing technology and reader and customer behaviours. Many people still think that they are the staff of the newspaper and work in newspaper people style. This is a key problem in our transformation.

Since the Bangkok Post was started by Alexander MacDonald in 1946 it has always stood for truth and fairness. It prides itself on 'Editorial Independence' is this still true?

Yes, it is. Such stance and pride remain intact despite more pressures these days. We are still "the newspaper you can trust" as we have been for 74 years.

Andrew Biggs called not The Nation and the Bangkok Post 'Champions of democracy' how do you see them?

Thank you for such sweet words Andrew. One of our clear stances is to promote democracy. We prove ourselves by running many pro-democracy pieces over the past years despite that several of such articles caused us troubles one way or another.

What do you do for fun?

Reading astrology works, dining and feeding cats.

What is in the future for you?

I love astrology but I cannot exactly predict the future.

What I want to do is to preserve the Bangkok Post's reputation and materialise our digital transformation plan. I will do my best for the time being. You can create good future by creating a good present.

Life begins when you start to live it. So, I'd say, start living in Thailand. However, Covid-19 transformed many things. Pre-Covid-19, I'd say do what the Thais do – say sorry when you make a mistake and smile. However, SARS-Cov2 nudged our evolutionary path more towards entropy, probably to correct that path. Thus, from this perspective, I think the biggest challenge for all of us now is how to co-exist with the virus, and try to make a difference in how we can help the world reduce its collateral damage.



TOM CROWLEY

Today we are speaking to Tom Crowley, long time Bangkok resident, noted author of numerous Thailand based books and humanitarian worker.

www.tomcrowleybooks.com

What brought you to Thailand the first time?

Business and investment management. In the mid nineties my company asked me to open an investment office for SE Asia. It came down to Bangkok or Manila. An obvious choice even today. However, it was only after I left the pressure and rat race of the business world in 1998 that I really arrived in Thailand.

What has changed the most in Thailand?

All credit to the urban planners and Thai government for the establishment of an extensive modern rail system. The MRT and BTS systems have brought about a tremendous and beneficial change in Bangkok. Its impact cannot be overstated. Transportation has eased and people, especially working class people, can move around much much more easily.

The amount of real estate investment and chic, in some places, urban growth in Bangkok has been amazing. Bangkok has some of the most modern high rise buildings in the world. The road system has expanded tremendously though at times in a bit of a confusing manner.

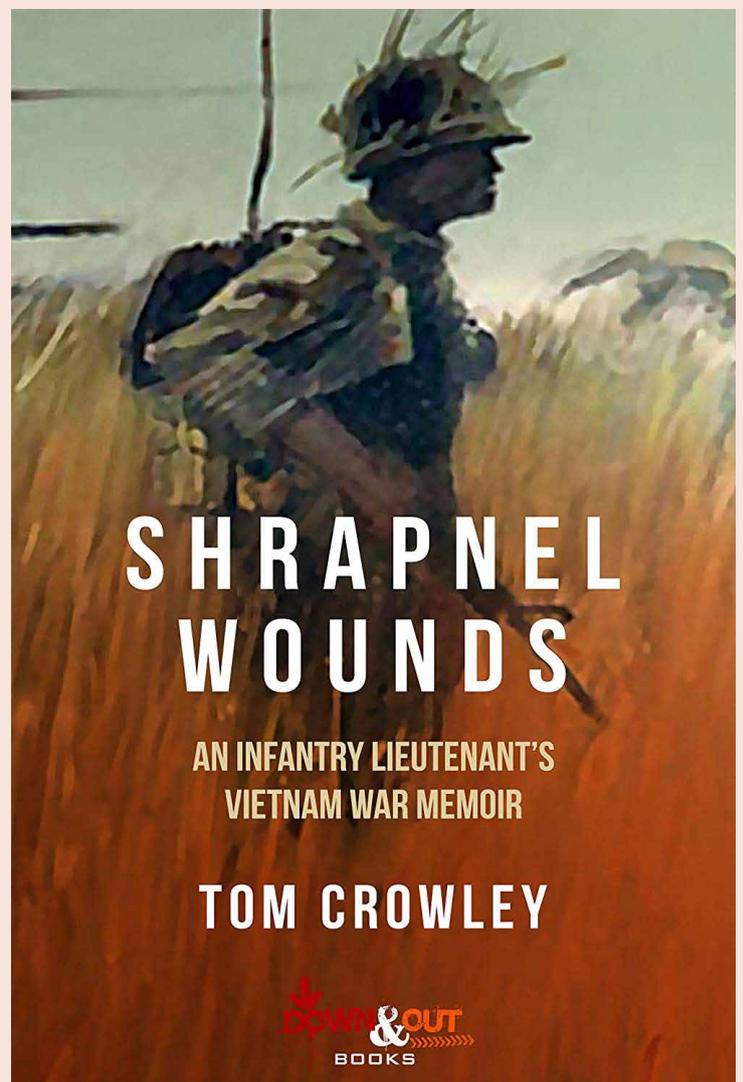
Growth in the countryside, roads, schools, and markets has also expanded though not matching Bangkok in any way.

What has changed the least here?

Things must still be done the 'Thai' way. One must be non-confrontational. Thailand is still captive to the Pee-Nong system it was ruled in the past by a gerontocracy and still is. Social innovation still lags in all areas. Your first novel *Vipers Tail* was about a deadly virus that emerged in China and spread across the world. This is amazingly prescient. Please tell us about the novel. My goal was really to introduce a new hero, a Thai American, whose military background and post war issues I could understand and develop fully.

Of course the protagonist always needs an antagonist, the more evil and threatening the better. My military history reading, which included WWII and the Japanese attempt to conquer Asia, had brought me to focus on the Kempeitai, the Japanese political military police. In that research I came across records of their death camps and the research and testing of biological agents. They actually released biological agents against civilian Chinese populations during the war.

Here was evidence of overwhelming evil. I reimagined a version of that in a current setting and set my hero on the trail. I must give credit for the boost to my imagination to the

