

EXPAT LIFE

IN THAILAND

April/May 2021

250B

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

We meet the
Deputy British
Ambassador
and review the
British Embassy

The Belgian
and Danish
Ambassadors
interviewed inside

Sukhothai
Festivals
in Asia

Songkran

Easter in the pandemic

WFB – Working from the beach

Engage and connect:

Web: www.expatlifethailand.com Email: subscribe@elbkk.com

expatlifethailand Instagram: @expatlifethailand Twitter: @ExpatLifeThai

Please read, enjoy and
pass on to other readers to share!

Expat Life is a CSR community magazine and
all of the expats involved are unpaid volunteers
raising awareness, exposure and ultimately
funds for Thai charitable foundations



I STILL CALL AUSTRALIA HOME

Living abroad for travel, career or family is still the norm, for 310,000 Aussies. However, with coronavirus sweeping the globe, expats are flocking back home to Australia from Europe, US, the UK and Asia to a relatively normal lifestyle despite the pandemic.

While Covid-19 restricted Australian residents from returning during the height of the outbreak, around 398,000 Australians have returned since mid-March 2020 [2] and numbers of residents have been steadily increasing since October 2020.[1] Australia continues to have one of the lowest worldwide infection and mortality rates from the virus and the Australian Government has invested more than \$3.3 billion into four separate agreements for the supply of proven, safe and effective vaccines. At the time of print, Australia has already received over 25,000,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccines, sufficient for 50% of the population to receive a 2 dose regime with more on the way. [3]

It seems the vaccine rollout is spurring on confidence in the Australian property market as well as gleaning interest from overseas buyers. Sean Hughes, director of one of Australia's top performing real estate offices, Realmark Coastal, recently reported a dramatic increase in the number of buyers bidding on unseen properties in an effort to beat future price hikes. "Quality Perth properties are still in high demand and people are increasingly comfortable with buying homes they've only inspected online and we're still seeing offers above market price and fielding multiple offers on residences," Sean says. [4]

According to a survey undertaken by Knight Frank[5] 64% of expats, said the global lockdown had influenced their decision to buy a property in their home country. With real estate prices set to rise over the next year and property demand only increasing, many may even consider a return to the land down under to prepare for a more secure future



in a post-Covid world.

One development Sean and his team are very much looking forward to helping buyers capitalise on, is a stunning over 55s strata title opportunity in Scarborough, Western Australia. Altum is the epitome of luxury, tailored to suit those who value a lock and leave, maintenance free lifestyle less than 450 metres from one of Perth's best beaches, Scarborough Beach. Boasting an indoor heated pool, concierge, gold class style cinema, gymnasium, yoga and Pilates studio, a massage treatment room, lounge, private





dining, wine room and so much more. “If another lockdown comes, I would like to know my parents are not only safe but thriving in a luxurious setting where they can still exercise and enjoy their lifestyle with minimum disruption” says Altum owner builder Michael Lawson.

There are only 43 apartments across the two towers still available. With no exit fees, and a stamp duty rebate of up to \$50,000 available until construction starts, there is real incentive to join your fellow Aussies choosing to return home to live the resort lifestyle, that luxury apartment living provides and indeed a lifestyle that many have become accustomed to living abroad.

The McGrath Report 2021, analysing trends in the Australian property market, observes expats taking up new opportunities to work remotely from Australia and predicts others will come home for the health benefits post vaccine rollout, with expats returning home likely to drive the demand for owner occupied premises.[6] While the world hopes a vaccine will restore a sense of normality, perhaps it's also a window of opportunity to consider what you envisage the future may look like for you and your family. No matter how far or wide you roam, we look forward to welcoming you back home.

Find out more about Altum's over 55 luxury apartments at: altumliving.com.au



- [1] Media Release: 18/01/2021 Australians continue to return home <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/australians-continue-return-home>
- [2] Media Release: 16 October 2020 DFAT More flights helping Australian return <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/more-flights-helping-australians-return>
- [3] Australian Government Department of Health 17 February 2021 Australia's vaccine agreements | Australian Government Department of Health
- [4] FEATURE ARTICLE: Feb 7, 2021 Lockdown sparks 37 offers in one day - new level of Perth property demand <https://www.therealestateconversation.com.au/news/2021/02/07/lockdown-sparks-37-offers-one-day-new-level-perth-property-demand-says-realmark>
- [5] Research Article: Knight Frank June 10,2020 COVID-19 sparks expat re-evaluation <https://www.knightfrank.com.au/blog/2020/06/10/covid19-sparks-expat-reevaluation>
- [6] McGrath Report 2021 https://issuu.com/mcgrathstateagents/docs/mcg013_mcgrath_20report_202021_digital_all_fa_2_sp



Get connected with us!

Web: www.expatlifethailand.com

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

Email: subscribe@elbkk.com

Instagram: [@expatlifethailand](https://www.instagram.com/expatlifethailand)

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



Contents

PROFILE

10 The Belgian Ambassador

16 The Danish Ambassador

FEATURE

24 The UK moving to the future

EDUCATION

30 An amazing opportunity to reshape education

34 Ten tips for getting into the best university

38 Parenting expat kids

CAREER PLANNING

40 So what next – Covid career planning

84 Just do it reach out

EXPAT LIFE

44 An author in distress

66 Working from the beach

96 The new normal, one year later

100 Thai massage times

102 The glorious taste of food

GREEN MATTERS

48 Can Thailand be a world leader

52 Sustainability and solar energy

56 Elephant hugs and more

120 Rising sea levels

HEALTH AND FITNESS

62 Trail running... bringing out the kid in me

HISTORY

70 Most welcome guests – the Chinese in Thailand

73 Royal Turf: Sanam Luang

109 RSBC

114 The first 19th century European merchant

117 Captain Bush Lane

118 The first time I ever heard the name

119 Second times the charm

EVENTS

74 Songkran

78 Festivals in Asia

81 The happiest (and wettest) time

82 Easter in the pandemic

TRAVEL

86 Sukhothai

92 The first road trip

FOOD AND DRINK

104 The world of wine

106 April skies; Starfruit surprise

123 Recreating the street food experience

ART

110 Two artists, different strokes for different folks

SOCIAL

126 Social gallery

MANAGE YOUR HEALTH

Bumrungrad Application



The central image shows a smartphone displaying the Bumrungrad application interface. The screen shows a welcome message for 'Amelia', buttons for 'Book an Appointment', 'Emergency', 'Find a Doctor', and 'Ask a Question'. Below these are 'Upcoming Appointments' for Dr. Daych Chongnarungsin and a 'News' section. The bottom navigation bar includes Home, Doctors, Shop, Notifications, and Account.

Digital Membership Card
ไม่ต้องพกบัตรผู้ป่วยอีกต่อไป

Appointment & Notification
นัดหมายล่วงหน้าง่ายขึ้น

Find a Doctor
ค้นหาแพทย์ง่ายขึ้น

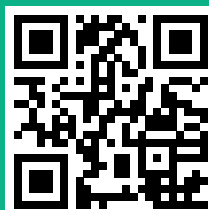
MyCare
เรียกดูประวัติการรักษา

Online Packages
ซื้อแพ็คเกจสุขภาพออนไลน์

Ask a Question
สอบถามข้อมูลสุขภาพ



Scan
to Download



Download on the
App Store

GET IT ON
Google Play

Expat Life in Thailand is a CSR community project created by an ever growing group of expatriates resident in Thailand. They are all unpaid volunteers and are doing what they do for passion and because they love Thailand! Most have chosen to live their lives here or are extremely happy to be posted here by their company's and or government. They all have a desire to 'engage and connect' both with each other and with our Thai hosts. We hope that this comes through in this magazine.

If you wish to 'engage and connect' with us – to write for us, subscribe to and or advertise in the magazine, to be a friend and show your love for Thailand then please write to nick@elbkk.com



Publisher and managing editor
Nick Argles
nick@elbkk.com
089 721 3384
Line ID: 33riverside

Admin
Haritchanan Kewwongsa (Bow)
bow.elbkk@gmail.com
Nicharat Prasertsri (Soi)
soi.elbkk@gmail.com

Design and graphics
Sarah Yeo
sarah.sydesign@gmail.com
Intern
Token Aung
tokenako872@gmail.com

For all advertising, editorial, marketing, social media or sponsorship enquiries, please write to or call the publisher: Nick – nick@elbkk.com

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

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

Visit www.expatlifethailand.com or www.facebook.com/expatlifethailand

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

Design Inspires Engagement

MyBeast Innovative Workout System is a vision of outdoor wellness and architectural beauty in harmony. It forms a bold statement of your property's commitment to wellness.



MyBeast is an evolution in the design of bodyweight training, stripped down to its fundamentals and condensed into a single high performance platform.



Designed and built by Italian craftsmen, it represents the pinnacle of the country's design heritage fitted to the latest insights in bodyweight training. For architects and owners of premium gyms, exclusive hotels, resorts and villas there is no finer expression of a property's innovation and contemporary style.

The MyBeast cutting edge design places equal importance on biomechanics and materials endurance. Each individual piece is built in Italy from hand-ground concrete and stainless steel in modular sections, making it inch for inch the smartest, most versatile, and highly customizable bodyweight training solution.

MyBeast: innovation that drives engagement

EXCLUSIVELY FROM

Seara
SPORTS SYSTEMS



Starbucks Reserve® Chao Phraya Riverfront

Starbucks Reserve® Chao Phraya Riverfront

ICONSIAM

It's a good day every day at ICONSIAM – whether you're looking for that perfect cup of coffee or for the finest dining experience then you can enjoy the *best of both worlds* at ICONSIAM to celebrate everything you love this summer.

You are certainly not short of places to take coffee and a break or to dine in style at ICONSIAM, the largest shopping mall in SE Asia. We arrived by car but I saw a constant stream of passenger boats delivering customers to the riverside destination which seemed to make it an exciting and perfect way to arrive.

Today we preview two of the very best and we highly recommend that you try them yourself.

The first is the ultimate coffee shop Starbucks Reserve® Chao Phraya Riverfront at ICONSIAM is on the 7th floor West wing which has to be the largest Starbucks in Thailand at an area of 1,260 square metre. America's finest from Seattle serves up a treat and is accessed by its own escalators and or lifts which deliver you to a huge inner area and even an outside terrace overlooking the Chao Phraya river. Apparently, it comfortably seats 350 seats inside in air controlled heaven and a further 80 outdoors sheltered from the sun.

We chose our beverage of choice – a large latte for me and Iced Pistachio Pure Matcha Latte for my guest and assorted croissants, meringues and Danish pastries and then searched for somewhere to sit and people watch. Despite its size both the well appointed lounge inside and the outside



Starbucks Reserve® Chao Phraya Riverfront

terrace were pretty full when we arrived at lunchtime and it must have had 3-400 people in it at least!

We found somewhere to sit, set about the tasty pastries and coffee and discussed what was to come our assault on the eight floors of shopping and hundreds of prestige brands ahead of us.

We were surrounded by all age groups from adolescent teenagers to families taking Grandma and Grandpa out shopping. People talking animatedly all around us deep in conversation or enjoying their beverage of choice.

After an hour or so devising a plan of action for the day we left Starbucks and set off for the real task of the day – shopping!

The other dining venue that I would like to cover was Blue by Alan Ducasse which is situated in the ICONLUXE area of ICONSIAM. Tucked discreetly away on the downriver corner of the building, on top of Gucci and near Jim Thompson and the lifts, it is on the first floor alongside a gallery or breakout space.





This delicate pigeon breast is baked whole. Wrapped in various layers starting with puff pastry, Savoy cabbage leaf, stuffed with pork, chicken, and duck farce, layered with Confit duck legs in black truffle, and then chicken breast, the sophistication Pigeon 'pithiviers' is serviced with a pigeon leg stuffed with foie gras. It is then finished with a black truffle cooking sauce. This meal is anything but ordinary.

Executive Pastry Chef Maxou Boonthanakit, has reimagined the soufflé with a citrus twist, incorporating lemon curd and almond biscuit within and topping it off with a sprinkling of grated almond tuile and lemon zest. A floral almond sorbet served on the side provides a refreshing conclusion to an indulgent dessert.



Starbucks Reserve® Chao Phraya Riverfront

very special, it is also very welcoming. It's a place where you can really just feel comfortable and allow yourself to fully focus on a marvellous experience, enjoying the ambience, the view, the service, the wines, and of course, the food."

His British restaurant Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester has three stars (the top ranking) in the Michelin guide.

Designed by Jouin Manku – a Parisian spatial design studio led by French designer Patrick Jouin and Canadian architect Sanjit Manku who have designed all of Alain Ducasse's 3 Michelin star restaurants – Blue is a sumptuous but still informal setting where blues, golds, creams, and natural wood dominate the palette, putting patrons at ease and enveloping them in comfort.

Guests are welcomed into a wood panelled foyer and then pass into a lounge inspired by the intimate gardens of the Chateau de Versailles, encircled by a wall of walnut and brass lamps. The restaurant lies beyond, under an extraordinary chandelier that sparkles among pleated textures, with luxurious royal blue walls and an expanse of floor-to-ceiling views across the city.

This fine dining restaurant has already been awarded one Michelin star in December 2020 and from what I saw it is well on the way to another. A la carte, a set menu or a "tasters" menu the panoramic view is spectacular looking over the Chao Phraya to the luxury hotels across the river.

Alain Ducasse has 28 restaurants around the world now in Hong Kong, Macau, Tokyo, Paris, New York, Las Vegas and of course across France.

Whether it is a special occasion or just a lunch break between the shopping or at the end of the day Blue is a fine dining experience you are not likely to forget.

enquiries@blue-alainducasse.com



Blue by Alain Ducasse

ICONLUXE is what it says it is the home of all of the luxury brands of ICONSIAM: Louis Vuitton, Bvlgari, Hermes, Cartier, Dior and all the other exclusive brands and labels that cluster together over three floors.

As Alain Ducasse a French born Monégasque chef says "Blue is not a stiff restaurant. While it is extraordinary and



Get **FREE**
200 THB GIFT CARD*
When apply **VIZ TITANIUM** MEMBERSHIP CARD
01 APR – 31 MAY '21
FREE! REGISTRATION FOR EXPATS

REDEEM AT : 1st fl Tourist Privilege Counter **ICONSIAM** / Tel. 02-495-7008

*Terms and conditions apply.

H.E. Mrs Sibille de Cartier d'Yves The Belgian Ambassador to Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos

Expat Life in Thailand were privileged to be granted the first interview with the Belgian Ambassador to Thailand H.E. Mrs Sibille de Cartier d'Yves.

Ambassador, good afternoon to you. May I start with asking how long have you been the Ambassador to Thailand? Did you arrive to Thailand from home, or were you posted somewhere else before?

Good afternoon to you. I arrived in Thailand in September. I am accredited for Thailand and also for Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao. For the previous four years I was Ambassador of Belgium in Egypt, responsible for Egypt and Sudan.

Where are you born and brought up?

I come from Belgium where I was brought up and studied.

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

As a student in international relations, diplomacy had been in my mind for a few years as a possibility after completing my studies. I became a diplomat directly after university. I registered for a national competition and was lucky enough to go through at the first trial.

Do you have other diplomats in your family?

There are no other diplomats in my close relatives. Although one of my ancestors is a very known Belgian diplomat who was Ambassador in London during the second World War.

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

I arrived in the middle of the Covid crisis with all the regulations and complications that it implies. It was therefore of course more challenging than usual to arrive in these circumstances. I also had to go through quarantine with my family to enter Thailand. We are however lucky to experience a life inside Thailand which is relatively normal, which is quite exceptional these days.



The recent increase of cases has of course caused some new measures to be taken but I am convinced that the quick actions taken will allow the situation to normalise quickly.

As a middle income country, Thailand has developed very quickly in the last decades and is not the country it was twenty years ago. These rapid changes are naturally an opportunity – it has created welfare and allowed Thailand to develop its infrastructures considerably – but it also creates challenges for the society, as changes are very rapid. I am impressed by a lot of the things I see in Thailand – the country is usually well organised and has health services that are a model for the region – our citizens living in other countries in the region often come to Bangkok when they have more complicated health issues to deal with.

On the other hands, like everywhere, there is also room for improvement in many fields. Belgium is one of the countries involved in road safety, which is increasingly an important focus of the authorities, and where we have best practices we are happily sharing. The consequences of the Covid crisis on the people in Thailand is of course without doubt a point of attention. It has also increased inequality in the society. It will surely be a priority of the leadership of this country in the future.



Thai silk fashion show in Bangkok

Do you see any similarities between your country and Thailand?

Belgium and Thailand are both in the heart of their regions and attached to multilateralism and cooperation. Belgium has been a motor of the European integration and Thailand has played a key role to develop ASEAN.

We are also committed to sustainability and I am eager to increase cooperation in this regard. We also are two monarchies with friendly relations between our royal households for centuries.

Both countries are also very green and have a lot to offer for visitors, from landscape to history. Belgium is much smaller in size however, so you don't need a aeroplane to travel around the country. On a more anecdotal note, it is the first country I am posted to where it rains more than in Belgium – usually known for its rainy weather!

Do you have children?

I have two teenagers at home. They have been moving from country to country with us for a while now.

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

My days are quite diverse, it is one of the privileges of my work. The variety of my work and the people I meet is really what I prefer in my job. I have meetings with the Embassy staff daily and at European level regularly. I also meet Belgian nationals – our associations, businessmen or other nationals. I also meet regularly officials, businessmen or the civil

society from Thailand or the other countries I am accredited for – to understand the country better and to strengthen the cooperation between our two countries. And sometimes I meet also colleagues from other Embassies or attend their events.

With the team of the Embassy, we spend our time between three main tasks: firstly, supporting the Belgian nationals – with administrative issues or consular assistance, secondly, supporting the economic and commercial activities between Belgium and the four countries of our jurisdiction and thirdly, understanding the situation in

the countries we are responsible for and strengthening the bilateral relations between these countries and Belgium. There is never a dull day, even though the current circumstances have an impact on our work and the way we are able to fulfill it. It surely requires more creativity than usual.

As every Ambassador, I assume you have some goals you really would like to fulfil before you leave Thailand. May I ask what they are?

2020 has reminded us that unpredictability was part of our equation and part of my task is to take this into account in the work of the Embassy. The circumstances are quite unusual so I am aware this will affect our work at least this year and probably further. We are now integrating the lessons learned in 2020. As I said earlier, our first priority as an Embassy is to take care of our citizens and to strengthen the bilateral relation. With four countries, it is surely an important task. We have specific items on the agenda with Thailand, including the update of an extradition treaty, the discussion of a social security agreement, academic cooperation and much more.



The Grand Place in Brussels © www.visit.brussels



The Royal family of the Kingdom of Belgium © Palais Royal, Bruxelles / Bas Bogaerts

Belgium is always keen as well, as a country attached to multilateral cooperation, to support the work of the European Union and with, the entire team of the Embassy, I will of course pay attention to this aspect of our work. The European Union is an important partner not only of Thailand, but also of the other countries I am accredited to. We are also attached to the UN and multilateralism in general. We will surely make sure to support the UN agencies in their work in the region to ensure, in partnership with the countries concerned, the Sustainable Development Goals targets can be achieved. This will surely also be an important focus for me in the years to come.

Have you managed to travel yet in Thailand? May I ask what is your favourite destination in Thailand?

I only arrived a few months ago so I still have a lot to discover. It is too early to talk about favourite places as I just had time to visit a very few places. Please ask me this question again at the end of my mandate.

So far I have enjoyed to travel outside of Bangkok and see other parts of the country. In all countries where I have been posted, I have extensively travelled inside the country, as it is an important element to understand it better. I have been to Phuket and Pattaya on business trips and I took a few days off in Koh Kood. I am eager to discover other areas of Thailand very soon, notably the Northern region.

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

I like to discover new places, so I will surely try to discover more of Bangkok and Thailand, and hopefully soon – when regulations allow – also the region. I spend time with my family whenever I can and it takes an important part of my time outside of the office. I enjoy reading and swimming and I practice fitness and yoga.

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

About 3,500 Belgians are registered with the Embassy but we suspect many more are enjoying life in Thailand. You will find Belgians all over the country but more particularly in Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen. The good weather and friendliness of the Thai people are definitely important elements in the choice of our retired Belgians spending their

time here. Belgians have been increasingly present in Thailand in the last three decades.

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

As an EU member, we are of course part of the Erasmus mundi programme which allow students from all over the world to study in the framework their university years in



The Atomium in Brussels © www.atomium.be – SABAM Belgium 2015

a European universities, including Belgian ones of course. Belgium – through its communities, in charge for culture – also offers a few scholarships for students - from Cambodia notably. Our universities offer English speaking programmes that are increasingly attracting students from abroad. Belgian universities and high schools have a great ranking among European universities, even though they are not always as known as other European universities. It is interesting to note for example that the University of Leuven topped in 2020 for the fourth year in a row the ranking of Europe's most innovative universities.

It is not often known that a large number of internationally famous scientists come from these institutes, including four Nobel Prize winners for Medicine, three Nobel Prize winners for Peace, one for Literature, one for Chemistry and, very recently, a Nobel Prize for Physics (François Englert, for his research on Higgs particles).

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

I just arrived so it is far too early to think about that. I will first concentrate on the new adventure that Thailand is for my family and myself.

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

Our first encounter with a water monitor was a funny moment. None of us had never seen one and we were not very sure what it was, having lived in Africa and met a few crocodiles, we were perhaps more worried than we should have been. It caused much merriment within our families afterwards.

We have also had a nice discovery moment – as I had never used a motorcycle before and we discovered it at the same time as my children during the holidays. They enjoyed it more than me I think!



Do you regularly meet up with your community?

Meeting with the Belgian community is an important part of my job and I always like to discover what our community does when I travel around the country. The Belgians are usually discrete and I like to highlight what they do and connect them with each other and, when needed with other actors.

For instance, Belgians discretely organised food distribution in Phuket to support the local community various times since the beginning of the crisis. We have Belgians that established themselves here and created beautiful and innovative enterprises, from chocolates to furniture or mattresses. We also have people here that discretely and graciously give their time for noble causes. There is much to say and I definitely want to support the visibility of the Belgian actions in the country.

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

I am grateful to the diplomatic network in Thailand for their help so far. We provide an important support to each other. I am looking forward to working with all of them to achieve our common goals.





WORLD'S FIRST TOWN PURPOSEFULLY DESIGNED FOR HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER LIVING

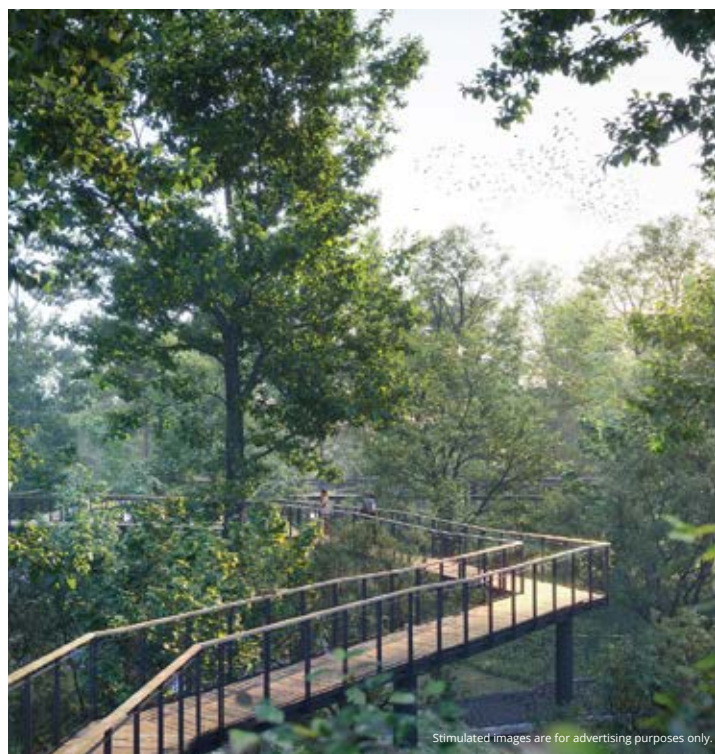
Stimulated images are for advertising purposes only.

The Forestias is Thailand's largest property development project and the world's first town to have every aspect purposefully designed for healthier and happier living.

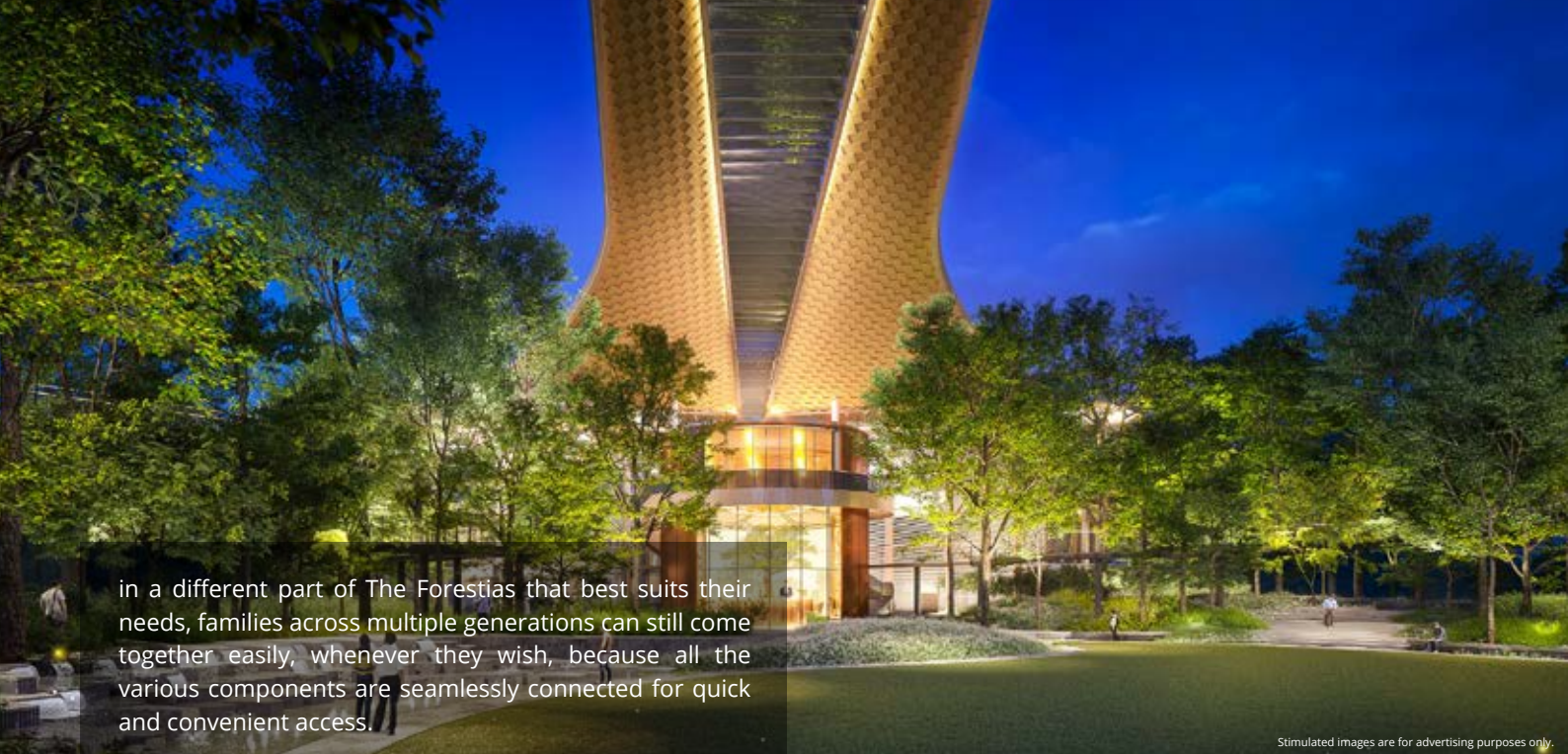
Every element is being designed and built by the most respected experts and organisations from around the world to ensure a healthier and better quality of life, including the layout of public spaces, home layouts, the choices of materials used inside and outside homes, the integration of 21st century life technologies, the management of natural light, noise, heat, airflows, as well as air quality and water quality.

Research clearly shows that one of the most essential contributors to a healthier, happier life is the proximity of people to members of their family and loved ones, across multiple generations.