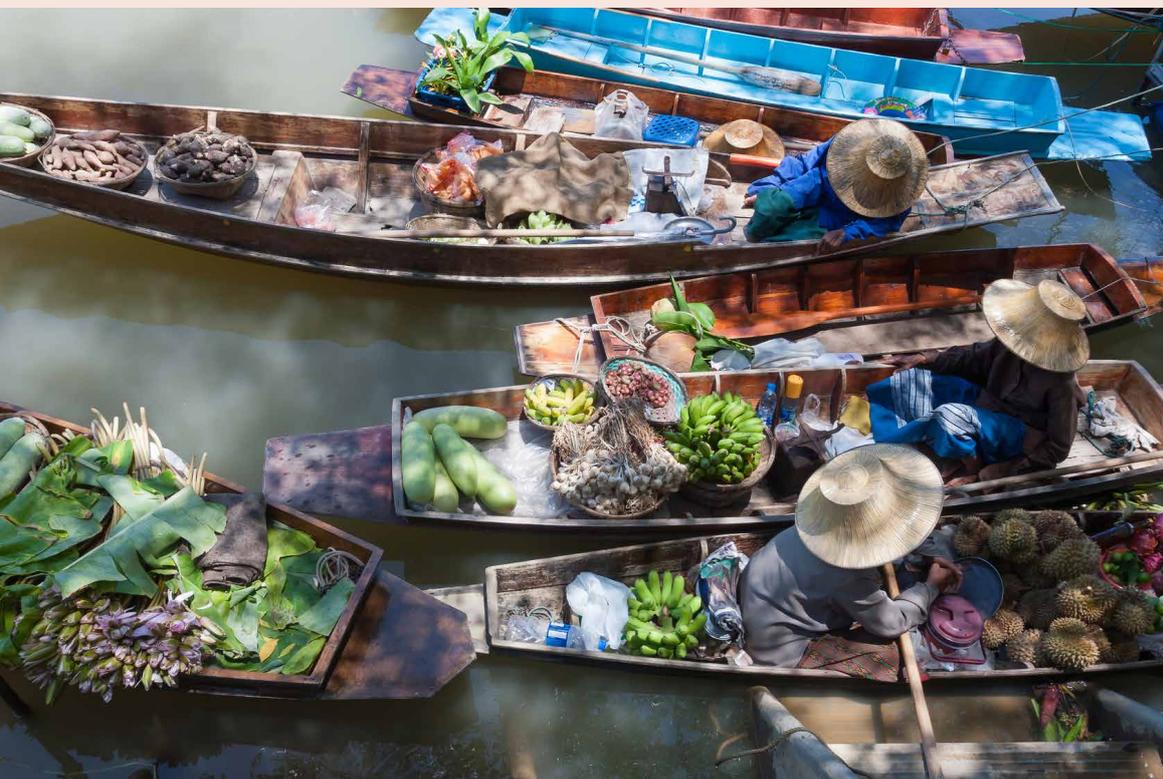


continuing stream of viral infections that China has shared with the rest of Asia during my time here. That list includes SARS, swine flu, avian flu, H1N1 and of course today, well after my book, the Corona virus. Chinese health practices can be deemed somewhat suspect.

You have done a number of fiction books about Thailand. Tell us about your main protagonist, Matt Chance, and where the idea for the character came from?

I have a good number of friends who are combat veterans. When they read my books they say to me, "There is a lot of you in there." Yes, there is a lot of all the combat veterans and PTSD survivors in Matt. The fires that rage within him at times, the determination to overcome the past and put it behind him, and the identification with the underdogs he comes across in life are all part of the man. Yet, as always, he is Thai, Thai-American, Luk Krung with an American father and a Thai mother, educated in America, but Thai. Bridging the two worlds.

The American military survivor part is mine. The Thai part is based on my good fortune in making some very strong Thai friends, especially in my work at the Mercy Centre, people who are friends to this day. In particular, as several of them were educated in the US and the UK, they provided a window into the nature of their life struggle to preserve their Thai cultural core but at the same time utilise the best of the world view that they had come to in their education.



It may work for you.

What advice do you have for anyone who wants to move to Thailand and live here?

DO: Learn the language, learn the language, learn the language.

I studied the Chinese language, including the characters, and worked in China for years. I studied Korean, including the alphabet, and worked in Korea for years. What I came to understand is that the native use of the language, the special phrases for certain occasions, how elders are referred to, differing references to

men and women, and many other things, provide the best window to understanding the people and the culture. A great book along this line is *Heart Talk* by Chris Moore and his Thai wife.

Language study can be an intense and painful process but do the study early on and maintain it. Don't pick up the language informally. You'll end up possibly using words and phrases which define you as not completely educated. I studied at Berlitz, total immersion, and found it a great starting point.

DON'T: Don't restrict yourself to the colonial village or limit your relations to other colonists as so many expats do. Find some way to immerse yourself, without colonial bodyguards, at least on occasion, in the Thai people and Thai activities

What does the future hold for you?

Reading and writing. Reading and writing. Reading and writing. I'm considered retired now, to my home in Maryland, just a visitor to Thailand and my friends there once a year, but there are no limits to what I can read and write. I love it and am very lucky to have this core identity to carry me through.

What books are you working on now?

After my time in business, I spent fourteen years, 1998 to 2012, working as a full time volunteer with a home for street kids based in the port slum area of Klong Toey, the Mercy Centre. I decided to write the story of the Heroes of Mercy. These are the staff and children of the poorest of families, who struggle with the tremendous difficulties involved in fighting to overcome strong Thai social prejudice and educational and economic barriers and to maintain their human dignity. Their stories are amazing and humbling. I will do my best to bring them to the world.

How has Thailand changed you?

My time in Thailand has helped me to learn how to keep my mouth shut, at least on occasion, and listen to the other person. Working at Mercy I learned not to judge quickly as the Thai would often keep things from the older person (me) being Kreng Jai. They didn't want to upset me or any elder (or boss). Take time to understand what is going on around you. Much of it may be hidden. This period of waiting to understand fully seems very difficult to Western newcomers who often want to get to the heart of the matter, very quickly.

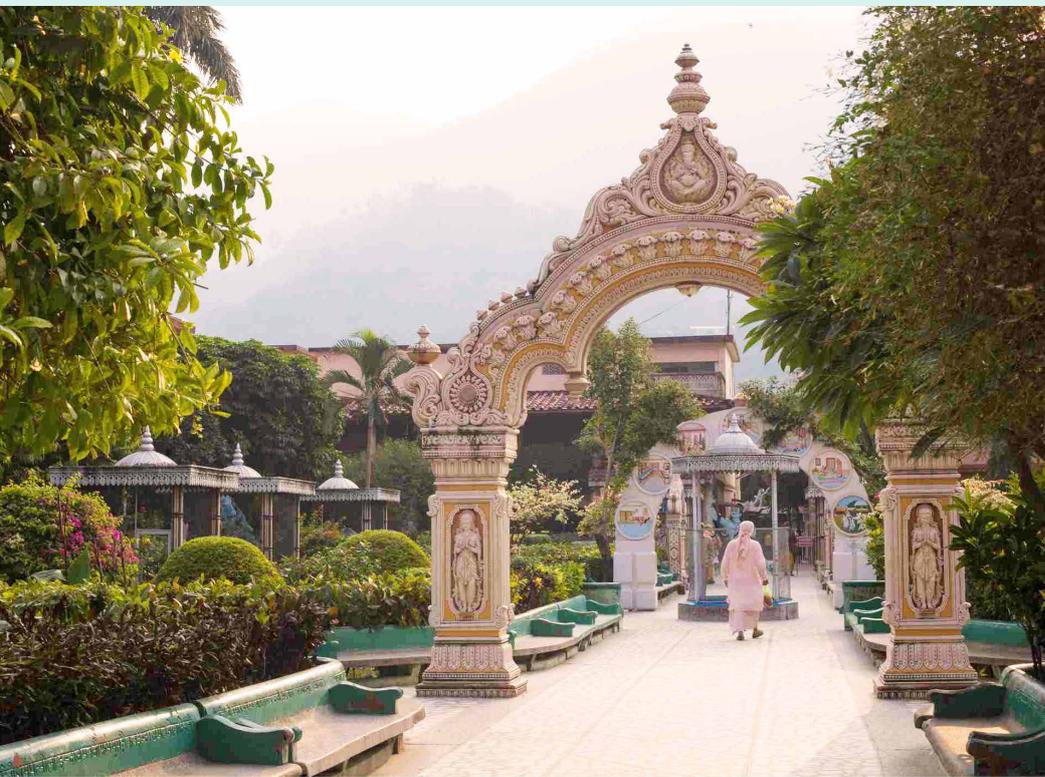
I hope I talk less and listen more.

The staff at the Mercy home are so professional and yet so humble. If I could learn to be like them...

What are your favourite things to do here?

Thailand has a wonderful collection of jungle parks and forest reserves which are little appreciated within Thailand, especially by the government. I would say some of these national parks, Keng Krachan in particular, are the best preserved bits of nature in Asia. I was a graduate of the US Army Jungle Expert School during my service and my wife and I love walking jungle trails and observing the birds and wildlife. I would put my time in these parks at the top of my list of the special activities available in Thailand. These parks provide a striking counterpoint to the urban jungle of Bangkok.

On a more pedestrian basis, I rediscovered the pleasure I experienced in my youth competing in the game of pool. Bangkok is the best pool venue in the world. Yes, the best. There are a great number of choices. Give it a try. My two favourite venues are Hustlers in the Times Square building and the Sportsman on Soi 13. This is where Matt goes to relax and escape the pressures of whatever case he is involved in.



of being part of the town however I have come to understand the deeper meaning of how the concepts of the centre were created by studying some of Sri Aurobindo's plentiful and outstanding clear and beautiful writings, some of which is in no doubt spiritual poetry for the soul. To understand how Auroville came about, one must go back to the history of Sri Aurobindo just a bit.

From all the reading I have gathered from research, without minimising his lengthy education, I find that, in a nutshell, he was a well educated Indian man originally from Calcutta that was sent to the UK for studies from 7 years up through Cambridge College years and then went back to India as a professor and was also in service of the Maharaja of the time in the Princely State of

Baroda. Eventually he quit these positions and went back to Calcutta to be in politics, becoming one of the leaders of the Nationalist movement. In conjunction with being an educator and political leader, he was a yoga devotee and eventually withdrew from politics after, what I think, was a heroic attempt at helping to create an independent India.

It was while devoting himself in Pondicherry that his concept of yoga developed into what he termed Integral Yoga and that is how the Ashram evolved over time. This yoga was in variance with older ways of yoga because the follower would not give up the outer life to live in a monastery, but would be present in regular life and practice spirituality in all parts of life. The aim is not only for spiritual realisation but it is also on transforming one's nature. Realising it is through one's own being that The Divine can be expressed.

One cannot talk about Sri Aurobindo without speaking of The Mother. Mirra Alfassa was an accomplished artist and pianist from Paris. She was interested in the occult and spiritual development, founded a group of spiritual seekers in Paris then went to Pondicherry to meet Sri Aurobindo. She immediately recognised him as the one who had been guiding her spiritual development inwardly and eventually Sri Aurobindo entrusted the material and spiritual charge to Mirra, who was now named The Mother. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram had its real beginnings then, back in 1926. The full stories of both these people and the development of their creation can be read on their website sritaurobindoAshram.org. I only summarised the history however it is the ideology and/or philosophy emanating from the foundations of the Ashram that I enjoyed learning about.

The Ashram itself is located right in the heart of urban White Town tourist area

Sri Aurobindo divine expression

by Margaret Elizabeth Johnston

Ashram. That word can bring a centred calmness or an aversion feeling depending on perception/experience of one you may of heard of or encountered. I'm here in South India where there is a very well known Ashram called Sri Aurobindo Ashram. From this Ashram, a community called Auroville, meaning City of the Dawn, was started back in 1968, a universal township of over 50,000 people from around the world. In the main village of Auroville the residents call themselves Aurovillians! I stayed there a week back in 2018 and enjoyed playing a role





of Pondicherry with its own vibrant working departments including the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. There are over 80 departments including farms, gardens, guesthouses and engineering units. There is an art gallery and studio, a library, paper making and traditional textile shops. These departments are run by the spiritual disciples depending on what they have discovered as their calling. A lot of the departments were created as more disciples arrived to be of service, nothing was demanded or created with the idea of making money from others working for anyone. The focus is on a harmonious way to be of service expressing The Divine doing what you feel will help to find your inner peace and expression, studying the Ashram writings and live in harmony with one's neighbour. When coming to be an Ashram resident, one is housed, fed and clothed as a disciple and allowed to come into their own natures as to how to be of service to "The Mother".

"Know that the Mother's light and force are the light and force of the Truth; remain always in contact with the Mother's light and force, then only can you grow into the divine Truth."

– Sri Aurobindo.

Using The Mother as a focus allows the

disciples to have a direction as they study and eventually grow into the divine Truth which is that you yourself can bring down The Divine as an expression of your own being in the world ascending your own humanity.

I am not 100% sure about financial issues regarding individual's own sources of income but the businesses surrounding the Ashram do allow the Ashram teachings to continue. No one that I can see is living in neither poverty nor luxury. It feels like a lovely way to live with others on a similar path. The place is in lockdown at the moment so I cannot go in and nose around but I have been to quite a few of the shops and food markets where I took the photos for this article.

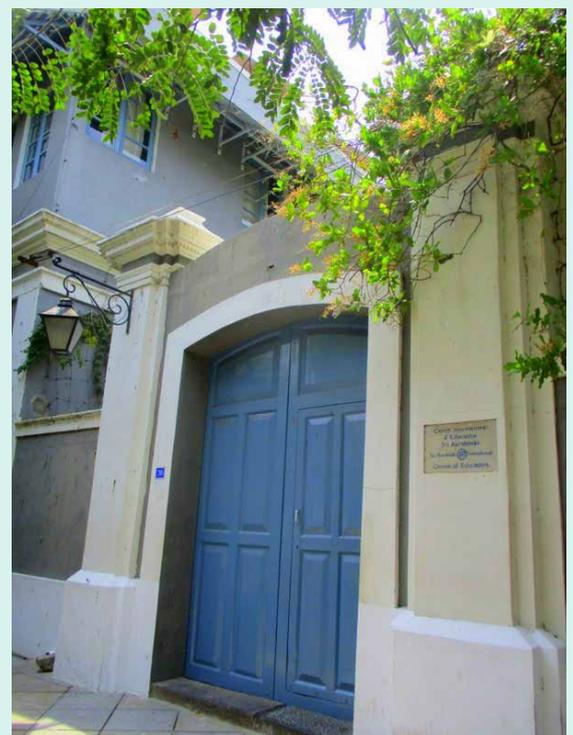
As an artist and philosopher myself, I relate to finding one's calling and the acceptance of being of service to allow The Divine to work through you, to express itself. This respects each individual to have contact with and experience a higher power, acknowledging that we, as common people, can bring The Divine into ourselves and then shine forth to allow the full expression of Divinity out into the world. This is the reason for the urban, working Ashram, people integrating their Divine Beings into their

work for the common good of the people and for a harmonious lifestyle which later became the basis for the City of the Dawn, Auroville.

"For the Leader of the Way in a work like ours has not only to bring down and represent and embody The Divine, but to represent to the ascending element in humanity."

– Sri Aurobindo.

This is the role that both Sri Aurobindo and The Mother took on, inspiring their devotees.



The town of Auroville, which as I mentioned before, is 15 minutes north of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry including all of the departments associated with it, is now a large experiment in human unity. The residents, and visitors, study and research ways for the human transformation of consciousness (from being of service to self to being of service for all) which include cultural issues, environmental studies and the social and spiritual needs of humankind. The people come from about 59 nations, from all age groups (from infancy to over eighty, averaging around 30), from all social classes, backgrounds and cultures, representing humanity as a whole. The population of the township is constantly growing, but currently stands at around 2,500 people, of whom approx one-third are Indian. If interested in learning more about Auroville I recommend checking out their website at auroville.org. It is very thorough and interesting!

Thanks for reading dear reader, learning about yet another religious spiritual study at the moment may not be highest on the scale of fun and exciting articles I have written however being in Pondicherry lockdown I am finding some uplifting moments in the local teachings of this world famous Ashram I just happen to have at my disposal! When I go for my 5am jogs around Pondicherry White Town area due to being woken at 4:30 with the Muslim chanting speaker outside my window, I thrill to the fact that I get to wave to Sri Aurobindo devotees, Muslims, Hindus, some straggler tourists, street sadhus and random Indian friends I have made. Yes, I am not the only one out there at that time, with the sun comes the heat and I hope to be out of India in June headed to SE Asia once again if and when flights start up. I have included in this article a poem by Sri Aurobindo that really spoke to me after understanding his ideology of embracing The Divine within ourselves and then being of service for humanity. I try to express my own divinity through my watercolour painting; here I have included a rose with some vermilion and sapphire of my own!