That's why The Forestias has **many different residential components that suit the particular lifestyles and needs of different generations and age-groups, whether they be first jobbers, newlyweds, young families, or older parents.** And, while each group can live



Stimulated images are for advertising purposes only.



in a different part of The Forestias that best suits their needs, families across multiple generations can still come together easily, whenever they wish, because all the various components are seamlessly connected for quick and convenient access.

Stimulated images are for advertising purposes only.

The Forestias also helps **people get closer to the diverse wonders of nature as one of the most important sources of comfort, relaxation, good health, and happiness.**

Among the most extraordinary features of The Forestias is a 30-rai (4.8 hectares) forest that has been planted at the centre of the development and brings nature into an urban environment. It is the first time anywhere in the world that such a large forest has been integrated into a town development.

Weaving through the forest canopy is a 1.6-kilometre elevated walkway that provides an unparalleled 'nature-walk' and links many of the development's components.



Stimulated images are for advertising purposes only.



Stimulated images are for advertising purposes only.

Strategically located in the Eastern Economic Corridor, on Bang Na-Trad Road km 7, The Forestias includes multiple residential components with villas and condominiums aimed at a diverse range of lifestyles and family sizes across 398 rais (64 hectares). The wide range of residential components at The Forestias includes 'Whizdom' condominiums, 'Mulberry Grove' condominiums, 'Mulberry Grove Villas' residences, 'The Aspen Tree' residences, 'Six Senses Residences' and a 'Six Senses' hotel. The project also includes commercial space for offices, a sports complex, lifestyle activities, retail and food & beverage outlets, family entertainment facilities in a Family Centre, a town centre for community activities and cultural pursuits, a theatre, an event hall, multiple markets, and a large medical centre.

Opening to the public in the first quarter of 2021 is an exciting 'Forest Pavilion' that offers visitors an immersive experience of life at The Forestias as well as showcasing sample residential units.



Stimulated images are for advertising purposes only.



For further information, please contact

Email : consultant@theestate-thailand.com

or Contact Center : 1265

Or visit : www.theestate-thailand.com



H.E. Mr. Jon Thorgaard the Danish Ambassador in Thailand

Expat Life in Thailand were honoured to catch up with H.E. Mr. Jon Thorgaard the Danish Ambassador in Thailand and ask him about his background, his posting and how he has settled in to Thailand.

Ambassador, good afternoon to you may I start with asking how long have you been the Ambassador to Thailand?

I arrived in Thailand May 2020 as Ambassador-Designate and since August as Ambassador to Thailand and Cambodia.

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

Before I arrived in Thailand, I was working at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen where I was head of the ministry's Economic diplomacy department. I have also served at Danish missions in New York, Prague in the Czech Republic and Riga in Latvia.

May I ask where were you born and brought up?

I grew up in the little town called Ebeltoft. It is a small town but it is the only town in Denmark with a museum section



dedicated to Thailand. The museum has a section that contains a collection of items brought back to Denmark from Siam. I later studied at the University of Aarhus.

And at what age did you decide you wanted to become a diplomat?

My family have always had an international outlook. My mother was an exchange student, my wife and I were both exchange students. Therefore, I have been interested in global affairs from a young age, but being a diplomat was never a goal for me until I was a trainee at the Danish Embassy in Latvia during my studies. I studied political sciences and have a global executive MBA.

Do you have any other diplomats in your family?

Both my parents worked as teachers until my father became Mayor in my hometown but I am the first to embrace a career as a diplomat.



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

Thailand is a wonderful country and like so many foreigners that visit Thailand, I have received a very warm welcome to Thailand. Of course, the biggest obstacle is one that we all face together, that of coping with the Covid-19 pandemic. It has meant that I had to delay travel plans, cancel meetings and events and it has made it more difficult to meet people and build networks.

I have left my wife and children in Denmark and we had planned to travel back and forth frequently. Therefore, I very much hope that we will return to some kind of normalcy during 2021 and I could have the possibility to see my wife and kids and the rest of my family as well as our friends on a regular basis.

Do you see any similarities between your country and Thailand?

I have been truly amazed to learn about the deep and enduring ties between the people of Thailand and Denmark and I definitely see the similarities. The passion for food, craftsmanship and design. In addition, what foreigners say about my fellow citizens and about Thais, the kindness of the people.

You mentioned your children? What age are they and where do they go to study?



We have two kids. Our son Rasmus is 22 and he studies economics at Copenhagen University in Denmark. Our daughter Alberte is 19 and she is just finishing her last year of high school at Birkerød Gymnasium in Denmark.

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

There is nothing really like an average day! I have many internal and external meetings – many now online – and quite a few of the evenings and weeks are busy with social or work-related events. Economic and trade matters, visa requests and consular matters such as assisting Danish citizens with problems they might have here are a big part of what the embassy does. In addition, of course anything political that might come up. A big part of the job is trying to understand Thai society, so that you are able to give advice to Danish politicians, companies, NGOs or citizens about what is going on and who to contact and how things are functioning in Thailand.

As with every Ambassador, I assume that you have some goals you really would like to fulfil before you leave Thailand.

May I ask what they are?

2021 marks the 400 year anniversary of relations between Denmark and Thailand. I am looking forward to celebrating this anniversary and I hope our celebration will make Thais even more aware of Denmark and our deep and enduring ties.





Until now may I ask what is your favourite destination in Thailand?

If the word "Denmark" is mentioned, Thai people will immediately associate with Thai-Denmark milk. 58 years ago, a technical cooperation project between the Thai and Danish governments resulted in the creation of Thai Danish Dairy Farm.



With my background in economic diplomacy, I am happy to see the rich and fruitful commercial relationship between Thailand and Denmark – not only in trade and tourism, but also regarding investments.

It is my ambition to work hard for a further deepening of the commercial cooperation between Thailand and Denmark. One area of great importance is the work on finding sustainable solutions to curb climate change worldwide. The Danish government and Danish companies have expertise to offer providing solutions for energy efficiency and sustainable cities.

Have you had the opportunity to travel around in Thailand yet?

Not as much as I would like to, but I have done some travelling. During the coming months, I am planning to go to Koh Samui and Chiang Mai which I am very much looking forward to.



Therefore, I was actually touched when I went to visit the Thai Danish Dairy Farm in Saraburi a couple of months ago. This is a special place that illustrates the long ties between our countries.

When you manage to get a day off, what do you do? Do you have any special hobbies?

My whole life I have been very interested in sports. I still enjoy going for a run in Lumpini Park, but I also have to admit that I watch as many football games as I can with my favourite premier league team, Liverpool.

I have also always tried to enjoy the nature and visit as many cultural sites as possible, wherever we have lived as a family.

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

Thailand has understandably been a popular destination for Danes for many years. Some of the reasons Danes come to Thailand are the historical and culinary richness, the climate and the welcoming culture.

As a Danish citizen, you are not required to register with the Embassy when you move to Thailand. It is therefore not possible for us to determine exactly how many Danes live permanently here. Figures from the Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sports show that there were approx. 163,000 (162,448) Danes arriving in Thailand in 2019. In 2020 the number was down almost 60% (58.86%) to approx. 67,000 (66,824). The Embassy estimates that around 5/8,000 Danes usually (or 'before Covid') could



be considered as living in Thailand. However, according to otherwise available data, there are just under 2,000 Danes currently registered as staying in Thailand.

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

The European Erasmus+ programme and similar programmes are used by Thai students go to study at Danish Universities.

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

To be honest I have not spent any time thinking about that yet. I have been in Thailand for 9 months now and I am very happy here. I will think about this a few years from now.

Is there any memory from Thailand that you would like to share with us, an awkward situation, a fun moment etc.?

As soon as I arrived in Thailand I learned that if you pronounce my name correctly in Danish it means mosquito (Jon (or Yung) in Thai. Therefore, I am getting used to being call John with an "h" instead of Jon. I was already used to that since I lived for 5 years in the US.



Do you regularly meet up with your community?

Yes, it is an important and enjoyable part of my job and I plan to pay visits to some of the locations where there are many Danish citizens living. I have already met with quite a few Danes especially in Bangkok and Pattaya, so far mainly from the business community. The embassy have held several events together with the Danish Thai Chamber of Commerce and we hosted the annual Christmas lunch of the DTCC at the Danish Embassy.



In addition to that, I find it important to have a well functioning embassy that creates results and has a highly motivated staff. I am lucky to have a very skilled team working with various issues such as political, economic and trade matters, visa requests and consular matters for assisting Danish citizens.

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

My role is to build and further strengthen ties between our countries. I want to help Thais understand Denmark and vice versa. I want to facilitate interactions between politicians, officials, NGOs, the commercial community, citizens and everyone who has an interest in relations between Thailand and Denmark. I want the embassy to act as a bridge and to create mutual understanding, and to resolve misunderstandings.





AL SARAY
Fine Lebanese & Indian Cuisine
المطعم اللبناني والهندي الممتاز

SOONVIJAI

02 319 4388

SILOM

02 234 4988



DELIVERY AVAILABLE

alsaraybkk | www.alsarayrestaurant.com



BRASSERIE 9

Authentic French Cuisine

02 234 2588

Sathorn Soi 6

brasserie9bkk

www.brasserie9.com



**ruen
noppagao**

AUTHENTIC THAI CUISINE

02 116 3317

Sathorn Soi 6

ruennoppagaorestaurant



DELIVERY AVAILABLE

AMANDA DENNISON

A Shrewsbury icon

Amanda Dennison is immediately recognisable within Bangkok's international education network as a highly skilled leader who understands. Understands what it means to run a successful international school; what it means to operate in an increasingly competitive market and through times of global challenge and what it means to tear down barriers.

As the Principal of Shrewsbury International School Bangkok City Campus, in 2020 she celebrated 10 years of headship within the Shrewsbury Bangkok family. Her 30 year career in education has covered a journey across diverse environments - with pastoral care, equality and fairness a constant motivational force throughout her profession. With Amanda's latest appointment to the Board of Directors at the British Chamber of Commerce in Thailand (BCCT), here we focus on the story of one of Bangkok's most experienced educationalists and delve into how this consummate leader encompasses qualities of compassion and empathy alongside a keen wit and unwavering energy to dismantle outdated legacies of patronage and bias.

Amanda started her career in the late 1980's. Where now, visitors to London's docklands are met with the clean straight lines and polished marble of an eminent and prosperous financial hub, in 1987 the area was home to communities of working class families and former dock workers left stranded and forgotten by the closure of many of the ports in the preceding decade. It was into the heart of this diverse and marginalised community that Amanda first became a teacher and she recalls a challenging environment:

"In my initial year at the school, one class saw 27



teachers come and go. Nobody wanted to stay. These children needed consistency and something needed to change"

Amanda made a commitment and stayed at St. Luke's Primary School for 10 years, fighting to ensure a generation of children progressed to a secondary education with academic stability. She saw beyond superficial challenges, providing a level of cohesion which released raw potential. And it was here too where Amanda credits the birth of a fighting spirit which has always stayed with her. A strong resolve was born to help young people overcome the barriers they faced.

And it's those barriers which have always driven Amanda. Those who know her talk of her compassion, empathy and ability to see in others their potential for greatness. Her track record of success and headship should also be heard however; it speaks of an individual with a focussed determination to ensure success is never restricted, both for herself and for others.

Since that demanding start, we see a career that includes deputy and headteacher roles and the successful creation of a 'Beacon School', so called for the (then) British Labour Government's 'Beacon School' programme under Prime Minister Tony Blair. The programme ran from 1998 to 2004 and epitomised Prime Minister Blair's focus on school improvement through diversity, collaboration and partnership; education was a major party manifesto of the time. As a beacon school, the success Amanda and her team achieved was held up as an example for others to follow. Schools from across London, the UK and even globally came to learn from their accomplishments. Amanda recalls coffee and cake with Tony Blair in her office; a simple story with Amanda keen not to indulge in the unnecessary trappings of celebrity or connection:

"We ate croissants, drank coffee, chatted about the school and he left. What's important to me is not endless discussion about how or why



Teaching Diplomacy: City Campus School Council members at their first School Council meeting



Shrewsbury's commitment to growth and renewal saw the creation of a second Bangkok campus in 2018. The opening ceremony was attended by British Ambassador to Thailand, Brian Davidson

but the actual realisation of a plan. Successful schools remove barriers, limits and restrictions to pupil achievement.”

And with this sentiment now a firmly established working mantra, Amanda's journey progresses to Thailand and the beginning of this, the latest point on the map.

In 2010 Amanda took up a role at Shrewsbury International School Bangkok as the Vice-Principal and Head of Junior School. At the time, the Shrewsbury brand was still only 7 years old in Thailand and its international status was the first in the British school's almost 500 years of history. In its pursuit of expansion and educational excellence overseas, it's certainly no over-dramatisation to say much rested on the success of this venture.

With Amanda in charge of the junior school, Shrewsbury International's reputation for inspiring and achieving excellence grew. So much so, that waiting lists for their primary facility became the norm and thus, in 2018, a second campus was opened to accommodate the need with Amanda leading the team.

Shrewsbury City Campus is a purpose built primary school in the heart of Bangkok. It reflects the changing requirements of education and its facilities have been purpose built with the younger learner in mind without having to compete with the demands of teenage pupils.

Amanda and her team spent countless meetings with architects designing a school environment they were proud of. Now in its third year of successful operations, it has grown to over 350 students and is yet another accolade on a growing list. Amanda credits the school's success to the same core threads of equality, fairness and compassion which have followed her through her career:

“Children are known by their name here and so are their families. The same applies to the team of amazing staff; I will always opt for a

we can expect the same dedication to this role as any of her previous commitments – and this dedication brings with it an agenda of tolerance and a strong determination to ensure everyone has the right to meet their fullest potential:

“I am keen to raise awareness of any inequalities I see as well as support the creation of an open culture; a culture where individuals are empowered to recognise and challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours in themselves and others”

And so, after 30 years in education, the honour of accomplishing beacon school status and a lead role in the creation of an entire new school; what's next?

“A bakery in my hometown of Morecambe” she jokes “Amanda's Macrons”.

www.shrewsbury.ac.th/city

strongly affiliative working relationship. That has always and will always be my preference. Managing a team of committed people who can understand and share in a vision is very important”.

The school's remarkable growth is all the more impressive given the backdrop of increasing competition and a global pandemic. But then Amanda isn't new to challenges and isn't one to give up on one either.

In 2021 Amanda was awarded a seat on the board of directors of the BCCT. It's fair to say



Amanda reads to students in City Campus Library

THE UK MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

Expat Life had coffee with Alexandra McKenzie, the new Deputy Head of Mission of the British Embassy Bangkok, at their impressive new offices on Sathorn Road.

“The Embassy staff were as heartbroken as anyone when we heard that the British Embassy compound on Wireless Road had been sold, and that the Embassy would move to a high rise building in downtown Bangkok. It felt like the long history of the British presence in Thailand was reduced to something just... ordinary.

As it turned out, it was not just us who felt that way. The people who felt the most emotional about the move, were the staff at the Embassy – those who had spent months and years working in those historic buildings. It must have felt like saying goodbye to an old friend.

But the fact is, nothing lasts forever, and we had to make a difficult decision to move on to a better future. Sometimes it is difficult to see the future as “better” or even as good, until you actually live it. And that’s exactly what we found when we visited the new British Embassy office at AIA Sathorn Building”.



The building stands proud on South Sathorn Road right next to Soi Sathorn 11, impossible to miss if you’re on the main road. At the time we visited the new Saint Louis BTS station was ready to open just in front of the building, so by the time you read this you will be able to jump off the BTS and walk straight into AIA Sathorn in literally 1 minute. At the reception counter on the ground floor, we were greeted





and functional place to work, and representing the modern face of the UK to Thailand and the world. The proceeds from the sale of the compound were used to improve existing and build new British Embassies around the world. The UK has more than 200 diplomatic missions, and representations in every ASEAN country. “It was really important to us to make sure we were represented throughout SE Asia and the Pacific – it shows how seriously we take our relationships

by the familiar red telephone box (well, not a real one, but close enough) where we got our visitor’s pass and one of the Embassy staff escorted us up to the Embassy.

Nice view from up here. The space certainly felt different from the old compound. While we missed the vintage vibe of the Wireless Rd. compound, we liked how the Embassy’s new home felt – bright, warm and modern. I sat down for a coffee with Mrs. Alexandra McKenzie – “Alex” as she called herself – the new Deputy Head of Mission, and her Embassy colleagues.

“The old Embassy was barely functioning. The air conditioning system kept falling apart. We had floods in the building, more than once, because the water pipes broke. At one point part of the ceiling fell down – fortunately no one was hurt! As much as we loved the space, we had to admit the office was a 40-year-old building and to repair it would not be cost effective,” an Embassy employee explained.

There were a mixture of reasons for the move. The decision was taken by UK Ministers, who had to weigh up ensuring the best value for taxpayers, guaranteeing a safe



here. That meant using the limited funds we had to build new Embassies in countries where we didn’t have representation and upgrading existing ones. A lot of that money came from the sale of the old British Embassy compound,” Alex said. “We care very much about our relationship with Thailand and see a modern Embassy as a demonstration of that. And having stronger relationships with the rest of SE Asia and the Pacific shows our commitment to the region as a whole”.





a representation in the Embassy to help support British businesses at home and in Thailand, and to encourage Thai investment into the UK. The Prosperity Team brings UK expertise to help Thailand in a range of areas including science and innovation, education and economic development.

The Political Team promotes good governance and works with organisations in Thailand to support democracy and human rights that in turn ensure everyone, including expats in the country, can live and work in a safe environment.

Of course, one of the most important roles of the Embassy remains taking care of British people in Thailand, although

according to Alex this might be in a different form than what some of us expect. While smaller posts might be able to provide community services to the local British communities or hold social events, the Consular Team in Thailand, taking care of more than 30,000 Brits and dealing with 1,244 cases last year, need to prioritise their resources to help the most vulnerable. These include victims of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault, retirees with health issues, and holidaymakers who find themselves in accidents or distressful situations.

A chunk of the resource is also spent on prevention work, addressing the most common issues to prevent people from becoming consular cases.

Their most recent work is the motorcycle safety project in which the Embassy collaborates with local authorities and businesses in Chiang Mai to improve rental motorcycle safety standards as motorcycle accidents are a top cause of deaths and injuries among British tourists in Thailand and a prevention project to provide support to British nationals in ASQ.

The new Embassy building provides a functional,

fit-for-purpose office for all these crucial responsibilities. The simple open plan office with many breakout areas and smaller meeting rooms resembles modern coworking spaces that promotes more collaboration and less hierarchy. New technologies make it more efficient for the staff to work together from anywhere. Consular staff can work collaboratively with each other on the go – and they are almost always ‘on the go’ to provide assistance to Brits around Thailand, from prisons and police stations to hospitals and care homes.



For the UK to remain globally connected and engaged, British Embassies around the world work to strengthen government-to-government, as well as to support British business and citizens overseas relations. While most Brits in Thailand think of the Consular Team when they think of the Embassy, the Consular Team is actually just one part of the whole mission. The Department for International Trade has





Why are real world events so important to STEAM education?

Why are real world events so important to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Maths) education?

Your child's natural desire to learn, experiment and question is fundamentally important to their education and development, so at Regents International School Pattaya we don't give our students all of the answers. Instead, we give them some of life's most interesting questions and challenges, and the tools to tackle them. Our aim for your child is that they learn creativity and resilience throughout their education with us. When they leave school and take their first steps into university and beyond, we want them to do so with the confidence of real global citizens. The question is, how do we teach that?

Exploring real-world challenges with STEAM



STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics, but it equates to more than a series of subjects. Whether in the classroom or through our extra-curricular



platform Global Campus, our teaching and thinking around STEAM is the key to your child learning about their impact on the world around them and how exciting the possibilities are.

You will recall that from a young age your child began to explore their surroundings and from there their perspective grew. STEAM takes this natural curiosity which students have as young learners in early years and primary, through to their teenage years in secondary school, and builds on it with a contextualised, skills-based approach to teaching. It encourages the natural instincts your child has for learning about where they are, how things work as they do, and why it matters, and asks them to apply that curiosity to solving real-world challenges.

Our exclusive collaboration with MIT

Underlying our STEAM education is our exclusive collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This relationship with MIT brings opportunities to our students which go far beyond their curriculum and the classroom. Your child might participate in our new MIT Abstracts series which gives them access to lectures with MIT professors, learning about what they are researching and the impact it will have on our lives, take on classroom or special at-home science challenges like our new Home Labs series, or even visit the MIT campus. The objective behind all MIT teaching is for students to understand and identify a real problem, and collaboratively take on the challenge of finding a solution to it - truly putting their creativity to test.

STEAM for young children

From our youngest years through to our oldest students, the role of STEAM is to teach core subjects by contextualising them. Forest School is an example of how we engage our early years students with the world around them. The Forest School is an interactive activities hub on Global Campus which shares engaging, outdoor tasks with our early years students each week. The aim of these activities, like town and city scavenger hunts, or nature walks, is to encourage young learners to begin engaging with the environment around them so that they can later understand their role within their local community, and beyond, and how they can make a positive impact on it.

Discover more

Whether at home or abroad, STEAM learning provides amazing experiences which teach our students about what being a global citizen really means. For more on how we teach STEAM, please contact the Regents International School Pattaya Admissions team at Admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th



Be Ambitious Be Regents

More than ceilings that do not fall and Wi-Fi that actually works, the modern office building creates an agile environment and allows flexible working patterns. It was a timely development as half of the world is working from home. In fact, the new technologies played a crucial role in enabling Embassy staff to continue providing services to Brits in Thailand during the Covid-19 lockdown periods. Many consular services have also become digital. Consular Team said they were working hard to streamline and digitalise more services, so the entire process becomes easier and faster.

Along with the office the Ambassador's Residence has also moved. The Ambassador and his family now live in a penthouse in the Four Seasons Residence building, overlooking the Chao Phraya River. Sure, it is not elaborated with decorative columns and pediments like the previous one, but the new residence, with its high ceilings, full height windows and stunning view of Bangkok skyline, is impressive in its own way. Paintings by famous British artists have just arrived – a few months late due to global logistic disruptions – to give the final touch to the new residence that represents modern and global Britain.

We finished our coffee and I said goodbye to Alex and her colleagues. They gave me a reusable face mask, made from recycled plastic bottles, with a Union Jack design as a souvenir.

As I go down the lift returning to the ground floor, the mask in my hand reminded me that indeed the world was changing, and that the only way to thrive amidst these changes was to adapt and ride with new waves of global trends while maintaining the core values that show the world who we are.



Photographs courtesy of Suraphong Namsermsri



WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP OUR CHILDREN PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

*by Thomas Banyard, Headmaster,
King's College International School Bangkok*

As parents, we want to give our children everything we can to help prepare them for the future; yet the next few decades are incredibly difficult to predict. The increase in technology such as artificial intelligence is disrupting the job market, pandemics like Covid-19 highlight the need for adaptability, and climate change may force us into new, more sustainable ways of working. If we do not know what we are preparing our children for, how can we help them to be happy and successful in their lives?

There are two ways of looking at this problem: through knowledge and through skills. If you think knowledge is the answer, you may focus on giving them Mandarin lessons or signing them up for a computing club to introduce them to coding and robotics. If you feel that skills are more important, you will focus on the competencies needed to be successful in a changing world. UNICEF describe these as 'transferable skills,' which involves the ability to think, socialise and empathise. Of course, this does not have to be a dichotomy! At King's Bangkok, we help our students develop the tools needed for future success by providing a well-rounded and world-class education.

How do we give our students the knowledge to succeed?

We are lucky to have an incredibly strong relationship with King's College School, Wimbledon, which is one of the world's most academically successful schools.

We take their curriculum and adapt it to the needs of our students. This means that we can help our children learn Mandarin and computing, as well as encourage them to think in an interdisciplinary way. Hence, we offer a diverse range of co-curricular activities that allow students to pursue their interests with expert guidance and support. It also means that we have a network of schools to learn from in the UK, China, France, and beyond, and can keep abreast of an ever-changing educational landscape.

How do we give our students the skills they will need?

In the words of Andrew Halls, Head Master of King's Wimbledon, "a school is much more than double maths on a Monday afternoon." King's Bangkok is successful because we provide a wide range of lessons and activities that engage, inspire

and extend our students; it allows every girl and boy to find something that they are passionate about and celebrates all students. We can do this because we are able to recruit outstanding teachers. King's Wimbledon interviews every teacher to ensure that both schools have the same teaching standards.

We all want our children to have the best chances in life and I think it is clear that the best way to do this is by giving

them a well-rounded education at a world-class school. If you wish to find out more about our school, please come and visit our campus in Rama 3 by going to our website and requesting a tour.

02 481 9955 | info@kingsbangkok.ac.th





AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO RESHAPE EDUCATION

by Peter Hogan of Hogan Education

Schools are open in Thailand so everyone can breathe a sigh of relief. Parents have stopped being unpaid substitute teachers, academic staff are no longer staring into screens and children can learn with their friends once more. But maybe this is more than a time for wanting everything to go back to the ways they were. This could just be the best of times to ask where schools should be going next. Lockdowns around the world have shown us that the imaginative and the resourceful thrive even in the face of adversity. Schools have taken a step forward by embracing the existing technology and shaping it to fit needs in an emergency. Now that the worst may be over schools should not stop or go backwards, they should be looking to the future.

Imagine going to sleep in 1995 and waking up in early in 2020. You might wonder why nobody was wearing baggy tops, what happened to grunge music or what fresh-faced teenager Leonardo di Caprio was doing these days. You may have read about a new idea called e-banking and wondered if banks had changed much while you were away. How you would react when you found you could do all your banking, your shopping and even run your business from a tiny pocket sized computer?

Banking is unrecognisable from the 1990s as are so many of our industries and sectors. Banks have hardly any

branches and the new ones have none at all. The world's biggest taxi company owns no cars, the most popular media company creates no content, the world's most valuable retailer carries no stock, the biggest accommodation provider owns no property and the owner of the largest selection of movies has no cinemas. In fact, banks don't even hold a monopoly over regulating money now that cryptocurrencies, can be used without banks being involved at all.

So, dazed and confused by so much change, you might marvel at the crazy new world you had woken into. But if you visit a school it will look so familiar and hardly changed at all. Of course there is much more hardware and software and a greater focus on equality but these are not big changes compared to those outside the classroom. In fact the actual system of education doesn't look very different today than it did way back in the 1950s. Students move along in same age groups, fixed by blocks of time all trying to learn the same material in the same way at the same pace. Most will write in the same kind of exercise books and sit the same kind of exams in rooms and in rows that have hardly moved on at all. It is an industrial factory style model, sorting by testing and grading, filtering out more and more the older the students become. This seemed to work half a century ago when there were career ladders in trades and apprenticeships that provided meaningful alternatives for those who did not make it to the top of the school pile. Now despite the fact that many of these routes have gone much of the actual education, supposed to be there to help young people, remains the same.

When Covid-19 forced millions to stay at home for work or study we all looked to tech for the answers. Thailand is ahead of many countries in getting children back into schools but few would claim with any confidence that this pandemic is over anywhere in the world. Once airports open up fully and there are more international visitors Thailand's school may have to close again. Who can tell? Rather than wringing our hands and wishing things were different, this is the best time to rethink what a school should look like and how it should operate. This can be the dawn of the new era

for schools and the time for technology to be embraced in a profound, forward thinking way.

The world's big tech companies are already looking at this and investing heavily. They see a business opportunity as well as the chance to truly empower learning. The most advanced model has been developed by Microsoft and can be seen in its Showcase Schools, a new and growing initiative aimed at moving schools into the realm of high-tech, high-spec teaching and learning. If you ask a typical school if they have heard of Getting Smart, Gensler, Education Changemakers, Steelcase or Fielding Nair International they are unlikely to be familiar with them. Yet these are Microsoft's collaborators in a radical rethink of what the classroom and the whole school could look like in the years ahead. They are pioneering new ideas, new approaches and new technology. Microsoft wants to offer an effective guide for education leaders to navigate the complexity of transforming schools. This is a holistic and systemic approach grounded in research from policy makers and academics around the world. It is about so much more than hardware.