ROSE OF GOD

Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven,
 Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven!
 Leap up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,
 Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.
 Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,
 Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!
 Live in the mind of our earth hood; O golden Mystery, flower,
 Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous
 Hour.
 Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,
 Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!
 Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy
 plan,
 Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.
 Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,
 Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre!
 Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical
 rhyme;
 Bridge our earth hood and heaven hood, make deathless the
 children of Time.
 Rose of God, like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,
 Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!
 Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's
 abyss:
 Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life beatitude's
 kiss.



About the author: Margaret has been in South India lockdown for over 2 months and the monsoon season will soon be upon her. She hopes to join us here in Bangkok as soon as flights resume. Her recent article about Pondicherry tells more about this amazing little village on the SE coast of India, Pondicherry; Cultivated Elegance in S. India, released online May 27, 2020.



Continuing some painting and writing exploring SE Asia is still a passion of hers.

7 things you should do while staying in your home



Hello, everyone now is the time for each of us to stay safe at home and to wait for the restrictions to lift for Covid-19 crisis.

Work related issues; it is almost impossible to stay in the house for a couple of weeks like this because of school issues. So, to overcome the crisis and finish your seven-step tasks, let's just do the following:

1. Cooking

First of all, let's say this: 'the gut' is the most important thing. You can 'wait for the bowels of the womb' and do other things you want to do in the womb.

In addition, it is absolutely essential to maintain good health now that you have to cook your own food.

We also encourage those who have never been in the kitchen to try and cook. So, when you are alone, There is no problem when it is time to eat from home.

2. Spend time with family

Because of work routines, it is not always possible to spend time with the family. Now is the best chance to fill the void. While at home, you can make bread with your family. By watching movies together, you can fully create the best memories of life.

For a moment, I would like to remind you of social media and encourage your family and your archetypes to warm up.

3. Talk to your crush

It is now time for everyone to stay indoors, as well as to climb the line almost full time. There are so few external issues and little attention is given so now is the best chance to get attention from your crush.

Therefore, I would like to encourage you to take a closer look at crush in your own way.

Speak up immediately... If you immediately ask for an answer, immediately (repetition) blame yourself.

4. Make time for hobbies

Now you can spend a lot of time working to get what you are passionate about. I would like to encourage you to do some lighthearted and fun things to relieve your tiredness at work.

Look at what you want to do and what you want to do because it depends on the person doing it.

5. Get recording

While filming your day at home, take a video and record it. I also want to talk about what you want to say. Also, tap into the video that you want to share. By doing so, you can re-evaluate yourself. The memory will remain.

Besides recording video, you can record audio and video. You can also do diary writing.

6. Keep yourself safe

It is easy to let go of too much fast food while eating indoors. Do not stop doing what you do every day. We do not always live at home. Soon you will be interacting with people.

The skin is damaged or damaged during that time. Extra fat – don't be bothered by acres. Eat a healthy diet. There are so many exercises that can be done at home, so take a look online and try it out.

Male or female skin girl or girl learn makeup tutorials and step up so when you meet up with your friends, you will be glowing and glowing.

7. Think about the future

When you are less active, review your position. Whether it's love or not. How to deal with work issues. How to do it better. Think about what you still need. Make plans. Those looking forward to the future will not be the night. You will be able to work calmly with what you have to do.

So, I urge you to be prepared for the future while you are spending time.

Authors: Kenneth and Token

Fashion in quarantine

by Talar Artinian

In the midst of this roller coaster of emotions in which the news, uncertainty and hardship embark us, we must seek refuge in things that make us feel good, distract us, that we enjoy and that motivate us to continue every day.

Now my question... Are you spending all day in pyjamas or dressed in the first thing you find, while in your closet your clothes feel lonely and useless? Are you bored, worried, reluctant and dressing and applying makeup do not interest you at all?

The law of least effort where physical appearance is not a priority, has become routine. But you have to make a quick change. The time has come to leave that attitude behind! Open your wardrobe, your makeup drawer, your perfumes and accessories, and decide that in the middle of this stage of social distancing, you are going to be you again! You will see how your self-esteem will turn 180 degrees. Anxiety will improve and you will feel much better!

My tips for this quarantine:

1. Get into a routine and you will feel 100% better!
2. Healthy diet (you are not always so hungry, most of the time you are just bored).
3. Gym at home (yes you need to leave the sedentary lifestyle aside)
4. Pay attention to your mental health: confinement, over-information and the threat of possible contagion can cause stress that brings negative thoughts such as worry, guilt, frustration, fear and uncertainty and this can cause emotional damage irreparable. In view of that, look for activities that distract your mind and help you stay calm, read a book, meditate, watch a series, stay away from the info media for a moment and this will give you the state of wellbeing you need despite stress caused by the crisis.

**OK and point 5 I want to cover:
Fashion in times of confinement!**

During the following months we have had to live with an accessory that we must use when leaving the house for any reason. We can see that all brands are devising trends on this requirement. In addition we already know that we are beginning to acquire or renovate, so that our wardrobe adapts to the meagre and familiar social life that we have to spend at home. Amongst the leading accessories that we will have to carry

when leaving the house with any reason for the next few months...

Now this is the time when many see the need to renew their pyjamas or clothes to be at home, we can not leave summer aside, so we must adjust our clothes to this season.

1. Do you know Athleisure clothing?

This is the combination of fashion and comfort clothes, yoga pants and t-shirts or loose sweaters, it has become a regular outfit to be at home and there are many brands that propose them, it allows freedom of expression for those who wear it, since they decide what to wear more than everything to feel good inside those clothes giving that touch of personality and originality that everyone wants when dressing. High fashionistas indicate that this trend is here to stay and that it will last for a long time, especially since it is widely adopted by young people who prefer low shoes to high heels or sandals for the newspaper.

Searches related to this topic were expected to focus on dresses or some other spring and summer trends, due to this quarantine the trend is different. But a ray of light illuminated the shadows, and we have seen a greater increase in summer products through the internet. Kaftans, kimonos, bathing suits, little summer dresses. May our mood to spend the summer at home not end!



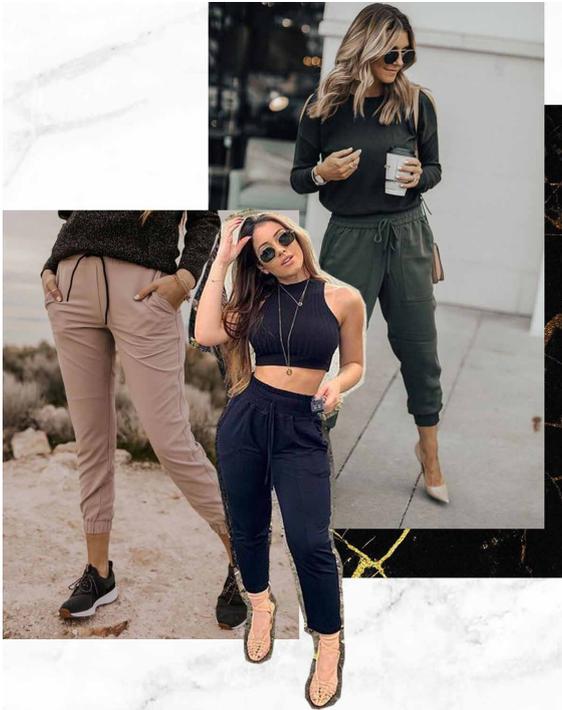
2. About the midi dresses:

The special thing about midi dresses is the length of the skirt which gives you the comfort of wearing this clothes without problems of taking care of yourself if you feel it is too short. The special thing about midi dresses is the length of the skirt. I leave you my favourite designs!



3. Joggers or comfy:

I think it is a 'must have' for its design, since it includes certain details, such as the darts and the simple hem with side opening, which immediately differentiates it from the typical sports pants. The truth is that, once the quarantine is over, it will become a basic, I'm convinced that it is a smart investment.



4. Say yes to Kimonos

Although it's a look that took to the streets in winter to make its mark with pants and boots, of course we will also see it in summer now, we are talking about the iconic clothes from Japan that has reinvented itself: there are long versions, short, printed, plain, long or short sleeved. During the day we can use it open to show off what we have underneath (with shorts, tops) and in the afternoons just by closing it, you can create a long and elegant dress.

Blouse-style kimonos greatly enhance the look, especially if they come in contrasting colours.



5. Normcore: the free and simple trend

The great minimalist trend typical of off-duty models from the 2010s. More precisely in 2014, it became popular, but companies were not ready for it. Normcore thrives on the authenticity and essence of the people who wear the clothes. This trend is about putting the focus on our own style that is inherent in trends and clothing. We begin to understand that fashion can do without gender and be based 100% on comfort. It is somewhat minimalist but, not in a sophisticated way, but rather it transmits relaxed airs and relaxation.





6. Long dresses:

Living at home these days and not enjoying the summer days, it is important to mention that whether inside or outside the home, long dresses should not be missing in our wardrobe. OK but first we must talk about my favourite cuts in dresses:

V stamping:

A printed dress with a V neckline is a classic bohemian dress. These clothes are a classic of summer clothing. This type of dress works very well for women who have an inverted triangle body, that is; wider from above than from below. The V

neckline stylises the figure.

Imperial court:

This type of cut is ideal for bodies shaped like a pear or hourglass, since the dresses are tight at the waist. This creates an illusion of balance in your silhouette, making you look slimmer and slimmer.

Silk:

This dress works very well for all body types, however, you can opt for fabrics with a satin finish to add volume to your curves in case you have few curves.

7. Blue will not only be a trend, I present the colour lilac!

It's one of the star colours in the next spring. To be up to date in the new 2020 season you have to include this colour, in your wardrobe. The good news is that it is quite flattering whatever your skin tone.



8. Preppy style

Lines have been a classic since Coco Chanel. The marine style prevails as a trend in a sophisticated touch. Pants, skirts, jackets and T shirts will be filled with lines this season. This look never fails, it is a classic combination of navy blue and white with some details highlighted in red and gold that give it strength and elegance to the set will turn your image into natural, sophisticated and always very chic for your summer days. A preppy look should always be perfect, impeccable. The combination should be classic, but not too serious, always with jovial and delicate elements.

9. Micro top:

These tops are defined by having a reduced size coming to look almost like a bustier. How to wear a micro top without looking like you're in underwear? The key is to integrate it into looks that wear a skirt, shorts or pants at the waist and a jacket, preferably oversize, to reveal the top only in part.



10. Leggings We wear to be at home:

Being an exclusively sporty or casual clothes, and are added to more sophisticated clothes until achieving stylish outfits to work with.

Leggings: comfort and total trend. In the hot season they are key for you to feel comfortable and take advantage of all the versatility. During the summer these pants are an ideal option, especially the models made from special fabrics to give comfort in the heat.

The act of dressing, whether in jeans or suit, is the key to maintaining the basic structure of the day. Get up and go to sleep always at the same time, have breakfast, keep the same schedule for work and above all dress!

"We have to make an effort to set ourselves specific objectives about how we are going to want to face this quarantine. It has been purchased that being in pyjamas all day, causes you to sleep during the day and insomnia at night. If you alter these rhythms you are going to feel less stable, you can get into a loop, get depressed and

end up focusing your mind on what you don't control. During this period of quarantine I consider it very important to stay active, busy and looking good so as not to lose our spirits and positivity".

I hope you like all these tips, let's change the perspective of our days a bit.

I wait for you on my instagram @be_a_starlette xoxo!



Talar Zambakjian

Successful fashion stylist with a Master's 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 or email: talar.beastarlette@gmail.com



Lebanese Fashion

by Talar Artinian

Fashion is something that not only serves to dress the body, shelter or cover oneself, it has evolved alongside the human being and has become a means of expression with which we have the opportunity to show the world what we are and what we think.

It's a social, cultural and generational phenomenon that impacts and transforms collective thinking.

These last months have been tragic for humanity, we have seen how bad decisions have changed the course of countries completely, six months since the Covid-19 spread throughout the world and has given us a change in our days, leading us to a "new life" that can be noticed on the catwalks of the world, social networks became a refuge. It definitely took a crisis to develop a tactic, so far we have not respected the planet and this is a wakeup call. Today this article is very different from always, I don't want to tell you what dress or shoes you should wear, I just want us to use solidarity and make it fashionable.





There is a very popular phrase "home is where the heart is", for those who don't know me I was born in Lebanon and grew up during the civil war in this country. When the situation became much more dangerous, my family and I had to find shelter in Paris for a year. Can you imagine a nine year old girl changing her entire environment because of this?

It's something that thousands of children still live with. My refuge was fashion, my creative way of expressing myself. I can say that I was born in a culture where fashion encompasses more than clothing, for us in Lebanon fashion is art.

Only a few weeks have passed since the tragic explosion in my country, I still remember the moment when this situation flooded the news; feeling panic, even if you are miles away is a terrible feeling, your body trembles and you only think at that moment, there is no way to change what you are living. Unfortunately, we Lebanese have reflections of war, but we have never seen this level of destruction in Beirut. This shockwave not only destroyed all the glass around it, it also destroyed homes, many lost their families and friends, there are still missing people and most unfortunately broke our hearts into pieces.

For those of us who are far away, our eyes filled with tears when we thought about our families, friends (I myself lost two friends) and our city, life can change you in minutes and this is a clear example. In recent months, the economic crisis, the increase in poverty and the increase in prices have aggravated the needs of each of the country's inhabitants, the increase in the transmission of Covid-19 has subjected the health system to a pressure from which it has hardly been able to escape.

Now social tensions are increasing and expectations for the future are radically complicated, the current level of social tension and insecurity subjects us to a significant level of stress. This explosion has affected the most vulnerable, our child population. This population has caused irreparable damage in more than 120 schools serving 55,000 children. The main hospitals were hit very badly too. And many cancer

centres for children that are badly hurt and unable to treat the patients. Furthermore, we must remember that in Lebanon there are more than two million refugees, this situation has severely punished the refugees too.

Beirut with turquoise waters of the Mediterranean, sinuous and sunny, a geographical synthesis of an original natural beauty. I have asked myself, How can we restore the brightness and beauty to this country? Many questions and few answers, the truth is that the fight continues and we have much to do. I know that life has many lonely bridges to cross, today I have this space to address many young people who have courageously taken a step forward towards their professional future, building the path to their dreams by starting a new life.

As much as life hits us, we continue with force, a clear example of what Lebanon has lived through for years. Beirut has long been considered the new capital of fashion, as well as being generous and open to many cultures. A country that has the capacity to survive through fashion, there are more than 40 haute couture houses with up to 270 employees, for a very small country, fashion abounds in every corner. This is where the endless list of red carpet designers who dress celebrities at the Oscars, Cannes or the Grammys comes from. Conflicts, instability, have perfected the personality of each of its inhabitants, a city of opposites between ruins and luxuries, unique personalities have emerged. As Kayrouz would say, "We are not frivolous. But fashion has shown that Lebanon is more than war."

Rabih Kayrouz:

With its own Parisian vibe, from the designers who are in Paris and have made it their home. He is worthy of admiration for his soul, his culture, his sensitivity and his affinity. We can see his simplicity in his work, he makes all structure and movement a poetry. He designed a dress that requires more than 300 hours of work, being very dedicated to what he loves.



Elie Saab

His building suffered irreparable damage, in addition to having suffered a small brain haemorrhage, 2 clots and 22 stitches. Rabih you are a phoenix capable of being reborn from your own ashes!

Elie Saab

With an uncontrollable taste for fashion, he was 11 years old when civil war broke out in Lebanon. The apartment where he lived with his family in a coastal suburb of Beirut was bombed. Fashion is nothing more than a synonym for hope and life, it's his magical place, a way of saying no to violence, of cultivating love on difficult days. Neither the bombs nor the absence of a fashion industry in his country kept him from his goal. He is the master of lace, embroidery and femininity, self-taught in the world of fashion.