So what might it look like? Imagine if every lesson in the school involved the integration of technology in to teaching not just a blackboard replaced by a whiteboard, video lessons on YouTube, online quizzes and Zoom but each child linked to all of their teachers through seamless online resources. Children have tablets instead of books and a digital pen/pencil. There are still lessons, classes, test and teachers but work can be exchanged, ideas shared and comments made digitally in real time. Students don't all have to be in the same place or the same age but can collaborate and communicate either online or in person – whatever works. All books, notes, videos, links and resources are available all the time and students are doers not watchers, engaged not just looking. Everyone reads, writes, draws, annotates, watches and records. Teachers are not replaced; they are integrated into a wider, richer experience. The choice is not whether we use the teacher or the computer, because the answer is to both – all the time. If the class are together the lessons are great and if the class has to stay at home then they can carry on without

interruption. A student's work is their own and private but their learning world is open and safe.

This is not an educational utopia – it is happening at the moment in some schools round the world. Schools that have applied and been assessed before joining a new elite of schools that are forging ahead.

What makes them so different?

- The whole school community is committed to the future of digital transformation in education.
- All staff are trained and committed to working with cutting edge educational technology.
- Students and parents get on board and work with the school.
- The school invests in the necessary technology and licenses to get the job done.
- Schools lead and share innovation in education transformation in their local community and around the globe.
- Less hierarchical and traditional, more collaborative and open to change.
- The school staff are one team all working to the same end.

Banking moved from filling out forms and monthly statements to real time, online, fast moving payments and receipts. With this came a modern approach, new entrants to the market and bold, new thinking. Older banks fell away, staff stuck in the old ways struggled and those committed to the future thrived and grew. If the past is any guide to the future of progress it is unlikely that the green shoots of change will grow in government department anywhere in the world. The answer might not be in the hands of Microsoft or another big business, it may emerge somewhere smaller, somewhere unexpected and different. This is the model of change we see everywhere from Alibaba to Uber in every country.

Schools are not under threat and machines will never replace teachers but schools must adapt. The factory style industrial model of how we run society is collapsing in many sectors and it is about time the status quo is questioned and replaced in all our schools. There will probably be some resistance and a few false starts but we owe it to this and future generations of children to make sure learning is future proof and can never be interrupted again.



Peter Hogan
has been the
Head of schools
in the UK and
Asia for 20 years.
He writes about
schools, teaching
and learning at hogan.education



Meet the Headmaster

Education in paradise

Expat Life spoke to Simon Meredith, the Headmaster at BISP, as the school celebrates 25 years of international education on Phuket.

What makes British International School, Phuket unique?

Rarely do you see the words education and paradise in the same sentence, however at BISP, many families are attracted by the world class learning opportunities and the lifestyle afforded in a tropical island location.

With over 60 different nationalities amongst our student body, we are a truly international school. 70% of our students are international, which creates a diverse, cosmopolitan atmosphere at the school.

The students have access to internationally recognised learning and examinations, with professional coaches in football, golf, tennis, swimming, aerial arts and gymnastics, artists in residence and school trips across Asia and beyond. Every child in middle school learns a musical instrument and is entered into LAMDA exams.

The school has day and boarding students.

We pride ourselves on offering learning without limits.



Where do your graduates go?

Our graduates pursue a diverse number of destinations, careers and interests. In the past three years alone, students have progressed to 134 different universities in 22 countries, as well as to professional sports clubs and careers around the world.

We recognise the needs of each individual, and support students and their families in making the right choice for the individual child. Two dedicated University Counsellors guide students and parents from Year 9 onwards.

Ultimately, we want students to find their passion at BISP, and to be able to follow these passions upon graduation.

Tell us about the school's mission.

*Our mission is to
Inspire Learning; Nurture
Wellbeing; Ignite Passion*

This mission reflects what we believe schools have to provide in a modern context. No longer are good schools responsible for simply providing strong academics. Instead, parents seek schools which can provide a balance of learning, wellbeing and extracurricular activities, and through our unique triple helix system, this is something BISP has been doing for many years.

We continue to enable students to make the most of the environment. Students play sports on real grass, enjoy our outdoor pools, and learn on our on-campus golf course. The afternoons see our population enjoying the fresh air, taking part in our 300 plus extracurricular activities, incorporating a healthy physical element into their lifestyle.



What is life like for boarding students?

The recent academic years have been unique in that some of our boarding students have not been home for two years. It is a testament to the boarding experience at BISP that during this time, these students have flourished.

Boarding students have the unique opportunity to share schooling experiences with students from around the world and establish lifelong friends. Some travel for more than 30 hours to get to BISP and so schooling is part of a great adventure.

Our house parents are from the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, France, Philippines, and Korea, and seven of the nine house parents have their own children in the school, forming an international and diverse family, and providing the safety and routines in which boarding students can feel at home.

A chef oversees our menus and refectory and caters

for high performance athletes, and our onsite nurses ensure medical care 24/7.

Students have the opportunity to explore Phuket on weekends and to travel Asia and the world on sporting and academic trips throughout the school year.

Many day students will join us if their parents are away for some time, or for periods of intense exam practice, as we have the flexibility of accommodating any family circumstances. We also have a weekly boarding option and part time boarding.

What would you say to any families moving to Phuket?

We recommend visiting the campus, meeting myself and the principals, and, depending on the ages and needs of your children, meeting our university counsellors and the specialist learning needs team, the head of boarding and high performance coaches.

We also offer trials, allowing students to experience the school prior to enrolment.

It is also a good idea to speak to other families. Approximately 25% of our graduating classes have been at BISP since the start of their schooling in Little Ducks or Early Years, so you'll find plenty of parents with the experience of the whole school journey.

*Education
in paradise
is a reality!*

Why not come and
join us!





It's not just an application anymore – it's a campaign

by *Peter Hogan of Hogan Education*

Ten tips for getting into the best university

Helping to get a daughter or son into the right university should be looked at as a campaign; a series of stages over the last two years in school with a single goal in mind.

Year One is the step up from IGCSE and the major goals are excellent marks and the development of a broad and unique CV. It is also a time to make important decisions with school about Higher Education plans so don't be afraid to ask lots of questions.

Year Two is all about hard work, maximising exam grades and hitting all the targets set.

A vital part of the campaign is leaning about the organisations that manage the university admissions process around the world. No one should rely just on the school, other children, those well meaning friends or even parents hoping they know enough based on their own experience. It is about

setting objectives, gathering information, collating facts and making positive but realistic plans.

The admissions process is ever changing and always presents new opportunities and challenges.

It is not like it was. Change is everywhere in Higher Education and different institutions offer different things. Also a degree does not necessarily mean a job anymore. Ten per cent of university leavers remained unemployed after graduation and on average nearly 70 graduates are vying for every job. Having said that the vast majority are still getting jobs and graduates earn more than non-graduate in almost every instance. The difference in gross hourly earnings between graduates and those educated to A level or equivalent remained high at 47% and the average lifetime earnings of a graduate is millions of Baht more than those of a non-graduate with two A levels. Getting the best degree from the best university are very important steps to employment and greater security.

Getting to the right university remains a complex matter and there is greater global competition, made even more opaque with the challenges of Covid-19. Universities struggle to find ways to choose candidates and there is a cold hard fact to keep in view: it is getting harder to get in to good universities. Applicants need higher grades and the process is more complicated. In the last 5 years the number of universities requiring students to achieve top grades in their A levels has tripled. A typical Russell Group university in the UK or Ivy League one in the USA may have 1,500 applicants for just 50 places on a course.

When you are looking at universities and working out which ones are good, better than others and so on, it isn't always as simple as it looks. Everyone knows the names of the

very top ones but bear in mind that the star rating and league table position of the university is based on the quality of their research, not the undergraduate degrees. A typical undergraduate will have little or no contact with the research side of university as part of their first degree. This means there is a disconnect (in some cases) between the reputation as defined by the league table and the student experience as felt by the undergraduate.

In addition to the headline grabbing league table positions there are other useful measures of university performance. These can include student satisfaction and graduate employability. Both of which may feel more pertinent to a youngster aged between 18 and 21 than they quality of research undertaken by MA, Ph.D., postdoctoral students and full time academic staff.

Ten takeaways

- Everyone benefits from positive but realistic career advice.
- Ambitious, organised and focussed pupils do better in their applications.
- Results are objective, predictions are subjective.



Don't hang everything on estimates.

- Universities want facts; every grade counts.
- The workload in the last two years at school is considerable and the jump from GCSE greater than some anticipate.
- Independent learning is essential for higher grades. Students cannot be spoon fed high grades.
- The CV needs to be active and meaningful. It cannot be done last minute. It also needs to be loaded with the right elements.
- Schools can help in all aspects of Higher Education preparation.
- The social life has to fit around the work, not the other way around.
- Personal statements matter – if there is no interview this is the only chance to shine.



Peter Hogan has been the Head of schools in the UK and Asia for 20 years. He writes about schools, teaching and learning at hogan.education



DESIGN FUTURES

ELC international schools are places where children are active protagonists in their own learning. They comprise a family of unique schools where students base their research, discovery, and experimentation within the context of contemporary culture and learning. Those within strive to resolve dilemmas of individual and shared importance in their quest for knowledge and understanding but most importantly, imagine possibilities for a better future.

In the daily life of ELC schools, we can perceive a pronounced increase in children's creativity, the quality of their research, and their ability to access information. This facilitates the development of complex digital projects and products of knowledge, which are elaborated between children and between children and adults.



digital bicycles for enjoyment in the park using arduino technology
designed by
Pop and Anna
(ages 8 to 9 years)



automated solar and wind-powered street cleaner using arduino technology
designed by Caden, Fabian and India
(ages 10 to 11 years)

elc international schools

The City School
Ages 3-11 years

Area: Thonglor
18 Soi Sukhumvit 49/4
Bangkok 10110

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

The Purple Elephant 39
Ages 18 – 36 months

Area: Phrom Phong
61 Soi Phrom Mit
Bangkok 10110

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

The Purple Elephant 49
Ages 18 – 36 months

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

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

The Purple Elephant 55
Ages 18 – 36 months

Area: Thonglor
79 Soi Thong Lo 8
Bangkok 10110

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

The Country School
Ages 18 months - 5 yrs

Area: Nonthaburi
44 Soi Samakkee 20
Nonthaburi 11000

+66 (0)2 003 5185
countryschool@elc.ac.th





differences and flight durations 3) They pick up multi-language curse words before they can pass grade five spelling, 4) They know how the McDonald's menu varies drastically from country to country. 5) They can convert the price of any toy to least two different currencies in an instant. There is a certain sparkle and fascination when it comes to this group, those with the well stamped passports and perfect recall of the

PARENTING EXPAT KIDS

The next generation of global citizens from everywhere, from nowhere

by Tina Haskins Chadha

For third culture kids answering the question “where are you from” is not so simple. For the children of expats this explanation can take embarrassingly too long and cause some anxiety. Should the answer be one of nationality, where one was born, where one lives presently? Even where ones parents are from?

It was American sociologist Ruth Useem who in the 1950's first coined the term third culture kid (TCK). She was studying the children of Americans living and working in India. The term was conceived to describe expatriate children who spend their formative years outside of their home country. They are shaped by the multicultural, nomadic spheres of their parents, many of whom are diplomats, military members or working for major multinational corporations. What she observed more than half a century ago rings true today still. Third culture kids are a globe spanning, diverse and highly adaptable lot.

As expat parents many of us find ourselves in the position of raising third culture kids. Even if we have recently moved abroad, the transition from “regular” kid to TCK happens faster than your shipping container might arrive. There are a few fail proof signs to determine if you are dealing with a third culture child. 1) The child's accent changes depending on who they are talking too, 2) Even young children are very, very good a calculating time

best airport lounge food offerings.

With the exception this past year due to Covid-19, expat families find themselves relocating frequently to locations that reach even the most remote corners of the globe. Children often transfer from one international school to the next every three to five years. They are exposed to communities populated by peers from dozens of nations with a melting pot of languages, customs and traditions that blend together. From this eclectic realm the concept of the “third” culture is born.

Each expat community differs in terms of the mix of precise backgrounds and nationalities, but what remains consistent is how expat groups prioritise spending time with each other.



Their shared experience in a perpetual loop morphing from newbie, to fully settled in, to prepping to move again is at once both relatable and frustrating. There is the initial excitement, then the big ambitious plans to master the local language to the realisation that the posting is nearly complete and it will soon be time to pack out! Expat community members relate to one another on a level that acknowledges this state of impermanence, of always upcoming mobility whether for the annual trek back home to visit family or the move to the next post.



a variety of outings, even the “boring” cultural stops or rustic hikes through remote hillsides. The challenging teenage years are when the TCK will typically feel more worry over peer issues, fitting in or more accurately worry about being different. These life disruptions do run the risk of having lasting effects from loneliness to depression.

Yet, overall, most highlight that the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks of raising third culture kids. The experience also can bring the family closer through these shared times of change and adjustment. So, let’s celebrate the benefits of today’s TCK – an ever digitally connected, creative and curious tribe. This child can become bilingual or multilingual, a skill exceptionally seamless to achieve in

The children of expats historically were even pigeonholed into smaller, less complimentary, category labels reflecting where their parents worked – “Army brats,” “biz kids,” “diplo brats,” even “oil kids.” Putting these belittling labels aside, third culture kids do have a unique upbringing. They are comfortable within multicultural settings. They typically are better equipped to deal with newness and change. They have to hone these skills to thrive, after all.

But it is not always smooth sailing for these cultural chameleons. There are some unique challenges to raising third culture kids. Most important may be the stress level they experience when the time comes to repatriate to their home country. A stress that can be compounded by the anticipation of culture shock their parents themselves expect imminently as well. The simplicity of early childhood is a time under appreciated by TCK parents. At the time, parents are too exhausted to recognise the early years are the “honeymoon phase” of third culture kid parenting. The inherently adaptable child will be amendable to trekking along on

the early years when language skills are developing. They can gain a truly worldview perspective getting up close knowledge of everything from cultural events to civil unrest. They can be more sensitive and empathetic to people from different backgrounds and socio-economic groups. They will be highly adaptive. They will have killer stories to share with friends back home and their own children in the future. They will have a network of friends around the globe. They will always think a flight under five hours is a quick commute. They will be natural mathematicians needing to calculate cost of goods between currencies, Amazon import fees and time zone differences for social media chats with friends across an array of globe time zones. They will have a diverse range of favourite foods, goofball jokes and corny songs to love.

Some say being a third culture kids creates a risk of being rootless. Never fully belonging to one place over another. I believe it brings choice, freedom, and adaptability – benefits that are priceless.



SO, WHAT NEXT — COVID CAREER PLANNING

by Alice Osborne

*From overwhelming uncertainty
to embarking on an unexpectedly
exciting path*

Starting a career has personally been a messy journey of exploration, but it would be silly to expect a perfectly linear process. By doing new and different work with new and different people, I am learning a lot about what brings the best out in me, my preferences and aversions. Here's what I've discovered about career planning during Covid, which could've easily taken up 5 pages and 5000 words but sometimes you realise one page and 750 words is enough...

Just want to start by saying (however cheesy) that whether you're reading this as a student, graduate, young professional or otherwise, take this unprecedented time to experiment, test, and learn. Perhaps, like myself, you'll find value in the possibility of pursuing a diversity of options as opposed to sticking wholeheartedly to one. Follow ideas regardless of whether they lie in the domain of your desired career and take the road less travelled. You may make surprising discoveries indeed!

Nothing in the pipeline

Prior to the pandemic, I had been attending all of the university career fairs and workshops, searching for a prospective role and employer in preparation for summer graduation. Applications to the big competitive grad schemes in the UK were underway, with a few rejections already received. I quickly realised the job search was extremely time consuming and didn't want to compromise getting a first class degree classification, so chose to focus on final year work.

When Covid spiked around this time last year, I didn't have much in the pipeline with regard to prospective employment. The only interview I had been invited to at that stage was for a mis-advertised position as a 'marketing manager', later discovered to be a 'direct marketer' position as a door-to-door salesman...

Finding my career post-Covid

Prior to the pandemic had envisaged that now I would be working for one of the big four consultancies. In China. It took some time to accept that I was not going to be able to pursue my potential plans work wise and socially, for the rest of the year at the very least. As someone who loves to have a good plan and options, the uncertainty was overwhelming. So I turned my attention proactively to what could be done to put myself in a better place for when the world reopens. Embarking on a very different career path here in Bangkok as the creative lead for a blockchain start up, thought I was just changing current plans to ultimately reach that same long term goal.



Corporate cog turns entrepreneur

For the past six months, I've thrown myself into developing technical knowledge about a cutting edge technology, whilst gaining practical knowledge from diverse responsibilities including website design, company branding, case research, original article writing, and social media management. All in the hopes of putting myself in good stead for future endeavours.

One year on with the door to the big four and China still closed, I have gained a completely different perspective of life, employment and working for myself. Where I initially came into my first job viewing it as a placeholder to gain experience to then go onto do those things later, now I find myself doing it the other way round, wanting to be an entrepreneur and explore the digital nomad lifestyle.

Making change my best friend

Since I've adapted and embraced the Covid led remote way of working, new doors are popping open left right and centre. With the changing nature of work, I've noticed that it's feasible (and acceptable) not to put all of my eggs in one basket. Through the support of people in my professional network here in Bangkok and abroad, I've been able to start exploring my newfound passion for professional writing to help startups craft their narrative and voice. This way of working as a freelance copywriter in my free time certainly wasn't on my radar prior to these unplanned career experiences.

Never would have thought of pursuing this avenue had I gone into a corporate setting as

initially planned. Situations can of course change overnight so will keep my mind open to opportunity. I take comfort in knowing that change is my friend and look forward to continuing on my career path with no set expectations, whilst sat working at a favourite café with a matcha in hand.

Taking the road less travelled

Covid-19 jolted everyone out of their comfort zones, turned well established habitual routines upside down and led us to think deeply about what matters/what is worth pursuing. No matter what stage in life, many people have had to change their career

plans. But I hope the topsy turvy journey to start my career in Thailand, amidst a pandemic of all things, shows you there is always opportunity to be found.



UNLOCKING THE FUTURE FOR TOMORROW'S HOSPITALITY LEADERS

The Asian Institute of Hospitality Management in academic association with Les Roches

The Asian Institute of Hospitality Management (AIHM), in academic association with Les Roches, brings Swiss-style hospitality education to Asia. A partnership between Les Roches and Minor Hotels, AIHM draws on the renown, expertise and network of two powerhouse names to provide a world-class education.

Les Roches

Les Roches is Switzerland's preeminent hospitality school, and although tucked away in the mountains of Crans-Montana, is a truly international institute. Switzerland itself is known as the destination of choice for future hospitality leaders, with four of the world's top seven hospitality schools located there according to the QS World University Rankings. Les Roches is ranked one of the top three schools worldwide by specialisation.

For its foray into Asia, Les Roches has partnered with Minor Hotels, not only one of Asia's most successful hospitality groups, but also one of the world's fastest growing. To date, Minor employs over 35,000 hoteliers in 530 hotels, resorts and serviced suites across six continents.



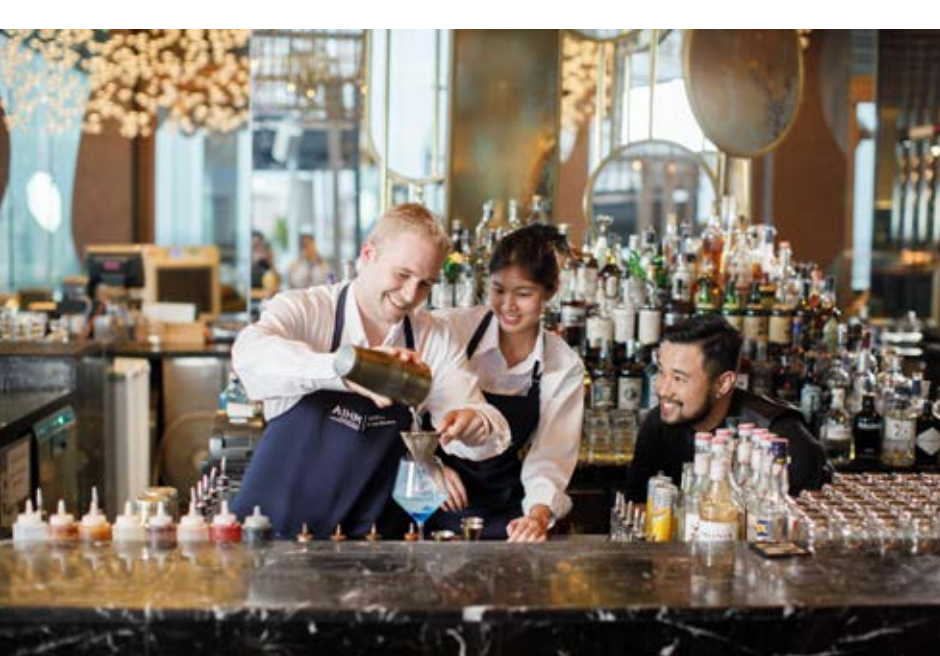
Minor Hotels

Minor Hotels is led by one of the region's most well-known entrepreneurs, William Heinecke. An American by birth but Thai by choice, Heinecke started his first business in Thailand at age 17. In 1978, he opened his first hotel, a small resort in Pattaya. In 2001, luxury brand Anantara was launched, and the 20 years since have seen overseas expansion (Asia, Indian Ocean, Africa, Middle East, Europe, the Americas, Australasia), global acquisitions (Elewana, Tivoli, Oaks, NH Hotel Group) and hundreds of hospitality awards and recognition from the world's major industry players. The group currently operates 76,000 rooms in 55 countries and is widely accepted as one of the companies that sets the benchmark in the hospitality trade internationally.

Studying at AIHM

AIHM offers a three-and-a-half-year Bachelor of Business Administration in Global Hospitality Management. The curriculum mirrors the Swiss one, and is designed in consultation with Les Roches, but with a specifically international outlook.





Two of seven semesters are dedicated to internships, and this is where Minor's strengths particularly come into play: for the first internship, students are based at one of Minor's 28 hotels across Thailand. For the second internship, students venture internationally, whether at a Minor hotel or other branded property, airline, cruise liner, travel agency or tour operator.

AIHM students who excel will also be offered the opportunity to enroll at the Crans-Montana, Switzerland or Marbella, Spain campuses as exchange students. Transfers there for the final two semesters will ensure graduating with a Les Roches degree.

Why study in Thailand?

Thailand is one of the world's leading tourism destinations, with 40 million arrivals in 2019. Many hotel brands have flagship properties here, with Thailand serving as a centre for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Based close to home, students still benefit from an international education and mindset, interacting with fellow students and lecturers from around the world. AIHM lecturers are certified by Les Roches, have decades of industry experience, and ensure graduates enter the workforce with a supportive and expansive network of contacts.

Thailand also offers affordability, with academic fees and particularly living costs half the price of Switzerland. Students transferring to Les Roches in their final semesters enjoy reduced fees exclusive to AIHM.

Applying to AIHM

AIHM will have two intakes per year, in 2021 we will welcome students in April and September for the Bachelor of Business Administration in Global Hospitality Management. Prospective students should apply now. Requirements include a high school diploma and IELTS average of 5.5. AIHM also hosts regular open days at the Bangkok campus.

For more information or to speak with an academic counsellor, visit aihm.education or email admissions@aihm.education



AIHM has two campuses – Bangkok and Pattaya – with both locations purposefully chosen to immerse students in the world's leading tourist destinations. AIHM facilities include newly built lecture theatres, libraries, labs and even a wine cellar.

Swiss-style learning involves small classes and hands-on experience. Classes are led in English by Les Roches-certified experts in their fields. Apart from the traditional hospitality disciplines, students will also explore leadership, entrepreneurship, sustainability and innovation. Modules include finance, accounting, data analytics, digital marketing and communications.





An author in distress

by Frank Hurst

On the face of it, a global pandemic should be perfect for a writer. It requires society to keep itself at arms length, maintain a respectable social distance, visit nowhere, apart perhaps from the pharmacist or the greengrocer. It should be a boon for a writer. There is a perceived wisdom; all a writer needs is an idea, a pen and lashings of solitude – right? Well, only partly right. Let me explain.

I was last in my beloved Thailand, a year ago. It was there, as I prepared for a brief visit to Europe, an expat friend questioned my judgement.

‘Flying back to London, Frank? Are you sure? This Covid thing looks worse there than here. I’d stay put if I were you.’

This was March 2020, and the early days of the plague. Thailand had been one of the first countries, after China, to report cases and some were holding their breath, waiting for the disease to grip. In England, people were only just beginning to look over their shoulders; still telling themselves it was someone else’s problem.

‘I have to get back; I have some banking to sort out.’ I replied indifferently.

All true; I was in the middle of buying an apartment and needed to sort out the finance. Something also told me I might be better off in England though; for a while anyway. Europe would handle the crisis better and once the

dust had settled, I’d be back. A few short months should do it. How wrong I was; particularly because the apartment in question was in Chiang Mai...

Back in the watery sunshine of a Sussex Spring, I quickly sorted out my funding and sat down to scope out the new novel. It was to be set in nineteenth century Siam – a political and espionage thriller, with a cast of vibrant English and Siamese characters.

I was excited. Then, as my thoughts started to

come together, the Thai travel restrictions were announced. I convinced myself that by August all would be well, so with plot ideas rumbling around in my head, and an assortment of scribbles, I settled down to write the first chapters in England.

One of the challenges of writing a historical novel, set in a faraway country, is to deliver authenticity. I pride myself on realism, and I relish the chance to research the terrain. To be honest, the exploration is usually the best part of creating a story – that, and the sense of total immersion. When writing my earlier novels, I’d spent extended periods in some of the remoter parts of Thai border country, meeting folk who treated ‘farangs’ as amusing novelties. I trudged up mountain trails, through dense, bird filled forests, to descend to sparkling river valleys. I always wanted a chance to experience what my characters might have felt. But now, here I was, marooned in a flat just outside Brighton, and worse, I was stuck in a cramped loft space with a view over Tesco’s carpark, with strict orders to stay put.

I reverted to the internet for company, but informative as it was, the feel, the atmosphere, the essence of the place I aspired to write about was somehow missing. I tried to imagine myself back; I yearned for the solitary veranda in Baan Nam Suaay, with its view over emerald green rice fields, the smell of lemongrass, the shack I’d rented above the Western reaches of the Mekong River, the spice market in Nong Khai; I could go on. After a month of wrestling with the wrong words, I gave up on ancient Siam – nothing worked. To write about Thailand, I needed to be there. The internet and the guide books were no substitute for serendipity and boots on the ground.

Instead, I turned my hand to writing a thriller, set in Victorian London. Suddenly, Brighton’s Covid lockdown seemed to be an advantage. It was easier to imagine the cold cobblestones of foggy London streets than the grand majesty of Wat Arun at dawn. Simpler in my mind’s eye to visualise a shrouded hansom cab against a lamp lit Thames

embankment than a rickshaw bumping down a track by a bustling Chao Phraya river. But there were still distractions. I developed a new and morbid fascination for the Coronavirus statistics of death – the growing pandemic was providing plenty of those. The figures now read like a lopsided and gruesome tally from a Somme battlefield. The United Kingdom 110,000 – The Kingdom of Thailand 79. Goodness!