His building in the central district of Beirut was

devastated by the blast, fortunately he and his team escaped unharmed.

Rami Kadi

An extraordinary debut, he has performed in the French capital during fashion week, full of fascinating colours and silhouettes, glitters and lace. Rami found favour in the label's fusion of romantic details and glamorous touches. "If you fall 7 times, you must get up 8". All his effort was destroyed, but we are sure that everything he has built will rise much more strongly.

Zuhair Murad:

Zuhair, whom I admire and respect, the key to his success is that he doesn't have a single style, he makes us feel like true



Rami Kadi



Zuhair Murad

goddesses. From a young age he dreamed of being recognised internationally for his innate talent, he never doubted himself and when he moved to the city of Paris he studied fashion design.

His first boutique opened in Beirut, in 1999 he paraded for the first time in Rome where he achieved resounding success and set his career on track. It stylises the female body, gives us that slender air to the silhouette that leads us to walk so firmly. Unfortunately it was one of the most affected by the shock wave in Beirut, destroying years of efforts in just a few minutes, more than 80% of work was destroyed, fortunately there were no human losses. Looking at the images, we cannot put the sadness aside, but we know that he will resurface from this tragedy and we will see him as we have never seen him.

I want to mention that there were many losses in Beirut, many restaurants, houses, jewellery stores and especially hospitals. We believe in hard work, in the willpower that each one has to be reborn in this devastating tragedy.

No matter how difficult it may seem, there is always a way, when strength comes from the heart.

We are born artists, no matter what conditions we find ourselves in, we will be able to get up amongst the rubble.

I want this to fill us with hope and inspiration, we fight every day, no matter how many times they want to knock you down, you must be strong. It's important that the eyes of the world continue to look at us, at this moment we do more than make clothes, we are returning the light and beauty to Lebanon and the world.

Remember that solidarity doesn't belong to anyone, it belongs to everyone. You must continue standing Lebanon, supporting Lebanon, no matter where you are.

We shall rise again like the Phoenix

Xoxoxo

@talarz @be_a_starlette



Events

What's been happening

CLB- Cosmopolitan Ladies of Bangkok went to lunch at BACCO, Bangkok. Pictured: Shakuntla Gurbani, Jindarat Jumsai Na Ayudhya, Hope Esperenca' Philunthanakul, Mukda Sorensen, Sanja Stanley, Tetsuko Wilberg, Stephanie Lim, Maria Schlueter, Nancy Bathan Lewis, June Khazi, Ronelle Stoessel.





CLB 2nd Anniversary
Lunch Celebration





CLB 2nd Anniversary
Lunch Celebration





IWC Luncheon

Kat's Birthda

GOOD FRIENDS
GOOD FOOD.
GOOD TIMES.

Hong Kong Ladies' Group

HK Ladies' Group Past Presidents and members celebrated Happy Birthday of current President Kathleen Pokrud at Koi Restaurant with delectable Japanese cuisine followed by karaoke singing. As Past President of International Women's Club of Thailand, Kathleen hosted another theme party "55 shades of orange" to celebrate friendship with IWC ladies at Ah Yat Abalone Restaurant.





BWG coffee morning

BANGKOK'S BEST SUNDAY BRUNCH by **Condé Nast Traveler**

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SUKHUMVIT ROAD

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

Almost all of Bangkok's major thoroughfares are known for a specialty. Silom Road is often called "Bangkok's Wall Street" for its many financial institutions. Ratchadamnoen Road is known for its many government buildings and royal palace related activities. Yaowarat Road is the symbolic name for Chinatown. Although Sukhumvit Road (Thai: Thanon Sukhumvit) has never been known for its historical attractions, monuments, temples, or touristy sites, it definitely offers the best dining options in the whole of Bangkok. It has been accurately called a 'night lover's paradise'.

It is almost unimaginable to think that for many decades Sukhumvit Road simply traversed nothing but rice fields to the far horizon. When the Siam Society headquarters building was constructed in 1932, the photograph of the new structure confirms the idyllic rural nature of the whole area in the background scene. This situation continued up to the end of World War II, when Bangkok restarted its expansion Eastwards after 1945. Then the whole area around Sukhumvit became a place for real estate investment. Soon after family homes started to be built, then small businesses began up operation. Since then, the dynamic expansion of the whole area has never stopped.

Sukhumvit Road is named after the fifth chief of the Department of Highways, Phra Bisal Sukhumvit. Simply referred to as Sukhumvit by many, it is the longest thoroughfare in Thailand and one of the longest roads in the world. It stretches a little over 400kms. Originally called the Bangkok-Trat Road, Sukhumvit Road starts in Bangkok as a continuation of Rama I and Ploenchit Roads. It then goes through Pathum Wan District. Sukhumvit Road also begins from where the district boundaries of Khlong Toey, Pathum Wan and Watthana all converge. The roadway runs the entire length of the boundary between Khlong Toey and Watthana

Districts, then passes through Phra Khanong and Bang Na districts.

Angling Southeastward through Bangkok, Sukhumvit Road then crosses the border between Bangkok and Samut Prakarn province. Subsequently the roadway continues East through Chachoengsao province, then turns South through Chonburi province passing the Khao Khiao Massif, past the cities of Sri Racha, Chon Buri, Pattaya and Sattahip, before turning Southeast through Rayong and Chanthaburi provinces. It finally ends at Ban Hat Lek village in Trat province near the Cambodian border. It is also designated as National Highway 3.

In Bangkok, Sukhumvit Road serves as one of the main commercial streets of the city. It is constantly congested, especially in the evening or early morning hours.

The sois are numbered from West to East, with odd numbers branching off to the Northeast of Sukhumvit, and even numbers branching off to the South West.

There are plenty of things to keep even the most hyperactive local or tourists happy. Both the Nana Entertainment Plaza (Soi 4) and Soi Cowboy (between Soi 21 Asoke and Soi 23) are jammed full of go-go bars, watering holes and beer bars. Soi 12 also has a Koreatown with several Korean restaurants, novelty shops and grocery stores. Koreatown is also directly across the road from the Korean Cultural Centre. Ratchadaphisek Road runs South from Sukhumvit at the Asoke intersection while Asoke Road runs North. The whole Sukhumvit area of Bangkok is easily accessible on the BTS Skytrain Sukhumvit Line. This starts from Wat Phra Sri Mahathat through the Silom Line interchange at Siam Square over to Kheha. The MRT's Sukhumvit station interchanges with the BTS Skytrain at Asoke.

Major hotels including famous names such as The Westin, J.W. Marriott, Grand Sheraton, Hyatt Regency and Park Hyatt, Sofitel, Holiday Inn, Rosewood, Carlton plus the Four Points by Sheraton. Several shopping malls are found, like Siam Paragon, Siam Centre, Siam Discovery, Terminal 21, EmQuartier, The Emporium. Bangkok's Eastern bus station is at Soi 63 Ekkamai.

Arguably, Sukhumvit offers the best dining options in the whole of Bangkok. There are various levels of restaurants and eateries, from the most luxurious signature restaurants to simple street food carts. In fact, the whole area all alongside Sukhumvit Road offers a dramatic change in contrast. You can see both, condos, high rises, office towers, and the street stalls running all along the roadway. Sukhumvit Road is famous for being fun loving, sophisticated, and social at the same time. It is a favourite haunt amongst local expats and tourists who come here to have a taste of the rich nightlife. Sukhumvit Road is very cosmopolitan due to its appeal and the many variety of activities it offers.