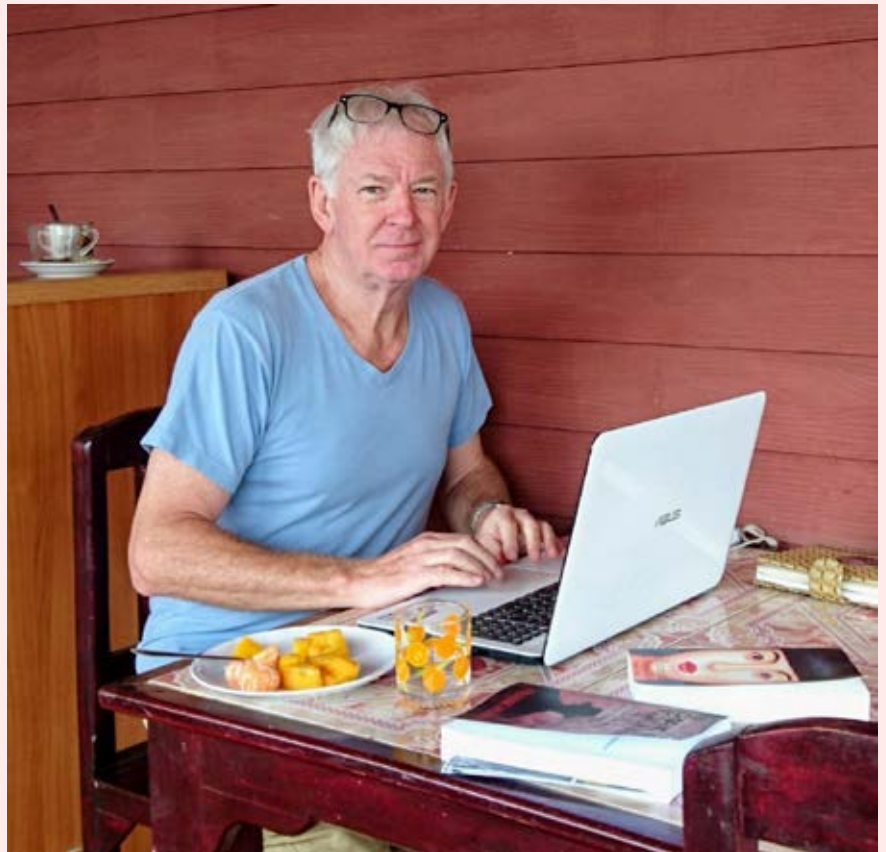
But, by this time, my forced isolation had started to focus my mind. Gone were the invented diversions; the unnecessary shopping trips and car rides to country pubs. I had no visitors, and when I turned my phone off, I had no calls. I became absorbed in the London of Jack the Ripper.

But then, just as my new project was beginning to show some promise, officialdom struck, and the whole equilibrium of my imprisoned existence would take a nasty jolt. I thought I had become immune to the many and sometimes charming quirks of Thai bureaucracy, but this experience left me scratching my head. The saga began shortly before I'd left Thailand a few months earlier. I had a tax bill to pay; it was connected to the Chiang Mai apartment that I was buying. The Land Office, quite rightly, wanted their money. So, I took myself to my local bank, and from my savings account, I withdrew a cashier's cheque to cover the new demand.

At this point, almost before the ink had dried, Thailand's Covid defences started to manifest themselves. Police barriers went up on the beach road, and there was talk of quarantine. Abruptly, the Land Office closed its doors to all comers,

including me. Three weeks passed before they opened for business once more, but by that time I'd returned to England and had already started to despise the view of my Sussex supermarket. On presentation, the Land Office advised that the cashier's cheque was no longer valid – it was past its sell by date – literally. Another would be required. No worries, I thought; irritating perhaps, but not insoluble. I contacted my branch by phone from England, a kind lady banker took on board my request and without hesitation she issued a brand new cheque on my behalf.

The Land Office duly accepted it, and my tax debt was





people you see are hooded shapes pushing shopping trolleys, and despite your appalling isolation, you are closer to contracting Covid than ever before. What were you thinking about, man?’

There is absolutely no doubt. The glitches of local officialdom may have been mind-bendingly frustrating. But more than ever, I am missing Thailand horribly, painfully. The smell of lemongrass, the Indochine spice market in Nong Khai, the sound of bamboo on a windy day, the taste of Khaw Khaw Hmu, the borrowed shed on the banks of the brown Mekong, my battered motorbike, and even the screech of the damn cockerel that used to wake me most mornings to mark the sun rise of another Isaan

paid – everyone was happy. There was just one thing required; to tie up the loose ends. I had to cancel the original cheque, and get the sum repaid into my account. I called them once more. But this time, the transaction would not prove to be so easy.

I would need a power of attorney, the bank said. It would have to be prepared in Thai and English and signed by me (in blue ink). Then, in the following order, a notary lawyer in UK, The British Foreign Office, The Royal Thai Embassy in London and finally, once returned to Thailand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok would have to add its moniker and stamp to it. The power of attorney would have to be accompanied by a signed copy of my passport photograph page, a signed copy of the relevant visa page, a signed copy of my bank book, and a signed copy of my appointed agent’s Thai ID card. The last signature, from the bank itself, would finally enable them to return my money. With a sigh of surrender, and realising that there was no point in remonstrating, I set myself up, square jawed, to tackle the task. Unfortunately, the Victorian novel stalled as a result, as I became obsessed with this new challenge.

Eventually the great day arrived; I had obtained all the required signatures. I shipped the papers back. But when presented with the wad of signed and stamped documents, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided that in order to process the application, I would need a second power of attorney; this to authorise my appointed agent to apply to them to legalise the first power of attorney...

I’ve tried to remain calm... but one question keeps repeating itself; it was vaguely teasing at first, gently reproachful perhaps, but with each asking, it has become ever more strident, ever more accusatory.

‘Frank! Why the hell did you abscond from Thailand in the first place? Now look what’s happened. Your tour de force Siamese novel has been put on ice, your half baked Victorian thriller is less than three chapters old, the destiny of your money is in the hands of overseas officialdom, the only

day. A year has passed since my banishment, and it looks like it will be many more months before this terrible scourge is conquered. Life must go on – I will survive.

I just wish I was surviving in Buriram, not Brighton.

About the author

Frank Hurst is an English author who writes crime and adventure novels about Thailand

Website: Frankhurst.com





The Pink Christmas Charity Ball, a fundraising event for the Queen Sirikit Center for Breast Cancer (QSCBC) took place from on December 18th 2020 at the Marriott Marquis hotel in Bangkok.



CAN THAILAND BE A WORLD LEADER FOR PLANT BASED MEAT AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE?

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children”

The reality of climate change is hitting us harder than we ever imagined, as I am writing this, I am watching news coverage on a glacier in the Uttarakhand Himalayan region of India which burst two days ago. The remoteness of where this happened means no-one has a definitive answer, so far.

Experts say one possibility is that massive ice blocks broke off the glacier due to a temperature rise, releasing a huge amount of water. We are already seeing the possibilities of how inhabitable our planet will become in the lifetime of a teenager. The point is we are neck deep in an existential crisis we created and the question on whether we can mitigate climate change remains to be answered.

The food we eat has a huge impact on the planet and I was curious to understand the future of sustainable agriculture and plant based meat in Thailand. Can you imagine a day meat might be replaced by plant based meat? There are more and more plant based meat options in the meat section, I never thought I would see vegetables in the meat section. I strongly believe that the next ten years will define humanity, human action has caused climate change and human action also has the power to mitigate climate change. We have to choose between action and inaction and what we choose will define our future.

I met four industry leaders who are passionate about



plant based meat and sustainable agriculture to understand the challenges of replacing meat with plant based meat in Thailand, a culture which has deep rooted connections to eating meat. Here is an excerpt from my interview with them:

Root the future: A NGO for news and articles on plant based and sustainability related projects in Thailand.

Expat Life: What do you think are the main challenges for plant based meat in Thailand ?

Root The Future: The main challenges for plant based meat in Thailand are awareness, price point and accessibility. The facts and figures about plant based food and the environment have only recently emerged in social dialogue here in Thailand so it's a very new thing that many people don't know about.

The second thing, is that because of how new the plant based movement is here, there has been no time for most companies to scale up and start selling these products at a competitive price compared to meat, so the price point can still be relatively high for plant based meat (although plant based whole food is still some of the cheapest food the world over).

And thirdly, accessibility. This is a big one. For the folks who are aware of plant based food and it's numerous benefits, and are willing to pay for it, it is still sometimes not accessible enough to make it convenient for people to purchase regularly (again talking about plant based alternatives like meat whole foods are incredibly easy and cheap to access).

Expat Life: Can it find a wider and a more mainstream market in Thailand in 2021?

In 2020 we saw the plant based food trend absolutely skyrocket. More people are sharing information and fast becoming aware. In 2020 we also saw a huge amount of plant based businesses start up. With the state of our environment and the ease of information sharing via social media, the only way is up. The movement is snowballing. Because this isn't just a trend or a fad – it has real and impactful consequences for our planet, the animals and our health, there is no chance of it slowing down. That means in 2021 we expect to see more plant based business, more information and education, more accessibility and competitive price points for plant based food.

We are very excited for 2021 and are so inspired by this movement here in Thailand. We have no doubt that Thailand has a real chance of becoming the next big leader in plant based food.



Let's plant meat: A plant based meat startup from Chiang Mai which was recently recognised as one of the winners of future food Asia's plant protein award. I spoke to Smith Taweelerdniti, CEO of Let's Plant Meat to understand if his brand can show the world that Thailand can be a world leader in plant based meat.

Expat Life: What do you think are the main challenges for creating a plant based meat market in Thailand?

Smith Taweelerdniti: Meat is cheap and easy to buy here in Thailand. Meat is deeply ingrained in our daily meal. To convince people to switch, we have to make it as tasty as the animal meat and roughly at the same price, too. Government put price control on animal meat, to help farmers, so retailers accept selling at no margin while making a profit from shampoos or tissue paper. Plant based meat does not have direct or indirect subsidy like that, so to keep price affordable is now a challenge.

Expat Life: How do you reach out to a market which does not care about ethical or environmental factors? The real challenge is to ensure plant based meat becomes the norm rather than niche, right?

Smith Taweelerdniti: I agree with you. But like many new things, people will adopt in tranches. First we must talk to early adopters like vegan or vegetarian groups, then to "sustainability and health conscious" consumers.





From there, we hope to create enough momentum for restaurants to listen and want to offer more plant based meat options, then to reach late adopters will be less challenging.

Expat Life: Which product is your bestseller and why?

Smith Taweelerdniti: The burger is our best seller at the moment but our newly launched minced meat may have a bigger audience in Asia. Our burger is popular because it tastes very good at a significant saving compared to imported brands. Our minced meat still needs some time to grow the sales. We have added over 300 supermarkets across Thailand and convenience in buying will allow the products to grow faster

Golden State: A California coast inspired 100% vegan seafood restaurant in Bangkok, it is the brainchild of Chef Eric who is passionate about creating unique artistic plant based seafood menus using fresh local ingredients. They also sell vegan frozen seafood products for cook-at-home.

Expat Life : Eating seafood is so deep rooted in Thai culture, how has the response to your plant based seafood been?

Eric: The response to our new vegan seafood has been fantastic, beyond our expectations. It may be true that seafood is embedded in Thai culture however we have found that most customers want only the taste and feel of seafood without having to eat the animal itself. Sure, Thai customers want squid, calamari and crab etc, and we are happy and proud to offer such dishes made with plants only. It is not only Thai customers but really everyone around the world that “wakes up” after trying a few good vegan meals. In terms of good health and good karma, there is no comparison. Pure veg dishes just make you feel

better in every way. Innovative chefs and food scientists are creating amazingly real plant based dishes. Soon there will simply be no reason to continue eating animals

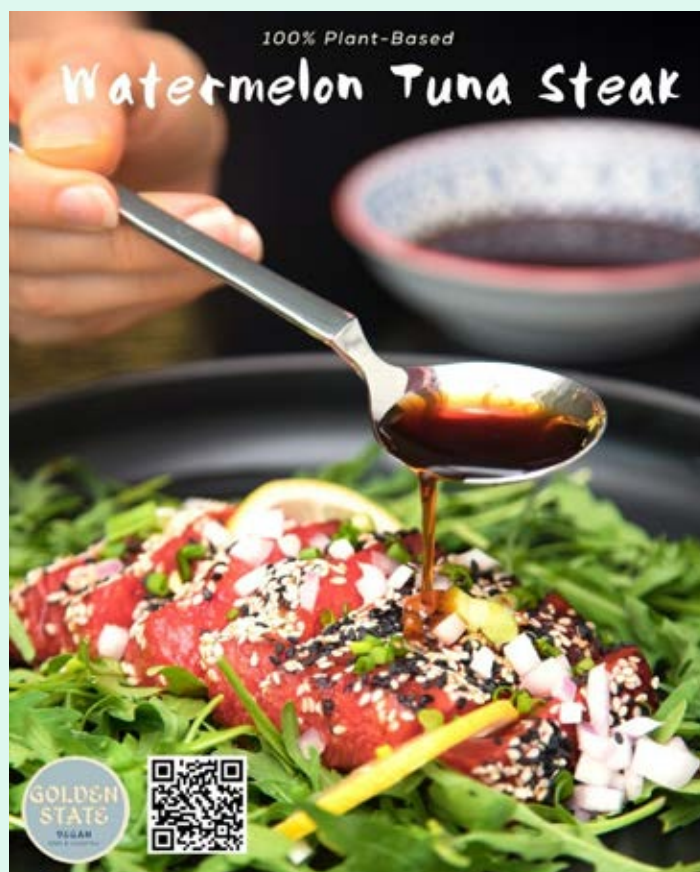
Expat Life: Has it been challenging as a chef to cook plant based seafood ?

Eric: It has been challenging yes, but it is the most fun thing in the world to choose an existing and beloved seafood dish and try to reach up to that height of taste and feel. Why do we try to recreate a seafood dish? The true answer is that it is just fun. Can I fool you? Will you love it? Will you feel totally satisfied, but also lighter and fresher after our meal? Yes.

Expat Life: Is your focus on recreating the taste of tuna etc. or creating a completely new taste?

Eric: We try to land somewhere in the middle. We want our dishes to simulate tuna, for example, but also we want to improve upon that taste. Some people are turned off to real seafood because the taste is too strong. So we have creative space to improve upon that. Conceptually, our dishes are like seafood but they also eat like pure veg dishes. We are proud to offer great taste and peace of mind.

Happy Grocers was founded by three people who are passionate about saving the environment and empowering farmers. I spoke to Moh who is the cofounder, she has a B.A. in Social Entrepreneurship (Sustainability and Marketing). They deliver fresh fruits and vegetables to your door! They are transparent, traceable and plastic free.



Expat Life: You sell sustainable fish and chicken along with your vegetables, can you please explain what exactly is sustainable chicken and fish?

Moh: The chickens we sell are raised in a big facility with 5 chickens per one square metre. This is where they eat, sleep, and lay eggs. The outside part of the facility is a big open space for the chickens to walk around, look for worms and plants in nature. The chickens are very happy and stress free. Our fish is from a small community in Chomphon and they follow the guidelines from the Marine Stewardship Council(MSC). We ensure that the fish population can continue indefinitely as well as remain productive and healthy. We also ensure that the fishing activity is managed carefully so that other species and habitats within the ecosystem remain healthy. We are completely against unsustainable fishing practices that not only distort the ecosystem but also support modern day slavery. There are over 20.9 million people all over the world who work under forced labour and slave trade in the fishing industry and we want to empower fishermen and educate people to only buy sustainable fish.

Expat Life: Given all the conditions needed for sustainable fish and chicken, the quantity must be limited and the price obviously higher?

Moh: That is right, our focus is to cater to a small market and we hope more small entrepreneurs can do the same business

model like ours to create more awareness and empower local fishermen in small communities. Having said that, sustainable fish is very limited and cannot feed the entire population but we hope mindful consumers start questioning the supply chain of their food and choose the most sustainable alternative available.

Expat Life: Do you have any advice for consumers who want to eat a sustainable diet?

Moh: The best option is to support local small businesses which are transparent. Most small local businesses are happy to offer a tour of their farm because they are proud of the living conditions of the farmers and the way they grow their food. Once people care about where their food comes from and understand the supply chain, it will help farmers get empowered and eventually increased demand for sustainable food can bring down the prices.

I often wonder what the future of sustainable agriculture is, is it lab based meat, plant based meat or both? Well, it is safe to say that we will be witnessing a lot of change in the next ten years. Will all our efforts to mitigate climate change work? It is very early to answer that but I sure hope we can all become mindful consumers and vote for the planet through our wallet power.



The Relocation Specialists



ASIAN TIGERS
GROUP

Tel: +66 2687 7800

**International – Domestic – Local
Office Moving • Home Finding
Visa & Immigration
Relocation Services**



SUSTAINABILITY AND SOLAR ENERGY

by Aparna Sharma

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the world. This is a moment of truth for people and the planet alike. Covid and climate have brought us to a threshold and we have to move forward sustainably.

The good news is that there is a lot of work being done all over the world to move towards renewable energy and Thailand has created the world's largest solar floating farm according to news reports. The facility, which generates power on a water surface of 72 hectares, was originally scheduled for operation in December last year, but the launch was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Franck Constant, CEO of Constant Energy.

I read an article in Thailand business news which stated that the state run Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) expects to operate a 45 megawatt floating solar farm it claims to be the largest in the world this June. EGAT signed a contract with B. Grimm Power Plc, which will serve as an engineering, procurement and construction firm to develop photovoltaic panels worth 842 million baht (28 million USD) on Sirindhorn Dam in Ubon Ratchathani, where an EGAT hydropower plant is operating. The floating solar farm is designed to be a hybrid system, working in tandem with 36MW of hydropower generation to increase optimisation capacity.



Mr. Chatchai Mawong, EGAT Director of Hydro and Renewable Energy Power Plant Development Division

Local media quoted Chatchai Mawong, EGAT's director for hydro and renewable energy power plant development, as saying that construction is now 82% complete. Workers began installing the first lot of floating solar panels in December 2020 and are speeding up installation. Under the 2018 National Power Development Plan, EGAT is committed to building more floating solar farms on all nine of its dams nationwide over the next 20 years, with a combined capacity of 2,725MW. It is also planning to adopt a modern energy management and energy storage systems, crucial to store electricity produced by solar panels. Mr. Sarit Witoon, Governor of Ubon Ratchathani Province said, having a

renewable energy pilot project that is essential for the country is an important step for Ubon Ratchathani province. The hydro-floating Solar Hybrid Project at Sirindhorn Dam will be a model project for developing renewable energy

which will not only create stability for renewable energy by using hybrid energy systems, but also promote Ubon Ratchathani province to become an energy learning centre for students, scholars, and the general public. The project will also be developed into a new tourist attraction for the province to increase revenue for the community so it can become sustainably self-reliant.

After reading this article, I wanted to understand more about solar energy development plans in Thailand so I got in touch with Franck Constant, CEO of Constant Energy. Franck has over 20 years of experience working in the independent power industry and 10 years in solar PV.



Mr. Prasertsak Cherngchawano, EGAT Deputy Governor – Power Plant Development and Renewable Energy, Mr. Chatchai Mawong, EGAT Director of Hydro and Renewable Energy Power Plant Development Division, Mr. Sanong Malaikwan, Sirindhorn District Chief Officer, Mr. Peradach Patanachan, Senior Executive Vice President – Legal of B. Grimm Power PCL, Mr. Hou Jiaqi, Head of International Business Development of China Energy Engineering Group Shanxi Electric Power Engineering Co., Ltd. (CEEC), and EGAT executives and officers joined the ceremony at Sirindhorn Dam, Ubon Ratchathani Province.



He continued in the power generation industry until 2002.

I asked him about the solar energy development targets for Thailand and he told me that the previous government target was 3GW by 2030, now 10GW by 2030 and they are on track to meet that. His personal view is that solar will be way above 10GW installed by 2030 in Thailand, since it is the lowest cost power source for Thailand, especially with recent 3x increase in spot LNG/gas prices globally. Franck mentioned that he believes that the clean energy disruption is gaining pace and will continue globally.

He further spoke about the investment strategy and markets for Constant Energy,

Mr. Prasertsak Chergchawano, EGAT Deputy Governor

Prior to founding Constant Energy, Franck co-founded Sonnedix, a solar IPP in 2009 and as board member and President developed the business into a global solar IPP fund present in 8 countries, including France, UK, Japan, Thailand, South Africa, with world class development, project finance, construction and asset management capabilities.

Franck moved into the power generation industry in 1995 by joining Sithe Energies Inc. in Bangkok where he worked for five years developing Sithe's power projects and business in SE Asia. During this period, Sithe became Thailand's leading foreign IPP, with new assets worth over \$500 million.

- 0** Zero investment / Operation & Maintenance cost
- %** Discounted electricity price
- \$** Savings on electricity bill from Day 1
- X** No resource required
- ☑** Establishment of a green branding
- ↑** Increased enterprise and asset value



“Renewable energies and smart grid are the future and a global growth market with tremendous investment requirements globally over the next 20 year. The ever higher penetration of intermittent renewable energy creates the need for power storage to mitigate intermittency and offer low-cost stable and constant renewable power.

Constant Energy has specialised on an area that uses sources for energy production with an absence of fuel costs/risks and whose cost have been



Schneider Electric Solar Plant Owned by Constant Energy; started in August 2017



Streetlights were installed at Ta Kien Sub-district Administration Organization office and on the road nearby for 2 kilometers as a part of CSR of Nakhon Ratchasima solar farm Constant Energy managing asset for.

dropping drastically among energy sources: Photovoltaics (PV), floating PV and battery storage.

These investments are attractive to us, as efficiency enhancements and cost reductions are making power generation from PV and Storage increasingly more cost-efficient and competitive.

They are enabling companies in Thailand to join the renewable resolution by installing solar plants for them at zero upfront cost under long-term contracts.

Strong country regulatory track record, high quality assets, long term global and local partnerships are the key factors when investing profitably in our sector.

Our investment decisions are based on extensive expert analysis, existing experience and successful track record in the countries where we invest, and direct asset management.

If you want to know more about Constant Energy, you can get in touch with Franck Constant directly, his email is franck@constantenergy.net.



Mr. Sarit Witoon, Governor of Ubon Ratchathani Province



ELEPHANT HUGS AND MORE... AN INSIGHT INTO THAILAND'S ELEPHANT TOURISM

by *Little Wandering Wren*

I thought I had the elephant situation sussed, I was brought up to love all creatures great and small. Elephants should be in the wild, or in an ethical sanctuary for retired elephants. They should not perform tricks or paint, and we should not ride them for our pleasure.

My firm beliefs were challenged when in November 2020, I was invited by TAT to join a trip to learn more about elephant care. You can read the views of my fellow participants here: [Meet Thailand's Elephant Influencers](#)

But now for my own opinions and believe you me, this has taken some thought processing and even so, I remain uncertain even when I try to stick to the view point that the elephant welfare comes first... but what about the humans, their safety and their livelihoods?



To say its complex sounds like a copout but it's true. Perhaps I should just say your position on domesticated elephant care depends on your cultural upbringing and heritage.

Let's go back a little in time.

In 2017 for my birthday I attended elephant yoga at the King's Cup Elephant Polo tournament raising money for elephant welfare. We had stayed at the Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp for our honeymoon (my husband was a zoologist) and the work of the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Sanctuary impressed.

Whilst we were in some downward dog position, beside the Chao Phraya river watched on by elephants waiting for their brekkie, and thinking we were doing the right thing supporting an elephant fundraiser. The PETA animal rights campaigners were filming and we ended up in the middle of an animal rights protest...

I knew from that moment on elephant welfare is complicated. The more I understand Thailand, the less sure I am of the validity of my own position.

The TAT trip to Lampang and Chiang Mai introduced us to vets and elephant welfare experts, to learn about their latest research into elephant care.

Thailand's elephants

There are approximately 7,000 elephants, 3,129 are captive, with 95% privately owned. 2,673 elephants work in tourism in 223 camps. (2019 data)

Government legislation exists to protect elephants in Thailand. Every domestic elephant must be registered.

Elephant tourism

We visited four operators working in elephant tourism to see how Thailand is moving forward towards more sustainable

solutions for elephant based tourism.

Even those words elephant tourism don't sit well with me. In my mind these majestic animals should not have the word tourism tagged on to their existence.

Please don't think I am writing this as a Thailand elephant expert, quite the contrary. I want to share my elephant dilemmas. The more I learn, the more there is to understand, the less certain I am.

The bottom line is that Thailand's 'domesticated' elephants are suffering from the pandemic's economic impact, just as people are suffering. They need food, they need medical care just the same as their mahouts. The easiest fund raising comes via some form of elephant interaction whether it is watching elephants roam at a sanctuary, bathing, feeding, hugging or even riding elephants.

You could of course take the hard line, that now is the time to break this cycle of the domestication of elephants. Release them back into the wild and stop breeding from captive elephants. But as we found out, things are more complicated than that.

TAT'S elephant care strategy

We are presented with three C's at the heart of TAT's Thailand's strategy for the current elephant care crisis



communication, collaboration and compromise. Hmmm, I'm already uncomfortable with the last one where elephant welfare is concerned but let's continue!

Communication:

The need for awareness of the current situation. I'm impressed with the diverse group of influencers, bloggers and media that TAT invited for this learning. I saw this as a two-way process.

TAT and their panel of elephant experts shared their knowledge and research into the condition of Thailand's captive elephants. We were given the opportunity to ask question and share our ideas.

The final part would be, having gained greater learning and understanding of Thailand's elephant care, to share via our various social media platforms.

It felt a weighty responsibility. To do the elephants justice and to share the knowledge learnt with others, especially as I ended up less sure of my own convictions.

Collaboration

TAT see their role as a collaborative one, as a facilitator amongst many interested groups. They are also a conduit to gather feedback from Thailand's tourists.

Compromise

We heard a pragmatic approach which suggested the need for compromise and balancing what TAT called Thailand's 'old belief cultures' with the 'modern ways'.

Elephants in Thai culture

Any understanding of Thailand's approach to domesticated elephant care must start with a respect and understanding of Thai history and the important role elephants have in Thai culture. From royalty, to logging and even having played their part in wars, elephants are revered animals.



Let me share with you some of my ideas, and my confusions.

Should elephants be returned to the wild?

It's a sad thing, the benefit of historical hindsight. The elephants were captured and bred in captivity for use in the Thai logging Industry, in turn destroying their natural habitat.

It is not that simple as saying return them to the wild. Where can they live in Thailand without risk to humans and the destruction of their crops and homes? In Thailand the natural elephant

The deep relationship between elephant and mahout is a special one which develops over many decades, as elephants can live up to 70 years. Some mahouts have had elephants in their families for many generations.

The elephant is an esteemed animal, that provides families an income originally from logging, more recently from tourism.

Herein lies the rub. As I look at this through my western lens with my own cultural beliefs as to what is right or wrong, I'm left wondering whether this is just one of those moments when I say I'm a guest in a foreign land, who am I to judge?

Or, for my own moral sanity, should I take the view that I need to know more. I need to understand, and offer that my tourist Baht will only go to 'ethical' sanctuaries who put elephant welfare at the heart of their business.

Definition of ethical elephant sanctuaries:

Well, bring in the vets with their elephant studies, and the above gets a whole lot more complicated.

The research:

We listened to various researchers over the three days including from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Chiang Mai University. Their research looked at the stress hormones in elephants, there was an assessment of their overall health and wellbeing by the vet, dung was analysed and mahout interviews conducted.

The study responds to the differing areas of elephant tourism:

Elephant shows, riding elephants, interacting by bathing and feeding elephants, purely observational programs.

habitat has seriously declined, there is simply not enough forestation to do this.

Many of the current captive elephants are third or fourth generation domestic animals. Can they live without human support? At Patara Farm, its elephant reintroduction programmes involves returning a mother and her baby into the wild. The baby elephants, bred to return to the wild, have less human interaction, and therefore a greater chance of successful reintegration.

My original belief that all elephants should roam wild is challenged when I am asked if I would set my dog free because it is unfair, and unnatural to keep him domesticated. Dogs roamed wild once and they should roam free.

My heart misses a beat thinking about my loveable crazy poodle trying to find food, the risks of accident and injury etc. To me that is just not right, unfair on my dog... Am I now experiencing the same feelings mahouts feel about their elephants?

But what if my wonderful pooch didn't eat a few kibbles a day and the odd sausage from the barbie, what if he ate 300kgs a day? And I couldn't afford to feed him?

Should you ride elephants?

Elephants, as working animals in Thailand, have been ridden for decades. The vet studies showed us that riding an elephant is not harmful providing the weight carried is less than 20% of its body weight and any seat is well fitted.

This gets me thinking. Is there any difference between this and the more widely accepted idea that horse riding is ok?

The vets also say that elephants typically walk 5-10km a day in the wild, domesticated elephants often do not have enough exercise. The resulting health issues from overweight elephants, joint, foot and nail issues, birthing problems, is of

growing concern.

Elephants at rescue sanctuaries offering a riding experience have more exercise, which is healthier for the elephant.

We note that at the elephant sanctuaries we are shown, it is possible to ride elephants, although interestingly this is not on our agenda. Was this because had it been, none of us would have come?!

Having been so staunchly opposed to elephant riding for many, many years I am currently rethinking this. The thought that my elephant ride, bare back through the forest, is providing a healthy walk, exercise and money to feed the animal becomes enlightening? What do you think?

I know what I think! Yes, fine to help the current elephants but not to propagate the continuation of domesticated elephants... Somehow I feel this is unlikely. Because at the end of the day the elephant is a commodity, a status symbol and in pre Covid days a means to an income. Any baby animal always gets the most attention.

Read more at fellow travel writer Barbara Weibel's excellent article *Elephant Tourism to ride or not?*

Should you feed elephants?

Elephants need 300kgs of food daily. The tourist pays for the elephant's food. However, elephants need to have a well balanced diet, they cannot live on sugar cane and bananas alone.

At Kanta Elephant Sanctuary one of the elephant



feeding activities involved preparing elephant medicine foodballs containing healthy ingredients and daily nutrients.

Vets at the Thai Elephant Conservation Hospital, Lampang reported prior to Covid-19 there were increasing issues from overweight elephants, creating a variety of issues. At the hospital we were introduced to an elephant recovering from an episiotomy, a common problem in overweight elephants.

Should you train elephants?

Isn't this at the crux of it all? That to train an elephant involves cruelty, or at the very least requires the animal to do something unnatural?

Elephants should not be trained for the entertainment of humans, such as painting or performing circus acts. However it was very clear, If elephants stay with humans, for the safety of humans, they need to follow the rules. This involves training.

There are some horrible video evidence of elephants being tortured and cruelly treated to obey whilst being trained. At Patara Elephant Farm the vets showed us the techniques their mahouts use to train the elephant to safely handle them preferring training programmes using positive reinforcement.

Should you beat elephants with a hook?

This one feels like a no brainer, no of course you shouldn't! However we were told the elephant hook is an essential tool, used properly it can effectively control movement of elephants.

Hmmm it still looks like a torture weapon. I'm thinking a taser or something from the 'more modern ways' would be less offensive, but then here I go again putting my ideas above tradition and what works.



Should elephants be chained?

Not every elephant can be free, some are aggressive and a danger to local populations and destructive of local habitats.

As with the hooks, chains and enclosed spaces were not seen to be a stress factor to elephants the vets reported... The obvious other factor is it depends on for how long the elephants are chained and then the safety factor for both elephants and people. Which goes back to elephants following the rules when with humans...

My final thoughts

I reflect that some of the traditional ways of elephant handling which look so vile to those of us who want to see animals run free, may not actually be harmful to elephant welfare.

I learn that sometimes when we think we are doing the right thing by not riding elephants, buying them sugar cane to eat, etc that we may inadvertently be doing something more harmful.

I realise that I have looked at elephant welfare totally from my Western lens. I respect TAT's initiatives of communication, collaboration and compromise in the complex environment and wish them well for the sakes of all domesticated elephants in Thailand.

I admire all those working in the fields of true elephant welfare in Thailand, we were introduced to some wonderful people who have given their lives to elephant welfare.

I applaud that tourism has played a very important part in Thai elephant conservation.

I understand that for many of us, an elephant encounter whilst on holiday in Thailand remains a highlight of our holiday in the Kingdom and recognise we need direction to ensure we do support the best ethical wildlife sanctuaries.

I urge you to consider supporting elephant welfare in Thailand.

For some ideas please see the links below.

Thai Elephant Conservation Centre, Lampang:
A government run centre and elephant hospital
Kanta Elephant Sanctuary Chiang Mai: Seeing, feeling and touching the elephants in the wild open space.
Patara Elephant Farm: Rescue, recovery, reproduction, reintroduction for elephants with education and meaningful tourism sharing.

Poopooelephant: An eco-friendly, fun, outdoor museum park that introduces and explains the unique steps involved in making elephant poo paper.

Elephant hugs to you!

Phew! Thank you for reading with me until the end.

I feel confident in saying that whilst Thailand does not always have a good public image regarding elephant care, there is a tremendous amount of good work done behind the scenes. The elephant sanctuaries we enjoyed above have been chosen by TAT for their valuable efforts in this field.

Whilst I went with an open mind about elephant tourism, I also realised I went with my own preconceived ideas on the subject of elephant care tourism, some of them in my mind ethical, some of them cultural.

There is an urgent need for tourist education and regulation of wildlife tourist attractions world wide. I was happy to learn more about Thailand's approach.

It was a fabulous three day of learning which challenged my opinions.

I still have a view that elephants should be in the wild, but as this is not practical, my elephant tourism Baht will go into projects that had this as their number one objective... I only support breeding of domesticated elephants where the primary purpose is to reintroduce them into the wild. Would I ride an elephant? Still no, but would I happily go for a wander beside an elephant with a mahout riding bareback, hell yes!

Little Wandering Wren

Further Reading:

Thailand Elephant Alliance

Elephant Reintroduction Foundation

Friends of the Asian Elephant Foundation

13 Ethical Elephant Sanctuaries in Thailand

Fodors: Thailand's Elephant tourism is more complex than you'd imagine





EMJOY

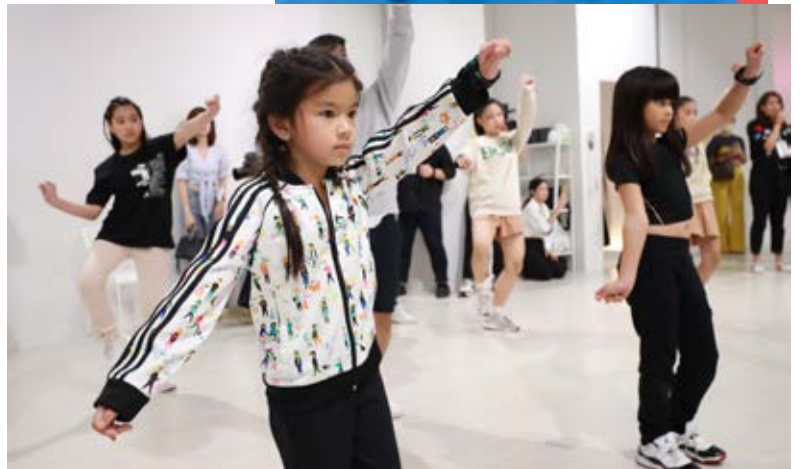
EmQuartier owned by The Mall Group in Phrom Pong recently launched EMJOY – an open edutainment centre for young children.

EMJOY for the youth of the digital generation in the heart of Sukhumvit is now open for business – and play!

Expand your children's imagination and encourage limitless creativity with over 6,000 square metres of educational and extra curricular activities within a fun, safe and colourful environment.

The area on the second floor of Building C the EmQuartier shopping complex is packed with facilities and functional spaces to entertain and enlighten your children and is a perfect destination for the family lifestyle.

EMJOY features the world's leading institutes, most widely praised by the family community, focusing on encouraging out-of-classroom learning experiences for the younger generation with diverse fields of interest such as Bungee Workout, Choi's Taekwondo, Code Genius, Copel, D Dance Studio, Haole Chinese Language, I can read, Kolor Me, Kumo Creative Studio, KX Smart Play, Mahidol Music Academy, Math Talent by Dr. Yong, Play Chef, Vocalise and many more.



Located in the zone are Kiddoland, Little Red Fox, Tanwa The Food Project, as well as Greyhound Café, with a new selection of family and kids menus. You can even take your Little Princess to the beauty parlour at Take Care Salon & Beauty, the beauty salon for kids and parents.

Dedicated to our children where they can explore and enjoy EMJOY and meet new friends. There are a variety of shops, restaurants and services that cater exclusively to young children.

The play zone is gaily decorated in a colourful, fun, educational and safe environment. It features functional spaces and convenient amenities, perfect for the family lifestyle, such as children's restrooms, benches, and playgrounds.



been sewn into me. A natural choice on leaving Oxford University was to join the Army and in the latter part of my time with the Paras (2nd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment) I started trail running. Mostly fitness in the Army was a heavy pack and a few nights of walking through barren cold, wet windy, bleak Scottish moorland, or equally fun, Welsh hills.

Trail running is a different 'kettle of fish'. Similar terrain, but no

harbouring up in a platoon defence formation, digging your night's sleeping area, and a 2am wake up call for your turn to go on 'watch', or 'stag' as we called it. The single worst aspect of Infantry life! Lying in a wet bog, full kit, staring into darkness for an hour, your night's sleep interrupted, platoon move at 4.30am, no chance of any sleep even after you get back in your sleeping bag. I squirm just thinking about it.

TRAIL RUNNING... BRINGING OUT THE KID IN ME

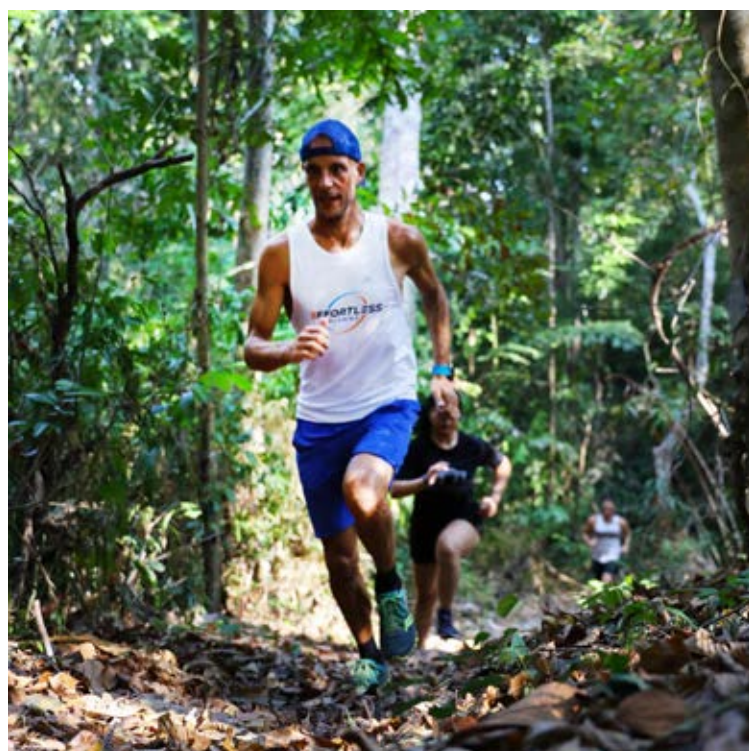
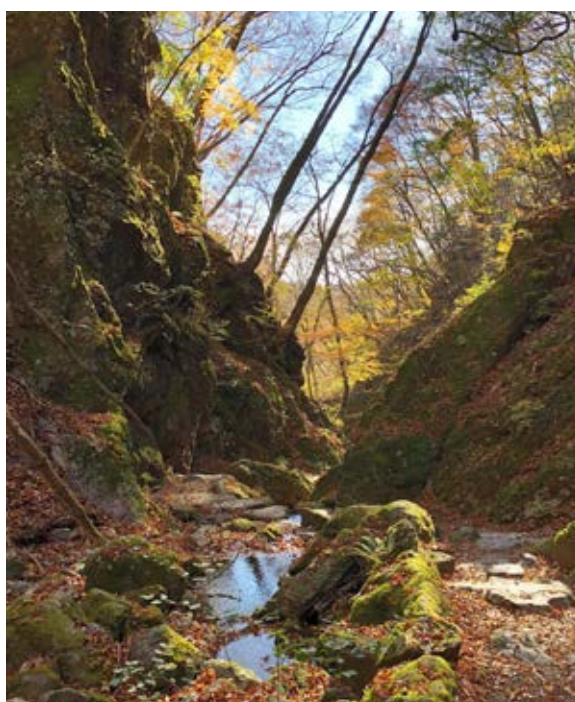
by *Pierre Lafayeedney*

Thailand is throwing its weight behind trail running. It's not my sport in fact. I enjoy it. But I'm a triathlete. I was brought up a rugby player. I took it very seriously especially when playing for England Schoolboys. But, with a Dad who always enjoyed 'the hills', aka, 'fell running' for the majority of UK trail running community members. It became a monthly ritual when I was little, scurrying after my Dad, up and down hills, through the Scottish wind and rain.

His short, hunched stature etched into my memory as I would pursue this stocky dwarf like figure unnecessarily laden with multiple layers of cotton - rain or shine, warm or cold, balaclavas and shirts alike. Watching Lord of the Rings and the dwarf, Gimli, in pursuit of the 2 kidnapped hobbits along with Aragorn, Boromir and Legolas gave me flashbacks to my youth. (I was Legolas of course)

I did try to persuade him of new fabrics. Synthetics that had been scientifically researched to perform better than traditional cotton. 1 layer of a good synthetic material can help regulate body temperature during exercise than 2 or 3 cotton layers. And no sweat wicking when you have all these layers! But, true to his dwarf-likeness, he was (and still is) stubborn in his ways.

This family tradition captured my imagination from a young age. Being active, outdoor and facing the elements had



Trail running gets you into similar wilderness. The very same we see in Peter Jackson's adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's novel of good vs evil, and all manner of things in between. Although filmed in New Zealand, the rough terrain, the wooded areas, the hills, rocks and boulders, another trail running heaven.

But unlike the Infantry soldier's insane rituals of packs heavier than small humans, and sleepless nights with a lot of blank staring into darkness, you explore what this beautiful world has to offer on your own terms. You choose what to wear. You choose where to go. You choose when to start and finish. The 'world's your oyster'. That's what my Dad used to say. I remember one time wearing a huge and very necessary waterproof jacket. Our monthly ritual had conveniently landed on a rainy day, not unusually. The hood drooping over my face, the water droplets showering down. We stopped on the side of a hill. I could see nothing around me except some bemused sheep, muddy wet ground, grey clouds, and fine Scottish heather. He took out his coffee flask and some chocolate. He says

'A brew and chocolate, and the "world's your oyster"'

I still remember his face, there was no hint of congeniality.



This was a serious affair! But still for me to this day, few food combinations can beat, coffee and chocolate.

So it was fairly natural I guess while in the Army I got into trail running. In the first few years in the Army, I dealt with a lot of injuries but later got into yoga and Pilates which helped me manage these. Then I took the chance of a more robust body to race at Ben Nevis, the 3 Peaks Marathon and the Tour of Pendle. Each of which were memorable experiences.

Much more recently I was in France, working for my sister, and in the winter when triathlon races are impossible because of the weather, the trail running races can still go on. It was a good chance to get some racing experience. And again similar experiences to UK trail running. A mob of running enthusiasts gather in a car park somewhere. They line up where the start banner has been planted in the mud for the morning, and then we follow the ribbons through 'God's country'. In this case, the drier Mediterranean countryside, a rockier surface, with more prickly bushes.



I fell in love with triathlon though. I had left the Army. I was seeking a new way of life. I had planned to become a yoga teacher. But while in Chiang Mai, supposed to be a quick pit stop on my way to India, I became a TEFL teacher, settled down, and after a 4 day silent meditation at the Doi Suthep temple, took the taxi straight to the bike shop, bought a road bike, rode home, and made a plan...

Now though I feel blessed to have the opportunity to dabble in trail running. This year at the UTTP (Ultra Trail Thailand Phattalung) and

more recently the Thailand UTMB. Specific training, in my case, flat roads on the bike, swim lengths in the pool, run intervals, and strength exercises in the gym, can become monotonous, not just for my brain but my body as well. To get the chance to focus on the run, experience new terrain at Doi Inthanon in Chiang Mai Province, and run my legs ragged up and down muddy slopes, and along narrow paths in rice paddies is a refreshing experience.

The kid in me was coming out. Mike McLean aka the Honey Badger told me on the morning of my race as he had completed his 120km trail the night before, leading from the start and finishing 1st, that there is a bit at the end, which my paltry 12km trail also included, a steep embankment where you need a rope to help lower you down to avoid slipping. I crested that very embankment and before I had time to think was in mid-air, eyeing the best

spot for my foot to land, only for the terrain to decide my bum would be best. I slid, and at the bottom, without hesitating planted my foot into the mud to leap into the next part of the trail.

In 2015 I left the British Army (2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment) and a previous life. My intention was to become a yoga teacher. Unexpectedly I took up triathlon and my passion grew for the sport daily. It is a second shot at life. Follow me at 'bornagaintriathlete' fb and IG. I am looking to partner with a photographer to help me build my social media. It is too difficult on my own. If you think you might be able to help please let me know. You can contact me directly at plafayeedney@gmail.com



ESCAPE BANGKOK
COME RELAX IN HUA HIN

Sivana
HIDEAWAY
— HUA HIN —

091-819-9810
www.sivanavillas.com
sivanavillas@gmail.com
sivana hideaway villas
sivanavillas

ONLY 8 UNITS LEFT FOR SALE!
NOW AVAILABLE FOR RENT

SIVANA HIDEAWAY VILLAS:
Soi HuaHin 126, Phetkasem Road, Nongkhae, HuaHin
Prachuabkirikhan Thailand 77110

Hong Kong Ladies' Group led by President Kathleen Pokrud celebrated International Women's Day with attendance of many members and friends.

The House of Grace (a refuge for teen moms & abused women) was invited to introduce the foundation. Members brought pre-loved clothing to support as donation.





Working from the beach (WFB) lifestyle

The Thailand much needed revolution

OK, OK, I so get it. You've been "pandemic stuck" in Thailand for an interminable length of time because of 'the job', in what all your friends the world over see as living the dream. You've enjoyed the freedom to move around the Kingdom over the past 12 months, give or take the occasional Thai Government Emergency Decree roadblock.



You've grown to know and love Thailand for giving you such travel opportunities at a time when your friends across the globe are in hard lockdowns. And so, it continues. But what now?

The enduring pandemic is taking a toll. You've had over a year without seeing, hugging and touching your family. Relatives have been born, grandchildren have yet to be met, and sadly family and friends have died without your final goodbyes. Your partner is frazzled, and relationships are suffering. Are you digging in for the long haul or could you, should you, would you, change things up for a bit... no for the better?

How about spicing up your Thai life with a sea change?

Do you daydream of having a partner who can work remotely and work from the beach? A partner who says, 'I am leading from the front, I'm going to put our emotional health and wellbeing as a priority?' A partner who says, 'Let's try something different, I know the last twelve months have been tricky for you, disconnected from family and friends' back in your homeland. I'm going to organise a WFB workcation!'

In January 2021, my husband and I did just that. Well, we came to Phuket on holiday and at the time of writing we are still here. Yes, we are paying for an apartment in Bangkok and a villa in Phuket, but the funny thing is, compared with 2019 we are still living within our budget. Life in Phuket is cheaper than Bangkok and we are loving it!

The rise of the 'working from beach' grey nomad!

It is something that all the digital nomads have known for years. Thailand and its high-speed Wi-Fi connectivity is fantastic for remote working.

Covid-19 created a remote, flexible, home working workforce with large degrees of success. Here in Thailand employees have bounced in and out of home working, depending on the local pandemic requirements.

With home working came the rise of new terms. WFH or working from home, became over the months for some of my lucky expat friends working from hotel, and indeed the ultimate "I'm so jealous now" 'he's WFB', working from beach. The opportunity to work from hotels around Thailand largely depends on whether the expat working partner is required to manage people in the office directly from the front at their office desk, what has become a rather old fashioned notion that today's world.

I'm here to challenge that notion, indeed today I would say that leading from the front means demonstrating business acumen and an appreciation for a work life balance that ultimately brings out the best in your workforce, for the benefit of the organisation.

Once the dream was set in motion, those of us who partook in it here in Thailand just loved it! Working from home, hotel or beach morphed into the notion of an extended Workcation. Putting out 'feelers' showed that some 87% of respondents in Thailand found an extended work-cation appealing, in fact the most positive response of the countries

surveyed in the Asia-Pacific region.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/2021523/the-rise-of-the-work-cation>

Whilst some executives may be uneasy about managing teams where they suspect their focus may be less on the 'work' and more on the 'cation' part. This has not been our experience, quite the opposite.

Advantages to employers

Be seen as a great employer... staff retention... staff happiness.... staff resilience

Forgive me for a moment, for regressing back into my old HR management days or should we now call this talent management?! But it's basic business operations. In my experience, no one ever listens to HR unless they could prove a difference to the bottom line.

Post Covid recovery will be no different, employers across the globe are always looking to attract top talent, cut costs and increase productivity. Never in the history of most organisations has this much needed priority been more sought after than now, with furloughed staff, reduced work forces, and in the case of hospitality this means in some instances skeleton staff with employees taking on broader responsibilities.

As we come out of the pandemic, have employers retained their key workers and strengthened their reputations with their employees to

continue keeping them? Or are we about to see the biggest redeployment of staff with massive resignations as employees reassess their working and life priorities to depart in their droves for pastures new?

Once the workforce has the taste of flexible working opportunities, will future employees look for it on an ongoing basis? This is an opportunity for those in business whether in the corporate world, diplomatic world or in education, to stand out as a top employer at a time when in many instances staff bonuses and salaries are cut. You need something attractive to offer your star performers!

Since employers have widened their embrace of flexible staffing arrangements during the pandemic, the best will look at opportunities to develop this further and perhaps build a hybrid workforce for the future - one that includes both remote and on-site teams.

"A key reason is that so many businesses and their employees are discovering that productivity, rather than diminishing, often increases with remote work. However, it may still take time for some leaders, and even their workers,

to change their mindset about when and how work gets done".

Forbes: Laying the success for a future hybrid workforce: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/paulmcdonald/2020/12/16/laying-the-foundation-for-a-successful-hybrid-workforce/?sh=670c34d21e5c>

Employers who offer and encourage remote working conditions for their team members without them feeling guilty, will in the long term benefit strong mental health and wellbeing of the employees while creating loyalty and improving productivity.

Advantages to employee: A change is as good as a rest!

"That view and the sea air just energises me. We are convinced that rather than the beach being a tempting distraction, we are more focused and completely grateful for this opportunity"

Extending resilience



Many expatriates in key jobs are exhausted. Their workloads increased immeasurably because of this unplanned and unpredicted pandemic as companies scrambled to adapt to the new normal. Whilst once upon a time they were jet setting across the world for various meetings, now all that is needed to prepare for global meetings virtually. Coordinating the meeting time can be an issue. The European have it best in the eyes of Asian and American expats, as the only way to

successfully get a global team virtually together is to do it on European time. Worst still if here in Thailand you are working for a European company, your big boss has no idea!

Avoiding burn out

Burn out is a real threat now given the longevity of the situation. Most working expats didn't get where they are today in the immortal words of Reggie Perrin without a high degree of stamina and resilience, but this is uncharted territory.

Reducing stress

There has been no relief, the continued uncertainty of the global economic trading situation put immense stress on all aspects of the workforce. There has been no extended vacation. Sure, our families abroad see us on differing weekend escapes across Thailand, but gone is the annual home leave, a time to take a breath and concentrate on something different.



Any negative impacts of working remotely?

When asking around whether business has suffered because of the home team working situation, the general consensus is that people have proven that home working is possible when needed. Meetings by Zoom, Google Hangout or Teams work, helps business survive.

Sure, there are mumblings that 2020 was costly in terms of business innovation and development, without the water cooler meetings, and internal communications needing greater focus, but then everyone is in the same boat, but how many are at the same beach?!

Why is Phuket such a great choice to WFB workcation?

- Location (1 hour flight, flights more regular and cheaper than say Koh Samui)
- Medical support
- Cheap
- Used to internationals
- Welcoming

Medical Facilities:

Phuket's two main private hospitals, Phuket International Hospital and Bangkok Hospital Phuket are both staffed with doctors and coordinators who speak English and other foreign languages. We have a high degree of confidence in the medical facilities here in Phuket.

Our lifestyle here is cheaper than in Bangkok. My husband needed a medical exam to renew his driving license, it cost 100B here, and I paid 850B at my private hospital in Bangkok. The hotels and restaurants are offering unbelievable deals.

Phuket is used to the international visitors. We have found the English language and services excellent, better even than in Bangkok

Happily, I have found Phuket Immigration helpful when I needed to complete my 90 day report for my visa. All you need is a proof of local address, which can be registered for you by any hotel. Note, make sure you ask for a copy to show at Immigration. You can even do a drive through 90 day report. A huge cheer for Phuket Immigration.

Here are the answers to some of the questions asked by our friends about our WFB experience

Paying for an apartment or a condo in Bangkok and a hotel, or villa in Phuket – isn't that a waste of money? We are trying to stash and save.

We firmly believe life is too short not to be living to its best now and maximising of what is on offer here in Thailand. This is a temporary window of opportunity, once the tourists return prices will increase, beaches will fill up, it may be less attractive!

We are fortunate to have retained work, when many have lost their jobs or are on a reduced salary. Our expenditure in Phuket is providing us with work and income, and it is our way of putting something back into the local community.

I need to lead from the front; I can't be seen dossing off at the beach!

This was easier than we thought – apart from comments like “you look well, tanned, happy” the office life continues as always. We like to remind employers of the advantage as stated above!

My team in the office needs supervising, I need to be there.

In a previous life you were away from the workplace travelling the world the whole time anyway... your team coped. The bottom line is that working from Phuket you are only an hour's flight away. Easy and quick to return!

A healthier lifestyle

We are exercising more in Phuket, getting our 10,000 steps is no problem when we wake to the roar of the ocean, the birds singing and the beach waiting for us for an early morning stroll before work.

Saving annual leave

Many expats are trying to hold on to their precious annual leave holiday just in case the borders miraculously open up for home leave; a workcation gives you the best of both worlds.

We have found working from the beach far from being a distraction, gives a refreshed mindset. An early morning barefoot walk sets the day up nicely and certainly the post work winddown on the beach happens quicker than commute home on the BTS or sat in traffic on Sukhumvit Road.

Others around us enjoy greater productivity because of less distractions of being in the office, some says the distance helps with a sense of perspective.

Are we happier? Hell, yes!

Does being happier make us work harder, not as such, we are professionals but loving the working environment and being more positive does have an impact on all aspects of our lives, including work.



This is a new approach to working; you can demonstrate good business leadership by not being in the office!

I need to sign important banking documents which can't be handled electronically.

Come and take a bow Kerry Express, Thailand's leading parcel delivery service. It is impressive how quickly a package can get from Phuket to Bangkok given the traffic jams on Sukhumvit Road and other major traffic arteries in Bangkok. The Kerry Express next-day (ND) delivery service covers 99.9% of the Thai population and 97% of the parcels are delivered at the first attempt.

Our experience in Phuket is that same day delivery service works well, if a parcel is posted before lunchtime. Kerry Express has a strong presence in local communities with plenty drop off points. In a multitude of closed businesses, this one seems to be riding the storm well.

How to successfully WFB workcation

1. Try it short term, book into a hotel to initially test the waters! There are plenty of hotels around Thailand offering tempting deals, see below.
2. Go week by week and make connections with local expats. Here in Phuket my husband found a keen golf community; he could be playing every day if he was retired! The golfers are a welcoming group even with just the occasional golfer. This group has been a valuable source of information and can be a support group if needed for anything from IT help to renewing your Thai driving license in Phuket. Also, there are many International Women's Groups on the island who I have found welcoming.

3. Ensure you have the basics for working from another location. Check the Wi-Fi! We bought a keyboard and a mouse, we were lucky that the villa we rented has a decent desk, with a sea view of course, and a comfortable office chair. No one ever swapped regular office work for beach desk facing the sea to find they had less time at their desks.

Where can I go for a WFB workcation?

Here in Phuket, you have many options from villas to clever hotels unable to reach the international markets all are now reaching out for city dwellers within Thailand to make the 'oh so' attractive move.

We booked the Work and Play in Phuket package at the Pullman Phuket Arcadia 3999B net per night including breakfast with discounts for longer stays. If you are looking to combine a five star luxury work hard by day options, whilst still having a 'this is brilliant' conversation with your happy partner at dinner, look no further:

<https://www.pullmanphuketarcadia.com/specialoffers/>

Aleenta Phuket workcation package on Natai Beach in Phang Nga <https://www.aleenta.com/phuket/special-offers/workcation/> Prices start at 3,990B net for single occupancy includes working space, breakfast and daily gourmet lunch 3-night minimum stay: rsvn.aph@akaryn.com.