SEXUAL HEALTH AWARENESS

by Dr. Donna Robinson

STDs can affect people from all ethnicities, races and ages, but adolescents and young people are the most impacted. Estimates suggest that even though youth make up only 25% of the sexually active population, nearly half of all STD cases occur in people aged 15 to 24.

It is important that people in this age group receive comprehensive preventative care to ensure that they are well educated on the transmission of these diseases, how to prevent them, testing and treatment. However, there are factors like stigma and lack of access to information or services that can prevent young adults from getting the help and information they need to make sure that they have good sexual health. Providers and services need to be open about talking about these subjects and initiating the conversation about having healthy sexual interactions.

Getting tested for STDs and STIs are one of the most important tools for prevention and treatment. Early detection is a key aspect of being tested as many STDs have no early symptoms, yet they can cause major problems in the future such as infertility and early treatment. Getting treatment early on can help minimise those effects.

What is important for people to know is that most STDs are treatable and many are curable.

The 5 Ps are the most important things that one should keep in mind when it comes to sexual health:

1. **Partners:** being aware of your partners sexual health and ensuring that there is no risk of passing any disease or infection
2. **Practices:** getting tested yearly and being aware of the symptoms if you are sexually active is very important
3. **Protection:** it is important to know about the various forms of contraception and protection that are available
4. **Past history of STDs:** it is important to inform your physician or provider about your history with STDs or STIs even if they have been cured
5. **Prevention of Pregnancy:** being aware of how one can prevent unwanted pregnancy is crucial for one's sexual health

Sexually transmitted diseases/infections can be spread through contact with any body fluids: blood, semen, saliva (only for herpes). They can also spread through contact with infected skin, like sores in the mouth. The exposure to infected skin and body fluids is increased when sexually active. Illicit drug use can also spread STIs, due to sharing needles.

Unprotected sex, multiple sex partners and illicit drug use as well as poor awareness on sexual health increase the risk of STDs. However, STDs are treatable and curable. Being conscious of the 5 Ps and awareness on sexual health can prevent these diseases, leading to a happier and healthier life.



67th YWCA Diplomatic Charity Bazaar 2020

by Kathleen Pokrud
Life Member YWCA of Bangkok

The festive seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas are soon arriving, only a few weeks before the preparation of year end gifts exchange. The 67th YWCA Diplomatic Charity Bazaar is scheduled for November 13–15th at CentralWorld this year. The annual event has provided excellent opportunity to shop for exquisite and popular overseas products from around the world. With the current challenges from Covid-19, Young Women’s Christian Association of Bangkok (YWCA of Bangkok) has adapted to the “New Normal” guidelines by reducing the number of booths to allow shoppers to adhere to social distancing measures. (The online event is separate to the diplomatic charity bazaar).

Expat Life covered the history of the YWCA Diplomatic Charity Bazaar in 2019, this year we are here to learn what products are in store for 2020 event.

Mrs. Usana Sukhothsub, President of YWCA of Bangkok shared, “Many exciting products will be on display. To name a few, China (Panda toys and Peking opera miniature), Denmark

(food supplements, Danish cheese), Germany (skincare, food and silver jewellery), Nepal (100% Pashmina), New Zealand (Manuka honey and skincare products), Peru (handicrafts) and Spain (100% vegan skincare products).”

Due to social distancing policy, the number of booths at this years bazaar will be significantly decreased by 40% compared to last year. On the other hand, for the first time in the event history, YWCA of Bangkok will organise “YWCA Online Charity Bazaar 2020,” an online marketplace during 1st November–31st December 2020, for the first time to be a part of fundraising for contribution to charity projects. President Usana explained, “YWCA Online Charity Bazaar 2020 is initially created to offer more opportunities for vendors to participate in fundraising, to reach more groups of shoppers not only in Bangkok but throughout Thailand and to bring proceeds in conjunction with the funds raised from the traditional bazaar.”





each day. Extra cleaning will take place at every touch point every 30 minutes throughout the day in the shopping centre and in all stores. During the event, touch less experience will be in place by encouraging cashless and e payments for all goods purchased.”

YWCA Diplomatic Executive Committee 2020



**Madame Christina Macpherson,
Spouse of the Ambassador of New Zealand,
Chairperson**

The channels of newly launched YWCA online sales will be:
Facebook Page: YWCA Charity Bazaar
Instagram: ywca.charitybazaar

To cope with the current situation of Covid-19, President Usana disclosed their well planned measures to adhere to social distancing requirements at the Diplomatic Charity Bazaar. “I would like to express my gratitude towards CPN/ CentralWorld which have continuously participated in co organising the event for many years. For this year’s, 67th Diplomatic Charity Bazaar, the emphasis is on “CentralWorld’s Hygiene and Safety measures during COVID-19” by following the masterplan according to Ministry of Public Health’s guidelines for the safety of our shoppers, vendors and employees.

Revealing further, “Extra screening will be required for everyone with body temperature checks upon entering CentralWorld and wearing face masks will be mandatory at all times. All vendors and employees will apply the 5 Shields concept: Face Shield/Food Shield/Table Shield/Counter Shield/Cashier Shield. There will be safety tracking of all employees’ health and travel records prior to starting work.

The Chairperson of YWCA Diplomatic Charity Bazaar is Madame Christina (Chrissy) Macpherson from New Zealand. In addition to being the Spouse of H.E. New Zealand Ambassador Taha Macpherson, she is the President of SHOM (Spouses of the Heads of Mission).

On an annual basis, the bazaar has raised a significant amount of money that supports many local Thai charities. Expat Life asked Madame Chrissy what her vision and strategy is to deal with the current challenges with social distancing. She replied, “I am really honoured to undertake the role of incoming Chairperson of the Diplomatic Executive Committee for YWCA this year. It is my hope that the committee, with the guidance and support of YWCA representatives and the Executive Board, which is led by

Madam President, Mrs. Usana Sukhonthsab and includes advisory members Mrs. Suvimol Mahagitsiri, M.L. Poomchai Chumbala and Mrs. Sirin Artinian, can plan and implement a safe and successful 67th YWCA Diplomatic Charity Bazaar at CentralWorld in November. As in previous years, we are grateful to participating embassies, vendors and partners for their involvement to help make this annual event possible.





We are also very appreciative to CPN for their gracious gift of space, support with organising and for hosting the event each year at CentralWorld.”

This is the second year of Madame Chrissy was involved when she undertook the role of Embassy Coordinator upon invitation by 2019 Chairperson, Madame Olga Tapiola. Madame Chrissy recalled her participation last year, “I found it to be a very interesting and enriching experience. In 2019, the diplomatic bazaar raised funds that contributed to a number of charity projects in the areas of community health, scholarships, quality of life, natural disaster and emergency relief, status promotion of children and women and education infrastructure improvement.

This year poses particular challenges with Covid-19. Madame Chrissy shared the measures to be undertaken, “There is no question that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact around the world. I am confident that YWCA here in Bangkok will work closely with CPN this year to take appropriate measures to ensure visitor safety including taking body temperature, applying hand sanitiser, the hygienic serving of food and maintaining social distance among visitors. We will also likely see a reduction of booths this year to allow safe social distancing.”

Madame Anima Acharya Dhakal, Spouse of the Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, Honorary Secretary



A new face to the Committee is Madame Anima Acharya Dhakal, Spouse of H.E. Nepalese Ambassador Ganesh Prasad Dhakal. Madame Anima has been associated with this YWCA Diplomatic Bazaar Committee since June 2020 and currently holds the position of Secretary. “When I was approached by the Embassy Coordinator of 2019 Mrs. Christina Macpherson to volunteer as Secretary, I happily accepted it. As YWCA raises funds for various charitable works, I am interested in

dedicating my free time as a volunteer. The role of the Secretary is to keep up with the YWCA Diplomatic Bazaar Committee meetings while staying in contacts with other Diplomatic Executive Committee members and Executive Board members.”

Due to Covid-19 situation, the Diplomatic Charity Bazaar has also been affected. Madame Anima explained, “The Bazaar Committee has had to reduce the number of

booths for the participating missions and to compensate the sales volume it has to introduce the new scheme of “YWCA Online Charity Bazaar 2020” which is expected to attract many potential customers beyond Bangkok. The customers can also enjoy the product of their choice from various countries at their doorstep. The bazaar has had to be arranged in a way to strictly follow all safety measures and guidelines with regard to Covid-19.”

Madame Ximena Rios, Spouse of the Ambassador of the Republic of Peru Advisor



It is the first year that Madame Ximena Rios, Spouse of H.E. Peruvian Ambassador Fernando Quiros, volunteered on the Diplomatic committee, again through invitation by Madame Chrissy, the

current Chairperson. “It was an honour to be invited and I am happy to contribute in any way. I am currently Chairperson of the Red Cross Diplomatic Bazaar and I am very motivated to do volunteer work in general. I see how active this Association is when it comes to helping people in need, and I am eager to participate to the best of my ability.”

Sharing the views on the challenges with this project, Madame Ximena admitted, “It is a special year. I would say COVID-19 is a very big challenge. It can probably change the way people participate in terms of going and buying in situ. I think it will be very important to communicate and promote this event in a broader way, showing how important it is to help, especially now when many people are living very difficult times because of this particular pandemic situation. Nevertheless, I am very much enjoying the volunteering work with this event. It is an enriching experience and it is gratifying as well.

I like when countries get together and work as a team for a noble cause."

In 2019, the funds raised from YWCA Diplomatic Bazaar supported more than 40 projects in the areas of education, health, quality of life and victim relief to the underprivileged in Bangkok and other provinces. For all Expat Life in Thailand readers, by visiting and purchasing products at the upcoming 67th YWCA Diplomatic Bazaar scheduled on November 13-15th at CentralWorld, we are supporting a very good charity cause as our spending will ultimately benefit the local Thai community and charities.





SLOW BOAT FROM CHINA - BANGKOK'S CHINATOWN

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

It is both ironic and amusing to think of the original Bangkok most probably always had a Chinatown. It is believed Chinese traders were living in the small trading post and later customs port from the 15th century. Originally, the Chinese settlers had congregated where the Grand Palace is located today. Following the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, King Taksin established his new kingdom with his capital at Thonburi ('Wealth Fortress'). He received aid from the local Teochew merchants who shared ethnic ties with him. They supplied his new capital with rice and provisions. In return, he granted them many favours, including land on the East bank of the Chao Phraya River, opposite his palace and enclosed by city walls, on which to settle their community. The Teochew prospered under King Taksin, at the expense of the previously influential Hokkien, whose community was located in the area of Kudi Chin on the West bank South of the city.

When King Rama I decided to move the capital from Thon Buri across the river in 1782, he asked the Chinese to move to a swampy, uninhabited area just to the Southeast further along the Chao Phaya River to free up the site of the proposed new palace. He had the palace moved to the East

bank of the river, which was more strategically secure. This necessitated the relocation of the Teochew community, a move probably motivated by the fact that the Teochew had been supporters of King Taksin, while Rama I had ties to the Hokkien. This new 'Chinatown' was called Sampeng or Sampheng. The Chinese simply replicated the community they knew in China: two storey shophouses with residences on the second floor, narrow alleyways, goods sellers were all tightly clustered together by type or trade. There was one simple dirt thoroughfare called Sampeng Lane.

As wars, famine, and civil strife wracked China, Thailand became a safe haven for more and more Chinese immigrants from the Southern part as the decades passed. As Thailand became stable, trade dramatically increased between the two countries. Every day saw more and more junks appear. Due to a devastating fire that destroyed much of the area 1890, due to the inability of firetrucks to enter the narrow lanes to combat the conflagration. Soon the area was rebuilt with a broader road built in 1891 called Yaowarat.

Relations began to grow between the two countries. Every single day, more and more Chinese junk boats were bringing goods to Thailand and it was because of these boats that the Wat Yannawa, or the Boat Temple, was built during the Ayutthaya era. The main road weaving through Bangkok's Chinatown is Yaowarat Road, built in 1891. This 1.5 kilometre road is often referred to as being dragon like, weaving in and out of Chinatown's historical neighbourhood.

Bangkok's Chinatown is one of the largest Chinatowns in the world. It was founded in 1782 when the city was established as the capital of the Rattanakosin Kingdom and served as the home of the mainly Teochew immigrant Chinese population, who soon became the city's dominant ethnic group. Originally centred around Sampheng, the core of Chinatown now lies along Yaowarat Road, which

serves as its main artery and sometimes lends its name to the entire area, which is often referred to as Yaowarat (Thai: เยาวราช). Chinatown's entire area is roughly coterminous with Samphanthawong District and includes neighbourhoods such as Song Wat and Talat Noi along the Chao Phraya River, and Charoen Chai, Khlong Thom, and Nakhon Khasem along Charoen Krung Road.

Originally a wilderness area outside the city walls, Chinatown grew to become Bangkok's commercial hub throughout the late 19th to early 20th centuries but has since declined in prominence as commercial activity moved elsewhere following the city's expansion. It now serves as a hub of Chinese culture, with numerous shops selling traditional goods, and is especially known as a gastronomic destination.

King Taksin's reign ended in 1782 when the general Chao Phraya Chakri instigated a coup against him and established the Rattanakosin Kingdom, becoming King Rama I. Rama I had the Teochew resettle in the area of Sampheng, on the river's East bank Southeast and downstream from the city centre. The area, between Wat Sam Pluem (now Wat Chakkrawat) and Wat Sampheng (now Wat Pathum Khongkha), was then a swampy, inaccessible area. A small road, later to become Sampheng Lane, linked it to the fortified city.

As adept merchants, the Chinese community prospered in trade, and gradually grew as immigrants from China (including non-Teochew minorities) increasingly flooded into Bangkok. Chinatown underwent rapid growth following the signing of the Bowring Treaty, which liberalised international trade, in 1855. Import-export businesses flourished and numerous piers and warehouses arose in the area, their operations further facilitated by the construction of Charoen Krung Road in 1864. Chinatown, now a highly dense shantytown, was ravaged by numerous fires during the second half of the 19th century, which cleared the way for the construction of many new roads, including Yaowarat, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). By the turn of the

19th -20th centuries, Chinatown had become Bangkok's main commercial area, as well as a red-light district hosting opium dens, theatres, nightclubs, and gambling houses.

In the 20th century, Chinatown's commercial prominence gradually declined as businesses and well off residents moved to newer areas of the expanding city. Those remaining, however, have continued to practice their culture, making Chinatown a centre of Chinese food, crafts, and religion, despite the general Chinese population's gradual assimilation into Thai society.

The direction of Chinatown's future again came into question in the 2010s, with the construction of the Blue Line of the underground MRT, whose Wat Mangkon Station will serve the area. There have been calls for urban conservation, among concerns that old communities are being displaced by development.

Areas

- Samphanthawong District, containing most of the Chinatown area
- Yaowarat: Yaowarat Road is Chinatown's main artery. It runs from Odeon Circle, where it splits off Charoen Krung Road, to the old city moat of Khlong Ong Ang.
- Odeon Circle: A former traffic circle at the beginning of Yaowarat Road, it is the site of the Chinatown Gate, built in 1999.
- Sampheng: Now known as Soi Wanit 1, Sampheng Lane was the original street serving Chinatown. Today it is a busy market consisting of numerous shophouses lining a narrow pedestrian alley.
- Charoen Chai: A historic community off Charoen Krung Road
- Talat Noi: A fringe neighbourhood Southeast of Yaowarat, it is home to several historic buildings.
- Song Wat: The street runs alongside the Chao Phraya River, and used to be the site of numerous cargo piers.





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