The Chava Resort: We always love the spacious apartments at The Chava on Surin beach, the Wi-Fi works well, the resort is stunning and Surin beach is one of our favourites. <https://thechavaresort.com/>

I hope this has given you and your partner some ideas to support you in your quest for a Thailand workcation lifestyle or at the very least a mini break. We can thoroughly recommend Phuket. The pearl of the Andaman Sea has so much to offer, for so little. Come join us!

About the author: Little Wandering Wren is an award winning travel writer and blogger with her nest in Thailand. In a previous life she was a Human Resources Manager which explains her interest in people management and organisational design and development. In Phuket she is on the way to achieving her life's goal to become a Zen Wren!





MOST WELCOME GUESTS – THE CHINESE IN THAILAND

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

The Thai-Chinese are the largest minority group in the country. They are also the largest overseas Chinese community in the world. With over 11 million people, the Chinese make up about 15% of Thailand's population. They are the oldest, most prominent and best integrated overseas Chinese community in history. About half of the ethnic Chinese in Thailand can trace their ancestry from Guangdong Province in SE China. For well over two centuries, the Thai-Chinese have been deeply involved into all elements of Thai society.

The Thai-Chinese are a very well established middle class ethnic group. They are well represented at all levels of Thai society. This group have always played a leading role in Thailand's business sector. They dominate the country's economy and finances even today. Additionally, they have a strong representation in Thai politics. It is very interesting to note that most of Thailand's former Prime Ministers and many parliamentary members have some Chinese ancestry. Chinese-Thai descendants are also well represented in Thailand's military and elite.

It has been noted by historians that from at least since the 13th century, Chinese traders started to arrive in Ayutthaya from Guangdong and Fujian Provinces. The Chinese did not achieve any prominence until after the fall of Ayutthaya to foreign invaders in 1767. An independent Thai general named Taksin, who escaped from Ayutthaya before its conquest, was the son of a Chinese immigrant. He quickly

gathered the remnants of the Thai army, reorganised and trained his troops and rapidly expelled the foreign invaders. When Taksin became King, he had a close relationship with his kinsmen and strongly encouraged more Chinese trade and immigration.

With massive corruption in the Qing dynasty in the early 19th century plus a massive population increase in China, reoccurring natural disasters like drought and flooding, internal rebellions plus a very high tax rate, these grave problems caused some men to leave China. Many emigrated to Thailand due to the many employment opportunities and the chances to advance themselves financially under a stable political regime. There were a lot of jobs due to an expanding economy, especially after Westerners were welcomed back in the early 1820s for trade, medicine, education and proselytising by missionaries. Also, some Thais shunned certain menial positions, hard labour or dangerous jobs they felt beneath them socially like rickshaw drivers, blacksmiths or stevedores.

The Chinese eagerly grabbed every employment opportunity available. These men were expected to send money back to their families if they were successful. During this early time, only men immigrated to Thailand. No women came, even if the men were married or had families. So, it became commonplace for single men to wed local Thai women. These families were called Sino-Thai. Such unions or mixed marriages started to rapidly decline in the early 20th century as greater numbers of Chinese women also began to emigrate to Thailand and married Chinese spouses. Immigration continued over the following years, and the Chinese population in Thailand jumped from 230,000 in 1825 to 792,000 by 1910.

As the Thai economy shifted away from royal controlled monopolies to international trade in later 19th century, due to the treaties between Western nations and Thailand, "tax farming" quickly became a very important source of new revenues for the government. Monopolies were granted on salt, gambling, opium, teak logging and other timber trade and in other areas. The Chinese immediately dominated all



these concessions by bidding more than other traders. But as the social ills associated with opium smoking and gambling became readily apparent the Thai government these concessions were ended and banned both activities.

When Thailand was struggling to defend its independence from the colonial powers in the later part of the 19th century, Chinese bandits from Yunnan Province, called Haws or Yunanese, began making raids into Northern Thailand. Due to the lack of transportation anywhere, these raids actually greatly spurred the development of national railways so troops could be quickly shifted to defend Thailand's borders. Thai nationalist attitudes at all levels began to be coloured by anti-Chinese sentiment.

Most of these new immigrants settled in Bangkok. These immigrants also brought agricultural innovations to rice farming and rubber plantations, but at the time the

Thai government was questioning their motives. Also, Sun Yat-sen was fomenting the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and visited Thailand in 1910. His visit helped to polarise the Imperial and nationalistic Chinese political elements here and also increased Thai government suspicions on the motives of the Chinese residents who were determined to integrate into the Thai society. King Rama VI (1910–1925) required the adoption of Thai surnames in 1913. This act was primarily directed at the Chinese community, so all the Chinese assumed Thai names. The government also started regulating Chinese schools even before compulsory education was established in the country, starting with the Private Schools Act of 1918. All Chinese newspapers except one were shut down and learning Chinese was discouraged, thus increasing assimilation.

In 1932, the Primary Education Act mandated the

Thai language would be compulsory in all schools. But Thai-Chinese strongly protested this edict. In 1933, a new regulation required all foreign teachers to pass a Thai language test and for principals of all schools to implement new education standards that were established by the Thai Ministry of Education. By 1939, Thai-Chinese students were finally permitted two hours per week of Mandarin Chinese instruction. The Chinese in Thailand did experience some discrimination between the 1930s to 1950s under the military dictatorship of Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkhram.





It is ironic to note that Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram had part-Chinese ancestry. With the forced alliance of Thailand with Japan in 1941 the Chinese faced more restrictions with new taxes and controls with the government taking over some commodities previously controlled by Chinese businesses.

By the late 1950s, the Thai-Chinese completely dominated all aspects of Bangkok's and Thailand's economy. It was estimated that 90% of Thailand's commercial and industrial capital was held by the Thai-Chinese. The same percentage was also estimated on the number of shares held in Thai corporations. It was also estimated that this group controlled 50% of all finance and banking investments. Traditionally, there has always been something of a lack of an indigenous commercial culture in the country. It has also been estimated that 25 of the leading entrepreneurs in the country, 23 are fully or partially Thai-Chinese. Of the country's most 70 powerful business groups, the Thai-Chinese families controls virtually all of them. It is a given that the businesses are passed down from one generation to the next. The Thai-Chinese overwhelmingly dominate the manufacturing sector and half the service sector.

By 1970, the overwhelming majority of Thai-Chinese had been granted Thai citizenship as they abandoned their Chinese citizenship. In 1975 diplomatic relations were finally established between Thailand and China. With the rapid rise of China as a global economic power over the past several decades, many Thai-Chinese business families have sought to learn the Chinese Mandarin dialect in order to help or cement their business relations between the two countries. Thai-Chinese families are encouraging their children to also learn Mandarin, but also Thai families are equally interested in encouraging their children to do exactly the same thing in order to boost their career and business opportunities in the future.

In 1994, one financial analyst based in Singapore estimated that of the 500 largest public corporations controlled by overseas Chinese in Asia, there were 39 companies based in Thailand. They had a combined market capitalisation of USD\$35 billion and total assets of USD\$94 billion. Thai-Chinese also control the country's largest banks including Bangkok Bank, Thai Farmers Bank and Bank of Ayudhya. Thai-Chinese families are an important part of what is called the "Bamboo" network. This term describes the extensive network of overseas Chinese businesses that are located in SE Asian markets that share common cultural ties, language, ethnic and family connections.

By the early part of the 21st century, the Thai-Chinese had maintained their dominant role in all aspects of the Thai economy and their strong representation at every level of Thai society that continues up to today. There never has been any question that they have maintained this important role in Thailand's important spheres of influence over the many decades. It has been said by some that the Thai-Chinese economic power is far greater than their proportion of the Thai population taken at face value. The Thai-Chinese have a very powerful economic presence and a significant representation among the wealthiest citizen of the kingdom.

This distinctly prominent Sino-Thai business community has emerged as the most important economic group. It controls virtually all major business sectors here. The Thai economy is highly dependent on Thai-Chinese business investors. Their support is enhanced by political parties and lawmakers many of whom are of Thai-Chinese heritage. Their influence in both Thailand, SE Asia and Asia cannot be overstated. They are an economically powerful and important social class.



ROYAL TURF: SANAM LUANG

by *Leonard H. Le Blanc III*

Of all the major or important sights in Bangkok that have changed the least, then Sanam Luang (Thai: สนามหลวง, or literally "royal turf") is most likely at the top of the list. The spacious grounds has served a multitude of official and unofficial functions for almost two and a half centuries. The royal field is an important part of modern Thai history and its national culture having had so many important events and rituals held in the public park.

Sanam Luang was laid out during the construction of the Grand Palace complex in 1782, when the capital was moved from the Thon Buri side of the Chao Phraya River to Bangkok. Sanam Luang now measures 74.5 rai, 119,200m² or almost 30 acres. It is considered both an open field and public square. Officially, Sanam Luang is known as "Thung Phra Men" or (the royal cremation ground; Thai:ทุ่งพระเมรุ). It has also been referred to as the Royal Park, the Royal Field and the Royal Grounds for the many royal or official ceremonies held there. It is a public square situated right in front of the Grand Palace. Sanam Luang has been frequently used as a site for the cremation of royal family members, including many of Thailand's kings, queens, royal princes and princesses plus other nobility since the reign of King Rama I.

The first royal cremation at Sanam Luang was King Rama I's brother, the vice-king or prince-successor, who occupied the Front Palace, a royal residence nearby the Grand Palace. King Rama II followed this tradition by both performing royal ceremonies at Sanam Luang and conducting the cremation rites of his closest brother, also a vice-king or prince-successor. During King Rama III's reign, Thailand entered into a dispute with Vietnam over Cambodia's border demarcation. Since "farangs" were starting to return to Thailand at this time, the king wanted to demonstrate to them, and all other nations, that his country was a flourishing, prosperous nation. So Sanam Luang was converted into a rice field. Even the grounds in front of the Grand Palace were placed into rice cultivation. When the grounds were needed

for a royal funeral, Sanam Luang was covered over with dirt for the cremation ceremony. There was a barn nearby to store the rice husks.

In 1855, King Mongkut (King Rama IV) changed its name from "Thung Phra Men" to "Thong Sanam Luang". The name was later shortened to "Sanam Luang" and is now of common usage. King Mongkut also established Sanam Luang as the site for the ancient ritual, the Royal Ploughing Ceremony. Low walls were placed on the grounds and a small pavilion was erected to house a Buddha statue for the ceremony. There were other pavilions and towers placed on the grounds including one for the king so he could watch the ceremony. Next to the king's pavilion a stage was erected so plays could be performed as part of the ploughing ceremony to appear the ancient spirits.

King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) enlarged the grounds. He also ordered all the old buildings dismantled that had been previously used. Rice growing was discontinued as the space was needed for Bangkok's centennial celebration in 1897 when King Rama V returned from his European tour. He also ordered two rows of tamarind trees to be planted that encircled the park. By 1900 Sanam Luang was the site of Bangkok's first golf course and race course. This was due to more foreign visitors and residents. In a July 1901 local newspaper article it mentioned that "farangs" doing snipe hunting in the park. Kite flying has always been a popular sport there.

King Vajiravudh (King Rama VI) continued his predecessors use of Sanam Luang for conducting various ceremonies. King Bhumibol Adulyadej (King Rama IX) also sponsored the Royal Ploughing Ceremony each May. Other celebrations conducted during his reign were the 1982 bicentennial celebration of Bangkok's founding and the grand celebration of the King's golden jubilee in 1996. Royal cremations included those for King Ananda Mahidol (King Rama VIII) in 1950, Queen Vadhana in 1956, Queen Rambhanni Barni in 1986. Princess Mother Srinagar Indra in 1996, Princess Galyani Vadhana in 2008, and Princess Bejaratana Rajasuda in 2012. On 26 October 2017, King Rama IX was cremated in the most ornate and lavish funeral ceremony the country has witnessed in a 50 metre high pyre.

Sanam Luang holds a very special place in the hearts and minds of all Thais.

SONGKRAN

by Ruth Gerson

Thais love a party! And indeed, the annual calendar is packed with cultural events and festivities, each month offering a colourful experience. The festival that marks the start of the Thai New Year in the month of April is Songkran - the focal holiday of Thai culture. The customary three days of celebrations embrace the rites of spring, family gatherings honouring the elderly, acts of purification, Buddhists rituals, and the now very popular water splashing revelry. It is the time to clean the house and burn the old refuse thus hoping to be rid of all the bad luck of the old year, and start anew with a clean slate, so to speak.

The name Songkran is derived from the ancient Sanskrit. Using ancient astrology to determine the position of the sun in the sky, it literally describes its monthly movement within the zodiac from one sphere to the next. In April the sun leaves the sphere of Aries and enters that of Taurus, a period known as Maha Songkran or the Great Songkran. It is believed that the festival of Songkran was introduced into Thailand from India where the festival of Holi is still celebrated. The theme of water splashing during the hot season has been so well integrated into SE Asian cultures that most countries neighbouring to Thailand have their own water festivals, from the Southwestern province of Yunnan in China, to Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. The purpose of water is manifold, as it is used for cooling, for symbolising the act of purification, and for invoking the life giving monsoon rains.

At present the official cultural Thai New Year falls in April, the fifth month of the Thai lunar calendar (the first month being December). At one time this holiday was celebrated by Tai of Yunnan on the first lunar month, a more befitting date. It is explained, however, that the cultivation of rice was a major factor for the change, as the Tai originated from China where harvest time was different from that of tropical Thailand, and subsequently they adopted the highly skilled agricultural system of the



Mon-Khmer. Denis Segaller, an author and expert on Thai culture reinforced this idea with his comment that present day Songkran depends on the cycle of rice cultivation, “with the rice harvesting finished, and the planting of the new crop not yet begun,” a time when people can relax. Another possible reason was that the astrological configuration in the April sky was considered more favourable, and the Thai are great believers in these astral phenomena. It is interesting to note that for years Songkran was the official Thais New Year. In 1888 King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) adopted the Thai version of the solar calendar called Suriyakhati, based on the Gregorian calendar, Suriya being the Hindu sun god. Consequently, the King moved the official New Year to 1 January to

conform with most of the world.

Originally a lunar holiday, Songkran is now a fixed date on the Thai calendar to accommodate modern times, and is officially celebrated in most regions in the country from



the 13th to 15th of April. However, in recent years the three days have been stretched out to five days and occasionally even longer. In the Northern city of Chiang Mai this festival lasts up to a week and is lavishly and recklessly celebrated, as do the Mon people in Prapadaeng, in the harbour area of Bangkok. The latter celebrate Songkran one week after the rest of Thailand. In Chiang Mai the Buddha image is taken out on procession, as is the custom in numerous Thai cities and towns, but appears to be in a much more elaborate fashion than seen anywhere including Bangkok. Just ahead of the Buddha image is the Songkran Queen, chosen from the beautiful young women of Chiang Mai.

She rides a mythical animal, usually the one symbolising the year to come. These animals represent the twelve year cycle of the zodiac introduced into Northern Thailand by the migrating Tai from Southern China around the 13th century.

On the eve of Songkran, every house is thoroughly cleaned and old refuse is burned so as not to carry bad luck or anything harmful into the New Year, with hopes of starting everything afresh. Another old tradition is the setting off of firecrackers to frighten away any bad spirits that may lurk about from the old year. This day is known as Tarusa Suta Pi, the last day of the old year. Wan Songkran or Songkran Day, the first day of the year, is also known as Wan Thaloeng Sok. This day was believed to have been the peak of the hot season when the hours of the day and night were equally divided.

Early in the morning of Songkran Day people pay respects to the monks by bringing offerings of food prepared the previous day. This is customarily a temple ritual which enables the public to acquire merit, an important act in the lives of Thai people that is carried out all year long. In recent years hundreds of monks have gathered at the Pramane Ground to receive alms from the public, enabling the many people of Bangkok to carry out this important meritorious act.

In the early afternoon, Buddha images are taken out of temples for ritual bathing and are sprinkled with lustral water by devotees. A most revered image in Bangkok is the Phra Phuttha Sihing, housed in the National Museum's Buddhaisawan Chapel. The image is taken out to the Pramane Ground every year for the public to pay their respects. Before placing the image in the elevated pavilion erected for the purpose, it is carried around the city to allow a greater number of people to receive merit. Once in place, the image is sprinkled by thousands of people who also free birds from their cages and release fish into rivers so as to gain additional merit and good fortune.

The act of purification is also performed on Buddha images in private home shrines, on family elders, and on specially revered monks and village elders who are father figures to their communities.

Songkran is a time for family gatherings, when young members bringing gifts visit their elders, pour scented water over the palms of their hands, and receive blessings in return. In the past, these respected elderly relatives were bathed and dressed in new garments brought as gifts for the New Year. The traditional gentle water sprinkling that takes place within families has escalated outdoors into public splashing, dousing by the bucketfuls. No one is spared a generous dose of water in this mischievous merriment and all participate good naturedly. Moreover, nobody seems to mind getting drenched, as April is the hottest month of the year and a shower can be most welcome, dress and all. The water throwing has a further purpose than just having fun. It is an old belief that if one walks around soaking wet, it is a hint to heaven to send down rain. In the agricultural regions of Thailand rain is of prime importance.





water splashing festival.

Khun Somlak Charoenpot, former Deputy Director General of the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture explains the reasons for the change in nature of the celebrations: "The concept of Songkran is still the same today as in the past but due to changes in social and economic conditions it became a target for tourism and thus some of the different ways in celebrating the event appear."

Also well liked at this time is the dabbing and smearing of white powder or paste on revellers' faces. It is one of the oldest Songkran traditions and is believed to protect the person, warding off evil; traditionally the paste has been applied by an older person. This

Today's celebrations of Songkran with raging water battles that use powerful water guns and water hoses have moved away from the traditional festivity. "In the old days Songkran was full of meaning, but today much of the holiday's spiritual aspect is gone. People just think of having a good time," says Khun Euayporn Kerdchouay, Siam Society Senior Consultant. And indeed, it seems that this age old holiday has grown into a water festival to please the young and the tourists who visit Thailand. A good example are the annual festivities on Khao San Road, a backpackers' enclave, and the more recent municipality sanctioned festival on Silom Road that closes for traffic on this occasion. Both locations draw huge crowds, as do other designated spots in the city and which are very popular. In fact, the result of the water festival has been so successful that last year Singapore staged its own

custom grew out of the practice by Buddhist monks who use chalky white powder to bless people, places and items on which they put their distinctive mark. The paste, the water, and even ice stuffed down people's shirts have gotten out of hand as the festival of Songkran continues to evolve. The Venerable Phra Kantasilo articulates, "In recent years, the observance of Songkran amongst Thai youth has taken on a particularly sinister mood, hardly resembling the fun and innocent practices of bygone years." Philip Cornwel-Smith, author on Thai culture explains the importance of such outlets for energy, "The sanuk surplus acts as a social safety valve," providing a much needed outlet for the stress of daily life.

For years Songkran has been the time for courting, when young men of one village woo the girls of another. These lively events begin on the afternoon of first day of Songkran when groups of young men and women play old courting games believed to be a vestige of an ancient culture and referred to by some scholars as 'mating games'. One such game still widely played in Thailand today is the game of saba, in which both sexes participate. Generally girls of one village play with boys from another village as this flirtatious game often leads to marriage, thus eliminate the pairing of those who may be related. They sit opposite each other in a small, enclosed arena and take turns in carrying a flat, rounded piece of wood on one foot while hopping on the other. The object of the game is to knock down a similar piece of wood, perched on its side in front of a person of the opposite sex. Both success and failure elicit further flirting and teasing.

Songkran serves a multitude of religious and social functions. Its festivals are celebrated with great zeal, including parades, carnivals, and beauty contests, while music blares and great quantities of food and rice liquor are consumed. On the first afternoon, a Nang Songkran or Miss Songkran is chosen to reign over the festival. She is led in procession seated on an animal figure representing the day of the week on which Wan Songkran falls that year. There are seven such animals. The Garuda, for example, stands for Sunday while a tiger is for Monday. These figures derive from an ancient





Hindu legend telling of a god who had lost a bet and in the process also lost his head. His seven daughters ensured that his memory lived on by parading his head once a year.

This procession still continues as part of the Songkran festival; the severed head, however, has been replaced by seven different creatures, each corresponding to one of the god's daughters.

A tradition practiced on the second day of Songkran is the building of sand chedi. Although predominantly a Northern custom, sand chedi have become a popular way of devotion in many regions of Thailand. A sacred structure, the chedi symbolises the place where the Buddha's ashes were kept. Wealthy people often add new structures to a temple compound usually in the form of a chedi. The poor emulate this meritorious act by constructing a representation of a chedi, a small one made of sand, in a designated area of the temple. As in permanent chedi, small items such as coins, bodhi leaves and Buddha images are placed in the core of the sand chedi. Likewise, these tiny structures are decorated with colourful flags,



topped by candles, incense sticks, and flowers. The completed sand chedi are sprinkled with scented water and some temples award prizes to the most beautiful ones. This custom is also a symbolic replacement of sand which may have clung to devotees' shoes and inadvertently carried out of the temple.

The Songkran festival goes on for several days, a welcome respite from work and daily routines, and a temporary diversion from the summer heat. Special food served in central Thailand at this time is khao che which is cooked rice soaked in aromatic cold water surrounded by delicate dishes of food, a dish inherited from the Mon, while glutinous rice cakes is the fare in Northern Thailand.

The water festival is not unique to Thailand although its celebrations are known worldwide. In Asia both Buddhist and Hindu enjoy water festivities, such as several states in India and some of Thailand's neighbouring countries. Myanmar celebrates Thingyan, Laos has Songkran or Boun Pi Mai, and Cambodia observes Chaul Chnam Thmey literally meaning to enter the new year, all celebrated like Songkran in Thailand with similar traditions and practices, as well the as the mythical tales that accompany this holiday. In Sri Lanka the holiday is called Aluth Avurudda while in Tamil Nadu it is Puthandu, Bohag Bihu in Assam, and in Orissa Pana Sankranti also known as Mesha Sankranti. In South India, especially in Karnataka, a festival called Okhali or Okhli is celebrated.

People there keep a barrel of water in their home mixed with chalk and turmeric which they throw on others. Bengali New Year includes East India and Bangladesh and is known as Pohela Boishakh. Here not much water is splashed but the lively parades are reminiscent of those in Thailand, only more colourful. Holi, a Hindu water and colour festival, is celebrated in India about a month before all these other water festivals, all of which amazingly fall on April 14th.

Interestingly, there are some water festivals in Europe as well. Hungary has a traditional event in which people get soaked, especially women, while Poland, Slovakia and parts of the Czech Republic splash people with water during the Easter celebrations.

Fortunately, beneath some rough festivities of Songkran remains a culture that is still intact and celebrated in a serious manner. It is practically a must for young people to return home on this landmark holiday to pay respects to the elders at home. As Bangkok is the hub of employment for thousands of upcountry people, particularly for those from Isaan, a great exodus is to be expected as the holiday nears. No matter the fashion in which Songkran will be celebrated, it remains the corner stone of Thai culture.



ten thousand, time, two, universe, violin, week, woman and you.

Mural of Ramakien at Emerald Buddha Temple (Wat Phra Kaew) in Bangkok

“Ramakien” means the glory of Rama, this originated from the Hindu epic “Ramayana”, and it places a very important role in Thai literature. Many Thai people know this story, how Lord Rama was gracious, how Hanuman was brave, and how the evil king “Thotsakan” was full of jealousy, anger, and endless greed. Some part of this story can be seen on the mural at Emerald Temple. Thai

King Rama II, rewrote this Ramakien version for Khon (Thai traditional performance) drama.

FESTIVALS IN ASIA

by Masako Tsuruta

There are many cultural festivals in April and May in Thailand, China, India and Japan. Here are just some of them.

1: Thai and Indian culture

In April, there is the famous Thai New Year “Songkran Festival” in Thailand. This year Songkran falls on April 13-15th. The word “Songkran” comes from Sanskrit word meaning, “approaching”.

Thai vocabulary derived from Sanskrit

According to the Wikipedia, not only this word “Songkran”, but over half of the Thai vocabulary is derived from Sanskrit language in India. This clearly shows us that there are some strong cultural connection between Thailand and India.

Lists of Thai vocabulary derived from Sanskrit: adversary, air, animal, apartment, association, bay, blame, boat, building, bus, castle, cloud, company, computer, danger, desk, design, destruction, food, fund, Goddess, glass, grape, great, head, hell, hope, human being, king, intelligence, language, life, living, lion, live, long, loyal, moon, mosque, mountain, name, noodles, paper, perfect, picture, raspberry, review, saddle, science, snow, soap, special, storm, suffering, taste, teacher, temple,

New Year Celebrations in April in India

Thai Songkran Festival falls on April 13th. In India, this day is called “Ugadi”, to celebrate New Year for Deccan region that includes State of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka. There is a spiritual significance added according to Indian mythology. This is the day that Lord Brahma started his work, and Lord Rama returned back home after his 14 years of exile in Dandakaranya forest in India.

On April 14th is Tamil New Year in the state of Tamil Nadu, on April 15th is Bengali New Year in the state of Bengali.

Vesak (Buddha Jayanthi, Buddha Poornima)

Almost 95% of Thai are Buddhists. The founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha was born in ancient India (5th to 4th century BCE). In 1950 in Sri Lanka, during the first fellowship of Buddhists, “Vesak” day was declared to celebrate as the



Buddha's birthday. This holy day is called "Buddha Poornima in India, Wisakhbucha in Thai, Buddha's Birthday in China, Hanamatsuri in Japan.

2: Japanese Festival between April and May

Between April and May, there are around 118 festivals in Japan. The most significant one is Kyoto's "Miyako Odori", Onbayashi matsuri at Suwa Nagano, Ohanami, Hanamatsuri, Asakusa Sanja Matsuri at Tokyo.

Miyako Odori

Miyako Odori, the showcase of Geisha's dance and music public show started in 1872 in Kyoto. This rare Geisha's annual public entertainment show can be only seen from April 1st till 23rd, 24, 27 or 30th. Advance booking and reservation must be done through official agents only.

Onbashira Matsuri

Onbayashi Matsuri is one of the top three unique Japanese festivals. This festival is done at the Suwa Taisha where people worship Japanese Shinto Gods of harvests, wind, water, and agriculture.

Ohanami

Ohanami simply means cherry blossom viewing in English. It started during Heian period, around 812AD among aristocrats and royal families. In 1598, the most extravagant ohanami was conducted by "Shogun Toyotomi".



After over a century and half passed, Japanese people still enjoys ohanami. Nowadays, people love to eat, drink Sake, and sing karaoke under and/or beside cherry blossom trees.

Hanamatsuri

This year May 19th is the Hanamatsuri day. English translation of this days is Buddha's Birthday or Buddha Poornima. The first official ceremony of this day was conducted by Shotoku Taishi in 606AD, April 8th. The present, Japanese offer specially brewed tea over small Buddha's statute that right hand points at sky, and left hand points at the earth.

Asakusa Sanja Matsuri

This is one of the three greatest matsuri (festival) in Tokyo, and the widest and largest one in Japan. It is held on the third weekend of every May at Asakusa, Tokyo. There are over hundred Mikoshi carried by Shinto Gods' worshippers including small children and women.



3: Chinese cultural influence in Thailand

Many Thai are of Chinese origin. Nowadays approximately 14% of the Thai population can still speak Chinese. A span of over 200 years, Thai Chinese is now deeply rooted in Thai society. King Ram I, the founder of present Chakri Dynasty was of Chinese descent.

There are Teochew, Yunnanese, Hokkien and Hakka ethnicity groups in Chinese community in Thailand. Teochew people came via Gulf of Siam by boat and arrived at Chonburi and Samut Prakan. Many of them settled around Chao Phraya River in Bangkok. Hokkiens were good sailors and many of them settled in Southern Thailand including Songkhla, Satun and Phuket. Many big rice traders are Hokkien descendants. Hakka people are seen mainly in Chiang Mai, Phuket and central western provinces. Many private banks were owned by Hakka descendants. The most notable one is the Kasikorn Bank owning family. Yunnanese descendants are seen around Chiang Rai province.

Taochiao (fermented bean paste), soy sauce, tofu, Ba Mii, Khanom Jiin, Guay Chap, Guay Tiaw, Salapao, Khao Kha Moo were brought to Thailand by these Chinese ethnic groups.

Historical background

Ayuthaya was under Burmese's attack from 16th century onwards. From 1766-1769, Emperor Qianlong in China sent his armies four times to subdue the Burmese army, but failed. In 1825, there were 230,000 Chinese lived in Thailand, that grew till 792,000 in 1910, approximately 12.2% of Thai population. Mainly these Chinese immigrants were men, and later they married to Thai women. Their children were called Shino Thai or Luk-Jin in Thai. In the early 20th century, many Chinese women immigrated to Thailand. From 1882 to 1917, around 13,000 to 34,000 Chinese from Southern China entered to Thailand yearly. Most of them settled in Bangkok. By 1970, more than 90% of Chinese born in Thailand, abandoned their Chinese citizenship and obtained Thai citizenship. In 1975, diplomatic tie between China and Thailand was established.

Chinese New Year

This year, the Thai Government officially announced Chinese New Year as an official holiday in Thailand.

Qingming Festival on April 4th

Qingming (ancestor's day) normally occurs around April 4 to 6th, that is, the 15th day of the Spring Equinox. This day is designated for cleaning and sweeping graves and for worshipping ancestors by offering food and burning incense. Qingming is a public holiday in China.

Qingming (ancestor's day) normally occurs around April 4 to 6th, that is the 15th day from the Spring Equinox. This day is designed for cleaning and sweeping the graves, and for worship ancestors by offering food and burning incense. This Qingming is a public holiday in China. Qingtuan (green dumpling made of glutinous rice and barely grass, filled with red or black bean paste) is the famous food to be offered.

Water splashing festival in Xishuangbanna, China

April 13-15th is the water splashing festival days for Dai ethnic minority in China. It is very similar to the Songkran festival in Thailand.

Thai Chinese Business Entrepreneur

Many Thai Chinese has well established business, and representing all levels of Thai society. Today, we can say that they lead a prominent role both in business and political sectors in Thailand.





The happiest (and wettest) time of the year in Thailand: Songkran

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

The worst thing any Thai can say about anything is that it's "boring." Happily for everyone, except a few clueless "farang" businessmen who never get the word about what to do (or wear) during the old Thai new year's day celebration (and are always perfect targets for merry-makers being in a suit and tie), Songkran (Thai: เทศกาลสงกรานต์), also called the "Water Festival" is guaranteed fun. It marks the start of the new year on the solar or astronomical calendar and the astrological calendar.

Thailand's old new year's day is now celebrated on 13 April. It has become one of the most important national holidays. The holiday period usually extends for three days or even longer, depending if new year's day falls on a weekend and if the Thai government approves the extension. The word "Songkran" is derived from the Sanskrit word "Sankranti", an Ancient Hindu new year's festival. It literally means astrological passage. It can also mean movement, transformation or change. It refers to the ascent of Aries from Pisces on the astrological chart or the start of the astrological new year. But astronomically, it coincides with the passage of the sun directly overhead in SE Asia or as it appears in the highest position in the sky on the earth's transit around the sun.

The traditional Western new year is now celebrated on 1st January in Thailand. But Songkran was celebrated as the official new year until 1888 when the new year's day celebration was moved back to 1st April. In 1940, this date was finally shifted to the traditional western new year's day

celebration on 1st January in line with the modernisation programme in the country. Songkran then became a national holiday. Some researchers say technically the name should be "Maha Songkran" of "Great Songkran". Each monthly passage of the zodiac marks the change from one astronomical month or sign to another. These passages are also referred to as a "Songkran".

Normally here in Thailand Songkran lasts for three days. Astrologically, the first day of the celebration, 13 April, is called "Maha Songkran" or Great Songkran, the last day of the old year. The second day of the celebration, 14 April, is called "Wan Nao" which is the transition day between the old and new year. The third day of the celebration, 15 April, is called "Wan Thaloeng Sok" which is the first day of the new year or the start of the new astrological era.

Since the actual solar year lasts about 365 1/4 days, Songkran has not always fallen on 13 April. There have been adjustments to the New Years Day over the centuries by periodically adding a day to the year to keep the astronomical and astrological years in alignment. For example, in the year 1600 Songkran was celebrated starting on 7th April. By the year 1900, the new year's day celebration had been moved back to 12th April. In 1989, the Thai cabinet set Songkran as 12-14th April, in spite of the correct starting new year's date of 13th April. In the West, this extra accumulation of time is added as one extra day every four years on 29th February in the years that are divided by four (i.e.; 2016, 2020, 2024, etc.) and another day for years that are divided by 400 on 30 February (i.e., 1600, 2000, etc.).

The Songkran festival is rich in symbolic traditions and meanings. In the morning there is merit making with offerings of food and other needed items to Buddhist monks and local temples, the most common way to start the celebration. In an old tradition that is still widely practiced, pouring water on Buddhist statues and on the hands of the monks. Also pouring water on the young and elderly is also a way of showing respect. This action symbolises the washing away of one's sins and bad luck plus the purification. This festival is also a time when people who have moved away from their traditional villages return home to spend time with their family and friends. Paying reverence to ancestors is also an important part of the festival.

For better or worse, the time honoured traditions of sprinkling water on hands or shoulders has morphed into copious water throwing, especially by raucous teenagers, by the bucketloads on anyone lucky (or unlucky) enough to pass by. Few targets are spared, but overall Songkran means fun, and an enjoyable time for all.



Easter in the pandemic

by Waleska Nascimento

Easter of 2020 had a pandemic, and unfortunately, Easter 2021 will have a continuation of that pandemic. Such a situation brings the only objective, to lead the Christian people, communities of faith and people of goodwill to think, evaluate and identify ways to overcome the polarisations and violence that mark the current world. It brings us together to reflect on this devastating world problem that affects not only our health, but the environment, the family, the economy and all matters that contribute to the flow of life.

The history of Easter

The Christian Easter is based on the Passover of Jewish origin. In addition, a celebration in the Western world was influenced by elements of the pagan culture of Germanic peoples. Easter is the principal festival on the Christian calendar and has its origins based on both Jewish tradition and pagan elements that were collected from Christianised peoples, such as the Germans. This celebration has a moving date and its Christian meaning recalls the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The Easter, the English word Easter, which parallels the German word Ostern, is of uncertain origin.

Passover

The Christian Passover is based on the Passover (“pesach”, in Hebrew), celebration of Jewish tradition that recalls the liberation of the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. The Passover celebrated by the Hebrews was held around the time that marked the beginning of spring. In Jewish tradition, this feast in reference to the liberation from slavery in Egypt was a direct order from Yahweh to Moses. (Exodus 12:21-27)

Christian Easter

Although Christianity emerged from a sect derived from Judaism, the meaning of the Christian Easter is different, as it recalls the three days of death until Christ's resurrection. Christ's resurrection is one of the main pillars of the Christian faith, which highlights the importance of this feast on the religion calendar. Christ, seen as the Lamb of God, offered himself in sacrifice to save humanity from sin. After being crucified and killed, he was resurrected after three days. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ would have happened exactly at the time of the Jewish festival, which created a parallel between the two celebrations.

In the Catholic Christian tradition, Easter ends Lent, which is basically a forty day period marked by fasting. The last week of Lent, called Holy Week, begins with Palm Sunday, which marks Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem; passes through Good Friday, which makes reference to the death of Christ; and is completed on Easter Sunday, which celebrates Christ's resurrection. The date of Easter was instituted by the Church during the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. The Church determined that the first full moon after the spring equinox would be the date to commence the commemoration of Easter. The equinox marks the beginning of spring in the Northern hemisphere.



Pagan elements at Easter

Christianity, in general, during the process of converting pagan Germanic peoples, appropriated innumerable traditions of these peoples. Easter, especially in the Northern hemisphere, has some associations with pagan traditions. Some historians relate Easter to the cult of the Germanic goddess Eostern, also called Ostara. The term Easter in English and German, in fact, most likely has its origin based on this goddess.

Easter, the English term for Easter (note the similarity to the name “Eostern”); Ostern, the German term for Easter (note the similarity to the name “Ostara”).

The parties that took place between Germanic and Celtic peoples for this goddess were held at the same time as the Christian festival. With the Christianisation of these peoples, the traditional pagan festival was mixed with the Christian celebration.

Easter symbols – the rabbit and eggs – are also attributed to pagan elements. It is believed that eggs and rabbits were seen by people in antiquity as symbols of fertility. Thus, as these peoples were Christianised, these elements were absorbed by the Christian feast. The tradition of decorating eggs and hiding them would have reached the American continent through German immigrants in the 18th century.

What will be your Easter in 2021?

Staying inside your bubble is much more comfortable for those who gloat over the sharing experience. The world is at a vulnerable time in terms of health, economics, politics, and so many other social weaknesses. The complacency and the selfishness of not perceiving the other, is called disunity, because in order to do something concrete, it is necessary to dispose of: structures, ideologies, proselytisms and also yourself. Now what is divided has to be unified.

With the pandemic, social differences broke out even more. The life of the population, especially the perception of the great problems that affect, above all, the poor people, who do not always have anyone to turn to in their suffering due to unjust situations. And it is known, a people that questions hunger, misery, violence, can awaken to think and act organic, besides to community.

This moment invites you to renew yourself. Be a new person. The self of human aid. The self of empathy and resilience. Regardless of belief, be someone's Easter. Make your Easter different. Take the resurrection of your attitudes to the mountain: Denounce the violence against people, peoples and the creation, especially those that use the name of Jesus; Encourage justice to restore people's dignity, to overcome conflicts and to achieve social reconciliation; Encourage engagement in concrete actions of love for the person close to you; Promote the conversion to a culture of love instead of a culture of hate; Strengthen and celebrate ecumenical and inter religious coexistence.

Let us keep the message of the Holy Pope in our minds and hearts:

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem” (Mt 20:18)

Lent: a Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love





JUST DO IT, REACH OUT

by Alice Osborne

Now is the best time to build
social and professional circles

When visiting family in Bangkok last March for what I thought might be a slightly longer Easter break than normal, little could I have imagined finishing university remotely and still being here over a year on. As a 22-year-old setting up my career and social circle in Bangkok from pretty much zero, with a pandemic thrown into the mix just to add to the challenge, have definitely learnt a lot about building my networks.

Over the last year I've chatted (physically and online) with school students, graduates, parents, teachers, alumni, entrepreneurs, SME owners and corporate CEOs. Still seems crazy to me that I have 1. Gained the confidence to go out and do that and 2. Had people be so receptive to meet with me! I've thoroughly enjoyed reconnecting with the old, maintaining existing, and creating new relationships.

Reconnecting with old friends and making new ones

With an abundance of time on everyone's hands it was so fulfilling to bolster current and rekindle past relationships during lockdown. But upon easing of the restrictions

in Thailand came the realisation that I actually had no friends based in Thailand anymore from the Bangkok Patana school days.

A dinner with four alumni one evening quickly turned into a reunion for more than twenty! Going into this network with no expectations, I was taken aback by how easy it was to get on with so many likeminded people. The speed of building strong friendships has been so rapid, especially since we are all super excited to be able to interact with people outside our immediate households.

Through this practice of contacting people, I had vaguely known at school or never met before but were friends of friends, I have found a solid base of besties to navigate young professional life within Bangkok.

Approaching those that are lesser known

After the challenge of making new friends, came that of finding a job. Graduating from university and coming into the daunting reality of mass youth unemployment, with recent grads vying for a much reduced number of vacancies, made it extra difficult to know where to start the job hunt...

So, I reached out to existing and new contacts on LinkedIn, asking for advice not a job. I quickly realised it was about not focusing on the easy networks. The biggest surprises came from mobilising my weakest ties with people I either didn't see very often, didn't know well or even at all. Then coupling the input from my parents and friends who understand me, in contrast with these new connections who didn't, enabled creative and realistic thinking about my future.

Discomfort and Unfamiliarity are great teachers

Talking with people I had never thought possible to approach or connect with in the pre-Covid world has stimulated conversation about career opportunities that were never on my previous radar. Starting my first ever job working in the unfamiliar concentration of blockchain technology, with undefined responsibilities as is the nature of a start-up, led me to discover an unexpected affinity for content writing. By doing new and different work with new and different people, I am learning a lot about what brings out the best in me. It's been such a rewarding experience to have unexpected doors open and contribute to the success of my connections in return.



Who doesn't love a casual chat over coffee?

Over this last year of craziness, feel that I've met some of my biggest cheerleaders both personally and professionally. Everyone is clearly attaching a whole new level of importance to social interaction and relationships so there is no better time to reconnect with old acquaintances or reach out to form new bonds. People may not have money right now, but they do have time and are eager to meet! Especially in Thailand, where the pandemic is fortunately under control, it is a great time to invite someone you wouldn't previously have dreamed accessible for a coffee. Odds are they have the time that they may not have again when the world fully reopens.

Following up for unexpected opportunities

Following up with new connections has driven several fruitful opportunities so far, including this writing gig for Expat Life in Thailand! Even in the new normal of social distancing and virtual meetings, I've still been able to expand my network and develop solid professional relationships.

Recently connected with a newsletter author for example, just because I liked an article they wrote. Now am in the process of exploring an exciting opportunity for me to engage with China – which is close to my heart having lived there and speaking Chinese – through translating local news not featured in mainstream Western media.





Sukhothai: UNESCO World Heritage City

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

Historical city of Sukhothai

After residing in Thailand for thirty years, I finally fulfilled my dream to visit Sukhothai. I have often been told by my Thai friends, "If you enjoy visiting Ayutthaya which is only one hour drive from Bangkok, you are going to fall in love with Sukhothai." And, they are perfectly right. The most historically significant and splendid temple ruins are inside the Sukhothai Historical Park and nearby Si Satchanalai Historical Park. Sukhothai and associated cities, namely Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet were declared the 574th UNESCO World Heritage in 1991.

Located over 400km from Bangkok with a five hours drive, this partly explains the reason for less foreign visitors without the convenient transportation. Frankly admitting that the current Covid situation has encouraged everyone like me to appreciate domestic travelling. I am totally enchanted by the rustic lifestyle of what Sukhothai offers as a quiet rural city in Thailand. Given the opportunity of a long weekend stay, one will not be disappointed! Sukhothai worth's deserved as a UNESCO World Heritage city.

Cradle of Thai civilisation

The Sukhothai Kingdom (1238-1438) was considered as the cradle of Thai civilisation, with Sukhothai city as the first capital of Siam. "Sukhothai" means "the dawn of happiness" which launched the birthplace of Thai art, architecture and language. The kingdom enjoyed 200 years of peace and prosperity until the Ayutthaya Kingdom annexed it.

Under King Ramkhamhaeng the Great (1239 – 1317), the second ruling monarch of the Phra Ruang dynasty, the Ceylonese school of Theravada Buddhism was established as the state religion. Thai alphabets were documented from ancient Khmer scripts and an administrative system for the government was set up. It was marked as golden period for Siamese art and architecture.

Sukhothai Historical Park

The Sukhothai Historical Park ruins are one of Thailand's most impressive World Heritage sites. It is a great testimony of the glorious part of Thailand. The park covers an area of land totally 70 square kilometres with 193 ancient monuments,



including 60 ancient monuments inside the town walls, 27 ancient monuments outside the town walls in the North, 37 ancient monuments outside the town walls in the South, 19 ancient monuments outside the town walls in the East and 50 ancient monuments outside the town walls in the West.

In terms of visiting the whole compound, the ground is divided into three separate but adjoining areas. Most visitors concentrate in the central area. I found the most amazing site in the North with Wat Si Chum. The roofless mondop building enshrines a huge Sukhothai style Buddha image named Phra Achana (translated as “He who is not frightened”). It is the largest Buddha image in Sukhothai measuring 15 metres high and 11 metres wide.



illuminations, entertainment, booths of all kinds of local products and food mixed with the famous krathongs, small rafts that people launch on the ponds of the park. The night ends with a light and sound and fireworks on the pond in front of Wat Sa Si.

Ramkhamhaeng National Museum

The National Museum was built for history and archaeology aspect to honour King Ramkhamhaeng the Great, the King of Phra Ruang Dynasty of Sukhothai.

The Ramkhamhaeng National Museum was officially opened in 1964 for over 50 years. It is located inside the Sukhothai Historical Park. The museum displays detailed exhibition on “Sukhothai: the Past and the Present.” A replica of the famous Ramkhamhaeng inscription, said to be the earliest example of “Lai Sue Thai”, the Thai letter of the alphabet, is kept here among an impressive collection of Sukhothai artefacts.



The Sukhothai style image wearing a serene facial expression occupies the total space of the mondop's interior. At the centre of the mondop is an opening diminishing in size towards the top through which the image can be seen from the outside. Local people also refer this amiable image as “Speaking Buddha”.

The architecture of Sukhothai temples is most typified by the classic lotus-bud chedis, featuring a conical spire topping a square sided structure on a three tiered base. Generally known as the Sukhothai style, these lotus-bud chedis, brick-over-stucco construction techniques present the Buddha images with a signature graceful form. Some sites exhibit other rich architectural forms introduced and modified during the period, such as bell shaped Sinhalese and double tiered Srivijaya chedi.

The grounds of the historical park are so expansive and I saw so many tourists renting bicycles to joyfully enjoy the scenery at their own pace. I hope my next visit to this beautiful historical park is during the Loy Krathong festival, as it is the most important festival of the year in Sukhothai. The local guide explained that during the Loy Krathong Festival, the Sukhothai Historical Park offers exceptional evenings with performances, ceremonies, monuments





Si Satchanalai Historical Park

Less than one hour drive from Sukhothai, we spent another day to explore Si Satchanalai. With the total area of 45 square kilometres, this historical park extends over 4 sub-districts including Si Satchanalai, Sara Chit, Nong O and Tha Chai. Its ancient monuments are entirely located in the district of Si Satchanalai. The ruins here are just as amazing as in Sukhothai and thoroughly well kept.

Sawankhalok

Together with Sukhothai, Si Satchanalai grew from a rural area to an urban centre. According to a stone inscription, Si Satchanalai of Sukhothai had been formally known as Chaliang. When Sukhothai was annexed and Ayuthaya became the capital of the Kingdom of Siam, Si Satchanalai was renamed as Sawankhalok, which was regarded as an outer town. In 1991, UNESCO as World Cultural Heritage together with Sukhothai and Kamphaeng Phet designated the ancient town of Si Satchanalai.

Earlier in 2019, several artists from around Thailand and the ASEAN region were invited to Sawankhalok to create street art along a stretch of road near the town. Sawankhalok Walking Street Art has drawn many curious tourists.

Sangkhalok ceramics

Sangkhalok ceramics are ancient Thai traditional ceramic ware specifically derived from Sukhothai kingdom period. The pottery is made in very fine ceramic and glazed signature green olive colour. The green exquisite pottery making has also been known as "Celadon". There is a small museum called Sangkhalok Ceramics Conservation and Study Centre, which is worth a visit.

Sukhothai noodles

One of the popular street foods and unique to the province is Sukhothai noodles. The main difference between Sukhothai noodles and regular Thai noodles is the ingredients. Sukhothai noodles are always served with thin rice noodle with sliced roasted pork, to be accompanied with green beans, small pieces of salted turnip and ground peanut.





The taste is slightly sweet and sour because the last touch is the addition of palm sugar, dried chilli and lime.

A trip is not completed without shopping for some souvenirs to take home. I picked up a few pieces of Sangkhalok ware with simple designs under their greyish blue/green matte glaze for our friends.

Sukhothai is well known with the gold and silver jewellery with its exclusive design. Colourful embroidered textiles are widely available at a much affordable than in Bangkok. For many places, we will feel that one visit is enough in a lifetime, it will definitely not in my case with Sukhothai. As said earlier, I wish to experience Loy Krathong festival at Sukhothai Historical Park, perhaps in my Thai traditional outfit!



BRAIN TUMOURS

The silent killer

Sukumvit Hospital employs advanced techniques to reduce blood loss during brain surgery.

In the case of a recent patient who visited Sukumvit Hospital, a passing headache ended up being a serious condition. The patient, a 40 year old man named Khun Chatra, had a history of headaches but at the end of last year, his frustrations grew when he experienced a severe headache on Father's Day, with painkillers and regular meals proving ineffective against the pain. Worried about the severity, Khun Chatra consulted with a friend who is a doctor to understand the root cause for the persistent headache.

He then decided to visit Sukumvit Hospital, where doctors did a routine examination followed by an MRI that scans the brain using electromagnetic waves. The results showed that the patient had a large tumour, initially believed to be five centimetres in size, in the right side of his brain. The medical team who examined the patient agreed that surgery was necessary to treat the tumour as it was very large. Due to the size, the tumour was likely pressing on key areas of the brain, causing complications. Two doctors specialising in neurology, Dr. Jackree Thanyanopporn, specialist in Neurosurgery and Interventional Neuroradiology and Dr. Juksanee Thanyanopporn, doctor of Neurology, made it clear that there was no choice but to operate.

Dr. Jackree describes the condition of the patient...

"Khun Chatra came to the hospital with a headache. On the day we examined him, we saw that he had severe headache symptoms and his hands trembled but he did not have any weakness. When we ordered the MRI, it was found that he had a brain tumour that was pressing on the right side of his brain that controls limbs, resulting in his left hand



tremouring. Afterwards, it was communicated to the patient that the condition puts him at risk of a left hemisphere paralysis and there is the chance of blood loss, loss of memory function, convulsions, and other complications."

Dr. Juksanee Thanyanopporn

After Dr. Jackree saw the diagnostic images, he evaluated that it was a benign tumour and not a malignant tumour, but



Dr. Juksanee Thanyanopporn

because of its large size it had the potential to cause blood loss during surgery. To begin the process, the doctor injected dye into the bloodstream, then employed a technique called catheter angiography embolisation, a minimally invasive treatment that blocks the blood vessels to reduce blood flow to an area. Dr. Jackree explains, "Tumours are alive, therefore they can draw new blood vessels. By implementing a catheter angiography embolisation, we can stop this from happening and subsequently reduce blood loss during surgery. This process begins with a close study of MRI results, checking the body's vitals once again, and then using what is called a 'Navigator,' a visual imaging programme that can determine what is needed during the surgery, including preparing the operation room, what incisions are required and what should be avoided, and what to do to ensure no mistakes happen."

Dr. Jackree also explains why the catheter angiography embolisation procedure is beneficial for patients like Khun Chatra: "Patients who are of older age are at risk of blood

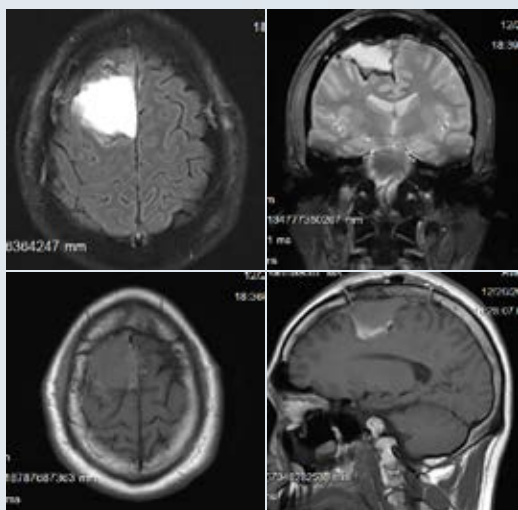


Dr. Jackree Thanyanopporn



Khun Chatra, patient

loss during an operation because the heart will work hard during surgery, which can result in complications like an acute heart attack. The biggest benefit of reducing blood loss through a catheter angiography embolisation is that the patient is safe during the surgery. Although this technique can be used to treat tumours, it is important to consider where the vessels will be occluded, as some locations are not possible.

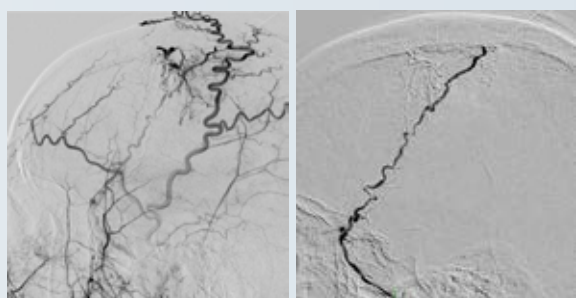


MRI scan before surgery

“Brain tumours are a kind of disease that you will never be sure of unless you get tested or unless you have defining symptoms. Many patients in Thailand will wait until they have limb weakness to get an X-ray, then

Before

After



Catheter Angiography Embolization

further tests are needed to be determined whether the tumour is benign or malignant.

A patient's medical history is also important, particularly whether they have other diseases or cancers as it adds to the chance of it spreading to the brain. It is imperative to get examined straight away if you suspect a

tumour. “Symptoms of a brain tumour differ depending on its location and size. In the case of Khun Chatra, he suffered from headaches, and trembling hands but some people can have numbness, fainting, limb weakness, blurred speech, double vision, and hiccups. Many of these symptoms are similar to stroke. Therefore, finding the root cause it is important so that it can be determined if the tumour is good or bad, and what kind of treatment to seek.

A follow-up 3-6 months after is also crucial for reducing the chance of recurrence.”

The patient, Khun Chatra, reflects on the entire treatment process and surgery...

“After listening to an explanation from the doctor, I understood that the risks were quite big with chances of disability and death. But thanks to Dr. Jackree, Dr. Juksanee, and the hospital staff, I was able to make a fast recovery. If you look back on my timeline, I arrived on Dec. 7th. By Dec. 8th we had a plan, Dec. 9th the doctor performed the catheter angiography embolisation, Dec. 10th I rested in the ICU, and on Dec. 11th I underwent brain surgery. Despite being a big procedure, I woke up within half an hour after the anaesthesia wore off. I was able to talk to relatives and the doctor, and was thrilled to have been able to recover quickly.

When I think about how I was able to recover, I believe it is a combination of the doctors' talent and skill and the level of service the hospital were able to provide me. They took very good care of me during my 17 days there.”



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.

Sukumvit Hospital

1411 Sukhumvit Road, (Ekkamai BTS)
Phraknong Nua, Wattana, Bangkok,
Thailand 10110

02 391 0011

www.sukumvithospital.com

Facebook: @sukumvithospital



With the 3 week duration of school holiday time we knew this was our opportunity to complete a visit to Chiang Mai, a long awaited and highly anticipated trip it was. Pete and I keeping it on our travel list for years for the “right time”. There never is a right time we know and even amidst talk of a lockdown and massive outbreak we decided to be optimistic. The cool weather was calling us, strawberries and culture and history alike.

We researched and organised our very first Thailand road trip, the boys overjoyed with the idea. We had hashed

THE FIRST ROAD TRIP

by Meghan Lynch

A second lockdown was looming, Covid cases were ramping up and somehow our already downsized holiday plans seemed to be on the cusp of being broken.

As Thailand braced for its second wave the timing seems less than desirable with a holiday already, heartbreakingly, adjusted to stay in Bangkok, safe and assured we knew we couldn't complain at the least with all that is going on in the world, for we have had a life so close to normal at times.

over the pros and cons of taking the train or a plane, the final decision based on the idea of something we had not done before. The Lazada packages containing a new organisational holder for the back seat, a crisp new map of Thailand to unfold and mark and the roof rack on the car caused more uproar than Santa's impending arrival.

Each day closer we had adjustments in place if travel with ease and safety due to the second wave of outbreaks strained us. We had a roll with the punches approach, one we have come to know and love and decided to focus on our first stop only and make the next move from there.

The car was packed, seat assignments in place and the adrenaline was pumping as we took our first road trip selfie, how could we not? We drove 7.5 hours to Khao Kho straight on Day 1. I won't share every detail, but let's say during those 7.5 hours I lost my title as copilot, due to a little hiccup with Google Maps. We stopped for a roadside lunch that was packed the morning of, an American family staple of Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwiches, fruit and veggies and leftover Christmas cookies was on the menu.

The further away from Bangkok we drove the further away from reality we felt. It was a different vibe than driving through the city streets or island towns in Thailand, the landscape shades of brown that stretched for miles and miles, the cars drove faster and buses and lorries were dodged more than motorbikes. The farther we got from home, the closer I felt our family becoming, less reliant on others and more on each other. While I had worries it would be stressful (and at times it was) it became more peaceful each kilometre we drove away.

At dusk we arrived at the mountain house in Khao Kho, after driving on an incline for quite some time we found a little house set out in the middle of nowhere, with views our eyes had never set upon in Thailand. The connection to nature and smell and sight overtook our bodies and the view alone offered us hope, in a time when we needed it the most.





A glance into Pete's eyes, showing relief and pride that we had made it to stop 1 and our journey was safe thus far.

Khao Kho is an area near Phetchabun, it is nicknamed "The Thailand Alps". The comparison is the hilly, windy roads with little campsites and lodging along the road with cafes and landmarks. It is quaint and picturesque. We swerved around each corner to find strawberry fields and stands selling the biggest, juiciest berries, which soon brought on a challenge of finding the best strawberries roadside, red stained fingers and sweet mouths agreed they were all delicious in the end.

The tourist attractions were slightly grim with very few tourists in sight, the harsh reality again as to the pandemic's impact. Temples, waterfalls, markets and top rated cafe's empty and yearning for much more than a few cars and visitors.

Once settled in at the "mountain house" and the sense of how close we were to Chiang Mai was felt. We decided to forge on.

On day 3, we packed the car, organised our spaces, shifted some seating arrangements; which offered me in particular a new view and a little more interaction with the boys whose company I was missing as copilot. The drive to Chiang Mai was different, intense at times. The roads and turns and fast driving cars gave me the understanding of the accident prone area and how quickly one can happen. We use the term "white knuckling" and Pete behind the wheel for that many hours has my utmost respect and trust, it was not easy roads to navigate or feel safe on.

We arrived to Chiang Mai, just after 4pm, the old town and history instantly felt, smallish buildings, old lettering, as we drove up the hotel driveway there was a little holiday charm and relaxation in store for the afternoon, a swim, poolside smoothie and room service and we called it a day.





Dressed in two layers with one more to don once we arrived, the view from the top was breathtaking. To breathe in, at the highest point in Thailand on New Year's Day in a year like no other brought tears to my eyes, as I watched the boys marvel as they were standing above the clouds.

With cool air in our lungs, new experiences had, visions of Northern Thailand and history in our minds, and a bond unexpected by taking to the roads of The Land of Smiles, our 'roadie', (as my Australian friend calls it) was drawing to an end. The lockdown getting closer and our obligations to home calling us.

The journey back to Bangkok made a little easier by the practice we had gotten on the way out, and the stories we know had tucked inside our seats, keeping us entertained and full, along with 4 boxes of roadside strawberries to keep us sweet and satisfied.

The art of travelling with young boys who have opinions and interests too is important to Pete and I to nourish and pay attention to. The balance of making them happy and enjoying the sightseeing of historical sights and temples was matched with a day at the Grand Canyon Water Park. They enjoyed 8 hours of jumping, sliding, zip lining on aqua inflatables and rope swings. It was empty, normally 400 people, today just 20 guests on our visit. That lack of people making it safer for our young children and no queues to have a tantrum in.

During our days in Chiang Mai, we toured the Arts District and took in the history of the town square. The New Year's Eve celebrations were cancelled and we decided on a Game Night to mix things up and were awoken to fireworks lighting the night sky at midnight, as not one little boy, made it past 10:30pm.

On January 1st we drove to Doi Inthanon, the highest mountain in Thailand. A quest we were all excited to take on.

After much research and preparation we felt safest driving in sunlight and even though we'd miss the sunrise, our comfort level eventually won the matter.





CLB ladies in the pics: Shakun Gurbani, Jindarat Jhumsai
Na Ayudhya, Tetsuko Wilberg, Sara Guzman, Sanja Stanley,
Ronelle Stoessel, Hope Esperanca Pilunthanakul, Claudia Anghel.





Michele Chan Grover's socially distanced family photo

THE NEW NORMAL, ONE YEAR LATER

by Netra Ruthaiyanont

“The corona virus is here to stay,” said the Professor Ooi Eng Eong in the recent zoom webinar on “Covid-19 vaccinations and coping with anxiety” organised by the Singapore Global Network. This was an expected but unwelcome statement, a reality that most of us find it hard to swallow.

In any case, life since the Covid-19 pandemic has not been totally bad. We, as humans, have learned to cope, one way or another. Some good things have also come out of this pandemic.



I, for one, found out more about my neighbourhood in Nonthaburi, a place that I have lived in for over 15 years but never had the chance to explore due to work and social commitments in Bangkok area. When the Thai government imposed a lockdown in April 2020, my husband and I started taking morning walks in our housing estate for exercise. At first, I would take a stick to ward off unfriendly dogs but we eventually figured out which soils to avoid. The anxiety of catching the virus made me lose some weight initially, to my great glee, but a few months later, my craving for good food surmounted to my desire to be thin. But not matter, I got into the groove of exercising and was in better health as a consequence.

For American born Rose Marie Wanchupela, the proprietor of Rose Marie Academy who has made Thailand her home for the past 50 years, being stuck at home enabled her to relax and enjoy the ambiance of her cosy home and bountiful garden.

“After the initial lockdown ended and schools reopened and then closed down again, I was anxious about how our



Zoom calls to family and friends became a regular activity for Michele Chan Grover's clan



Dar Lim Chakrabandhu discovers a new coffee shop.

students would be affected,” said the former Peace Corps Volunteer who has been running the school for over 25 years. “Fortunately, they adjusted very well to online learning under the guidance of their teachers who all rose to the occasion. I am now confident that our students will succeed in learning regardless of circumstances such as what we have just passed through.”

“Finally, I would say that it has been a struggle to fathom the millions of deaths and the destruction this pandemic has wrought upon us,” concluded Rose Marie. “To be empathetic and to carry on a normal life at the same time is a dilemma and a real challenge I face. Knowing we are all in this together is fortifying and reassuring.”

For Chinese-American Michele Chan Grover who lived in Thailand before moving to Canada, she and her Canadian husband, Paul, stayed home for most of the part since Covid-19 restrictions were stricter in Canada than Thailand.

Nonetheless, exercise was something they never neglected. Bike riding, walks and runs continued to be part of their daily lives in the summer and fall. And when winter came, skiing and walks were their regular routine.

When gatherings with family and friends came to a halt, they started Zoom calls with family and friends instead of having people come over for dinner. Zoom calls were something they had not done before, but this activity quickly caught on and became a superb and crucial technique to keep in touch to family and friends.

“When indoor gatherings were not allowed, we had outdoor dinners on our porch (just amongst the family) and we still kept 6ft apart from each other,” said Michele. “We also had friends, just one couple at a time and sat in the garden, often around the fire pit,

in the evenings in the summer.”

House cleaning and getting rid of unused stuff also become another routine activity.

“At the beginning of the pandemic, we went through our storage area and got rid of a lot of things -- old textbooks, notes and photos,” expounded Michele. “We also did a bunch of home maintenance stuff, painting, chopping wood, going through old books, uncluttering.”

Husband Paul also found the time and inclination to learn to play the guitar which opened up a whole new world for him.

“It was something he had always been interested but never made the time,” said Michele. “He found a great website which is free and learned from a young instructor who is so good at his job that now Paul is always serenading me.”

“I myself started a drawing programme through a book which I have had for 30 years, but like Paul’s guitar, never finding the time...”

“Paul and I realised quite early on how lucky we were in spite of the pandemic,” added Michele. “We don’t have young kids and have to worry about their schooling,” Michele concluded. “We don’t have to worry about losing a job. We have a nice place to live, friends and family to Zoom, have the ability to go out and exercise and be outdoors to socialise, and enough resources to keep us from getting depressed. We have learned to be super grateful.”

Danai Chandrangam, General Manager of GT Auto Co., Ltd., had this to say about his Covid experience.

“The pandemic taught me to be happy with what we have,” said the Netherland-born Thai-Dutch who made Thailand his permanent home when he moved here to work after he graduated from university. “I have come to appreciate the thoughtfulness and support I received from my loved ones during these stressful times. Life would have been a lot more difficult without their understanding and encouragement.”

“On a general scale, it was wonderful to see that the Thai people abided by the Covid-19 prevention rules enforced by the Thai government strictly and without resentment,” commented Danai. “Whether they agreed with it or not, people cooperated for the benefit of everyone around them.”

For someone who led a socially active life, Covid-19 caused a marked change in Danai’s lifestyle.





Husband ML Pongchak Chakrabandhu (left) joins Dar Lim is trying out a new café.

“My wife and I started staying home more. We cooked and ate at home and found that I actually enjoyed staying home and felt more relaxed. After the rules were eased, we had small gatherings with friends and family members and we came realise how important the time spent with these people are to us and we came to cherish these times more than before.”

“I became more health conscious to minimise the possibility of getting the virus infection and as a result, became healthier and did not get sick at all during the past 12 months,” added Danai.

“Work wise, it was tough,” Danai acknowledged. “I had to make many unpleasant decisions. Thankfully, most of our staff were supportive. It was a great team effort where many executives rose to the occasion and worked tirelessly to achieve their targets.”

“Another blessing in disguise was the Bangkok traffic,” said Danai with a big smile. “With people staying home more, the traffic got lighter, to the delight of many of us.”

“One regret that I have though is that my parents who live in Holland could not visit us last year.”

Danai’s Thai father and Dutch mother usually visit Thailand once or twice a year, spending a few months in the country during each visit.

“It is sad that we were also not able to fly over to see them. Of course, we stay in touch with WhatsApp and so on, but nothing beats face-to-face contact. I hope this issue will be solved by the end of this year.”

“All in all, people are more resilient

that we give them credit for. Many found creative ways to make a living. They don’t give up but move on with enthusiasm, courage and hope.”

Similar to Danai, New York born Dar Lim Chakrabandhu who has lived in Thailand for more than 30 years, said that not being able to travel overseas during that pandemic was one thing she really missed.

“But I’m basically a homebody so it’s been fine for me,” said the owner of The Vintage Shop and Very Vintage Jewellery. “I have started reading daily which I used to do but didn’t have the time. I have also tried out new recipes and some gardening techniques that would not have gotten my attention before the pandemic.”

“I think it has brought me closer to friends and relatives living far away.

Previously, I did not correspond with as often as I should have,” Dar Lim added. “Covid-19 sure has made me value my relationships so much more,”

“I also got around my local neighbourhood and discovered some nice little gems I may not have checked out before,” said Dar Lim, who spends most of her time in Chiang Rai where her family’s Katiliya Mountain Resort and Spa is located. “We found some new businesses and cafes and restaurants that are now regular stops for us.”

As far as advice for young people regarding jobs, Dar Lim recommends that now is the time for soul searching, especially for those who are out of a job.

“One needs to decide what work would bring you joy through all of the madness going on around us. It may be





necessary to learn something new or return to university for further studies.”

“During tough times there are always new opportunities if you keep your eyes and ears open,” she continued. “Right now, anything having to do with the medical field, pharmaceuticals or research offers endless possibilities. As well as work in the field of energy and products and services that have climate change in mind. Many new businesses started during this pandemic will be around for years to come.”

“No matter what the circumstances are around us, life goes on,” Dar Lim added practically. “Some couples may choose not to have children given the state of the world and that’s OK. For those who want to start a family, now may not be the time if you are having financial stress. Or if you are affected by the news each day, that would only add undue worry while pregnant. If you are anxious to start a family and are financially secure and in good health, then go for it. But remain vigilant avoiding any risks while Covid-19 is still with us.”

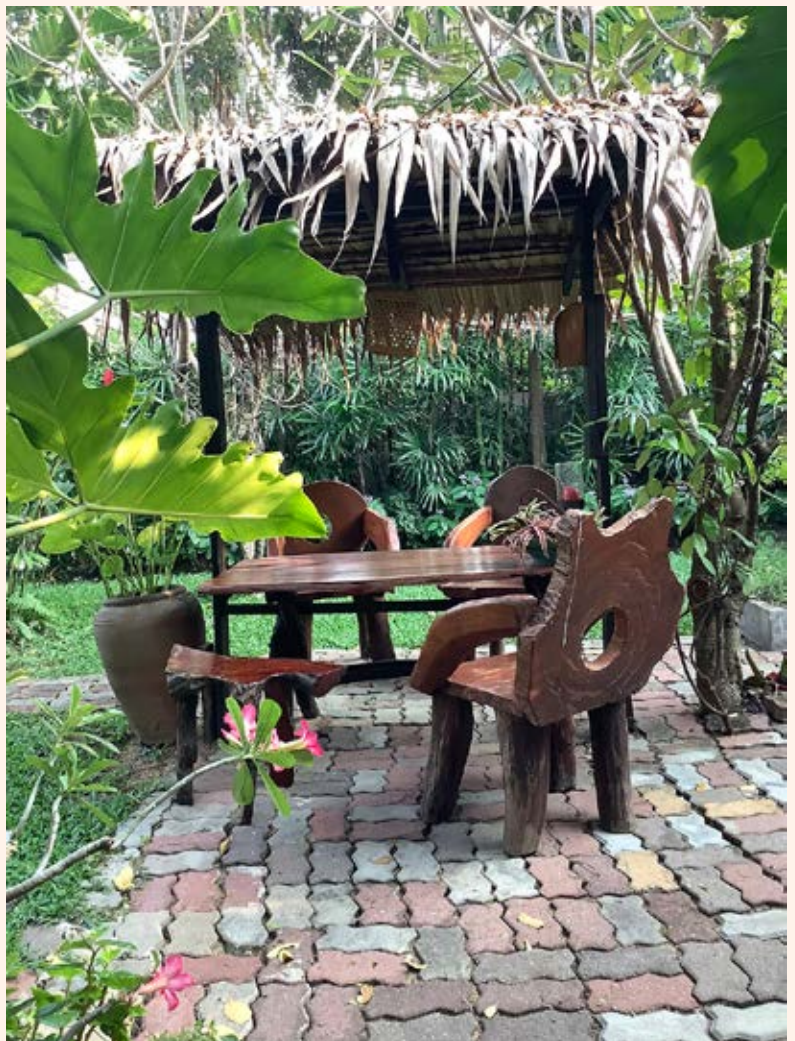
“I think that Covid-19 will not end but be with us forever like the flu. But we will be able to manage it through vaccines and revised inoculations as time goes on. It will be a few more years before we start to really understand this disease and have enough research to truly be confident about making predictions.”

Covid-19 has taught us to stop, step back, and look deeply into our own lives to figure out where we go from here. It also taught us to appreciate the simple things in life, be it a pleasant cool breeze that brushed our faces during our early morning walk or a nice hot cup of coffee that tasted so good because we did not rush to finish it to beat the traffic to get to work. And stay optimistic and be confident that the answers to our dilemmas will come to us when we calmly think things through.



The sun will always come up in the morning.

About the author: *Netra Ruthaiyanont is currently the Marketing Director of GT Auto Co., Ltd., authorised Volvo Car Retailer. The former member of the print media enjoys writing stories about travel, education and the challenging lives of women.*



Rose Marie’s garden

Thai massage times

by Margaret Elizabeth Johnston ND

As springtime comes upon Thailand, I have been reflecting on how Thailand was my “springboard” into this new world of Eastern life including Laos, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, my Bali life and then being brave enough to expand into Nepal and India.

One of the many things I uniquely thank Thailand for, other than new cuisine and cooking classes, vibrant island tours, Northern Province indigenous peoples, my discovery of Matcha, Buddhist culture and art, local Batik textiles and Durian (my goodness what a list!) is the fabulous Thai massages and being trained in the art of this form of body work.

Being a massage therapist for many years at the time of my decision to train in the Thai way wasn't too hard a decision to come to when on my first journey into Thailand. I first met my lovely trainer, Jidapa Norsai, in Phuket when I was first exploring some of the main tourist spots trying to decide



where to settle for a bit to paint; Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pai, Koh Samui, Krabi and Phuket. After I had made the decision to settle in Phuket I soon re-contacted Miss Jidapa and enrolled in her school of Thai Massage that was licensed and certified through a proper government venue and was excited to begin this new journey. I am sharing this idea to those out there waiting for Thailand to re-open (hopefully come this April edition release that has changed) and feeling like they wish they had something to do or new to learn. If you can find someone in your area to experience this training with, now may be a good time. I do feel hands-on bodywork in these days of social isolation and a “no-touch” ruling in general can be damaging for human connection. Massage and bodywork of any kind can be so healing. Even just being available for your loved ones, family and friends, it is a gift to be shared.

There are many different schools all over Thailand to go to and various styles to take. I think the key, if you're not a practitioner and just wanting to learn techniques to share, then the most important factor is the ease of which the course is structured and location. I organised my time to be able to take the course in Phuket Town at a time I had finished up with my 3 month “self-tour” of mainland Thailand and had decided to “hunker” in Phuket for another three. I organised to move into my new home in Kamala after my course so could stay in a small hotel across the street from the school. Phuket Town is so charming to spend some real time in, so it certainly wasn't a trying situation.

I was impressed with the chiropractor that was also based at the school and it was a real treat to learn the Thai massage way. The main basis for most Thai massage I found in my training was with the way in which the practitioner moved



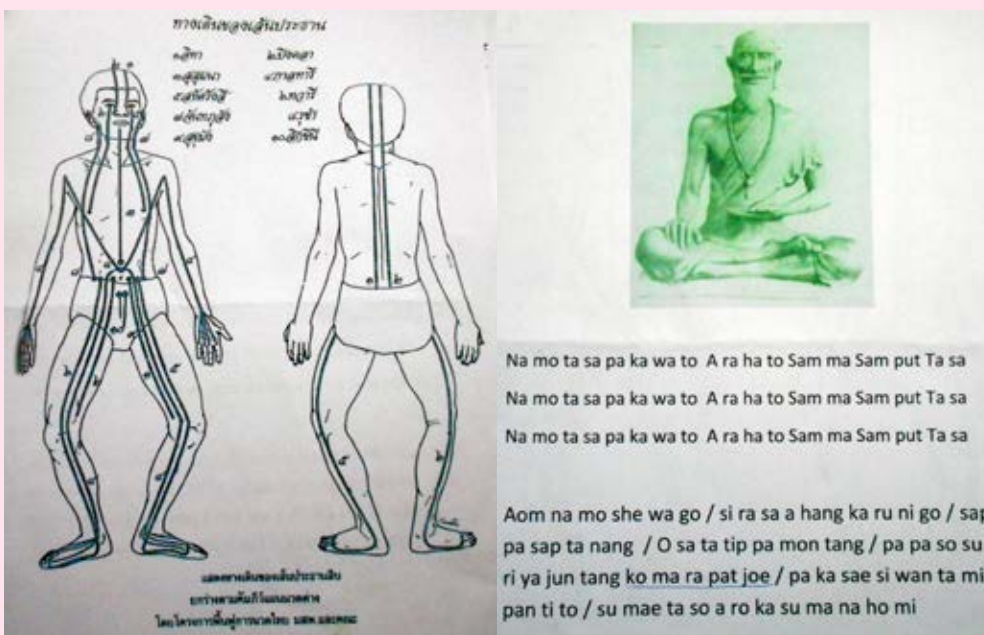


My course was a month intensive training 5 days a week, 7.5 hours a day. It was a professionally certified and licensed massage course that I chose to do to add to my already massage therapist professional resume however, one might think about a weekend workshop or something similar to learn some of the basic moves to practice on family and friends. In this human contact touch, a little can go a long way.

I will always remember the first experiences of my Thai time back in 2015/16 and have been in and out of Thailand many times since. I've taken home with me many gifts of experiences from Thailand; tangible art, great new recipes, beautiful textiles

and clothes but the best gift I received from Thailand, other than having the privilege of writing for Expat Life in Thailand and sharing my art and healthful ideas, has been the gift of giving a real proper Thai massage!

and stretched the limbs of the person while doing some good deep pressure, sometimes with thumbs, sometimes with knees. It encourages the client to engage in "active relaxation" which can be easier said than done! I already knew some Shiatsu work from previous training however the "moving of other people's limbs" while I stretched them and put pressure on various areas was new to me. If the client is very limber this can be a challenge. There are some very advanced Thai therapists that can lay on their backs while supporting you up in the air with their feet while you relax on top of their feet as they push into your back! This is not a level most attain to but being able to walk on the back, hang from a bar from the ceiling to massage the client with feet can be done. The normal basic way really is just like some of these pictures demonstrate, using thumbs for deep pressure and using one's forearms and palms for some effleurage type massage, with or without oil. There is also a 'tapping' method which uses the sides of the hands closest to the pinky to alternately tap rapidly on various areas of the body to loosen and heat up the muscles in that area.



About the author:

Miss Margaret had indeed been writing for us on a regular basis since 2015, sharing with us her holistic ways of health and vitality along with sharing some of her bright and colourful watercolours. You can check out her work and travels on www.mejcreations.com and sign up for a quarterly newsletter not to mention acquiring a new friend in far flung places. She now writes to us from Hawaii patiently awaiting Thailand and the rest of SE Asia to reopen.



2 weeks. In older folk the taste buds decrease to approximately 5,000.

There are areas of the tongue that hold different receptors for flavour. When you eat one of the flavours, be it salt, sweet, sour, bitter or pungent the receptor will process an electrical charge and that releases a neurotransmitter. That electrical charge passes along a neurone and that message is carried to the brain.

Once the

information is received by the brain, we have that moment of recognising what the taste is. How amazing that our receptors can send these signals to help us distinguish multiple flavours all that the same time.

The scientific community continues to discuss, debate and research whether in fact we have regions of the tongue associated with different taste sensations or whether there are only three specialised nerves that have been discovered and that they are responsible for the tastes we have.

I am always advising people of the importance of chewing, also known as mastication, to start the process of digestion. Chewing not only aids in digestion but we now clearly see the importance of being able to enjoy the flavour of the food we eat through the saliva that is in the mouth. Saliva is another transport mechanism to our taste buds. The majority of people never chew their food long enough to truly impart enough saliva to assist with the breakdown of food particles.

The science of taste is an ongoing scientific project. Further studies are being conducted on a new taste Umani, which is the taste of amino acids in meat broth and aged cheese. The other exciting investigation is whether we have taste buds specifically for fat. Learning more about how the body works and what we are capable of is exciting. It's your body, why not know how it works.

Another fascinating area of your tongue is that it is a window to your health. Look in the mirror and stick out your tongue. A healthy tongue is pink and you can see the papillae. The tongue can be pale, white, black or grey, which are indications of health challenges.

Oral thrush is a yeast infection inside the mouth. Patches appear that resemble cottage cheese on the side of the mouth. Oral thrush can occur from taking antibiotics, inhaled steroids, or people wearing dentures.

If the tongue in some way has been irritated white

The glorious taste of food

by Karla Walter

“Make food simple and let things taste of what they are” by Curnonsky

Songkran or Thai New Year is such an important festival, and it may look a little different this year. However, some things can remain the same, such as cooking special dishes to be eaten at this time. These dishes that may include Khao Chae — cooked rice in flower scented water with various condiments, Mango Sticky Rice, Prawn Pad Thai to name but a few. Already ones mouth is watering, knowing that these dishes are made with such exquisite flavours.

For more than two decades I have written about, talked about and advised about, the five flavours from which people make their meals. These flavours are salt, sweet, bitter, pungent and sour.

So how do we get to taste these flavours. The official word used for our taste is gustatory. Two of the main processes that help us to recognise flavour when we eat, are taste and smell.

Firstly, we taste from taste buds that contain taste receptor cells. You find these cells on the front and back of the tongue, the sides, plus the roof of the mouth. The little bumps that you can see on your tongue are called papillae. There are two types of papillae, one called circumvallate and the other fungiform and contain taste buds. There are approximately 10,000 taste buds in the mouth and they are replaced every

patches may appear which is called Leukoplakia. This is often seen in people who smoke. This condition needs to be addressed as soon as possible as it may be a precursor to cancer.

If the tongue is red, the first thought is Vitamin B12 deficiency. Easily rectified by Vitamin B12 foods or supplements. A blood test will help determine if a person is deficient in B12.

In very young children who have Kawasaki disease the appearance of the tongue is red similar to a strawberry appearance. This is very serious and must be seen to immediately.

Good dental hygiene is so important for having a healthy mouth and tongue. When people do not have good dental hygiene the bacteria in the mouth can grow and a coating almost like hair is formed over the tongue, making the appearance look black and hairy. Canker sores also known as mouth ulcers usually go within a week or two. The common thought is that these are bought on by stress.

If a lump or a sore appears on your tongue seek medical advice as soon as you can. It might be nothing or it could be the start of oral cancer. One item to give up is smoking. Smoking causes the tongue to be irritated.

One unique ability for some people, is that they are extremely sensitive to taste. There are people who are considered super tasters and they are several times more sensitive to bitter and other tastes than most people. This phenomenon is associated with the amount of fungiform papillae and therefore taste buds on the tongue and may run in families.

We must not forget that taste is also associated with food texture and temperature. Different temperatures have a different reaction on food particles. If the food consumed is thick then the mastication process required to chew the food



so the inner particles can get to the taste buds is greater.

This is different from a food that melts with the heat of the mouth or is in liquid form.

The sense of smell is present when we eat. When you have a stuffy nose or if you have a cold for example, there is no taste to the food you eat. Further discussion on smell will be included in my next article.

There are a number of things that can limit our sense of taste, from the types of food we have eaten during our life, to our environment and where we live. There is also internal and external pollutants in our home to take into consideration. However, when you come to the process of eating your food, take time to chew and enjoy all the taste sensations that food has to offer.

"Cooking is all about people. Food is maybe the only universal thing that really has the power to bring everyone together. No matter what culture, everywhere around the world, people eat together."
– Guy Fieri

Health and Happiness

Karla Walter

www.5seasonsliving.com





Introduction to the World of Wine

by Billy Brigham

Wine! What exactly is it? Where does it come from? And where is it going to be in the future? These are the questions I find myself answering the most often as a Wine Ambassador.

Let's start with: What exactly is wine?

Wine is defined as an alcoholic beverage made from fermented wine grapes. However, wine can be made from any fruit, but wine grapes are most commonly used. Wine grapes are slightly different from your regular table grapes from farmers markets or shops. They are smaller in size, contain more bitter tasting seeds, have thicker skins, and are sweeter in taste. All these factors contribute to the flavourful wines you know and love. By crushing the wine grapes, we can extract the sweet juice inside, then by adding yeast, the fermentation process occurs! The yeast will eat the sugars converting it into alcohol after a few additional steps, your wine is ready to enjoy.

Now that we know how wines are made let's discuss the different types of wines. There are many different types, because of the different grape varieties. You may notice many of these when walk down the wine aisle and see Pinot Noir, Riesling, and Shiraz. All these grape varieties, whether red or white, can be traced back to one species of grapevine, the *Vitis Vinifera*. Each wine producing country tends to plant a different variety of the *Vitis Vinifera*, which is how there are thousands of different grape varieties around the world. When you think of Spain, most people think of Tempranillo, for France, Pinot Noir, and Australia, Shiraz. But the most planted red grape variety in the world, is the Cabernet Sauvignon grape with approximately 340,000 hectares (840,000 acres) planted globally. Some of the most well known regions for planting Cabernet Sauvignon include: Bordeaux, France; The Coonawarra, Australia; and Napa Valley, USA.



While it is not surprising to hear Cabernet Sauvignon is the most largely planted red grape variety, many wine enthusiasts, myself included, would be surprised to find out the most planted white wine variety isn't Chardonnay or Riesling, or even Sauvignon Blanc but Airén with 218,000 hectares (538,700 acres). It is planted almost entirely in Spain, and is used to make brandies, sherries and still white wine that is consumed almost entirely domestically.

Where does wine come from?

To start, let's go back to the very beginning. The first traces of wine can be found around 6000BC in Georgia. People shifted away from the nomadic lifestyle and wanted a more stable living place. This allowed for more experimentation with food and drinks - and ultimately, the creation of wine. Fast forward a few centuries, and the ancient Greeks were using wine as a tool for worship, which later carried on to the ancient Romans. As time went on, the way for producing wine improved, and the places growing vines expanded. During the medieval era, wine became a common social beverage for all, partially to its links to religion and heavy production from Benedictine monks. The monks had vineyards all over France and Germany, including, Burgundy, Bordeaux, Champagne and Frankfurt. One famous Benedictine monk, Dom Perignon, was the first to discover how to make bubbles in wine through a second fermentation. With this discovery he accidentally created what we now know as Champagne.

For many centuries, places like France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Greece have been the biggest producers of wine. They have created many traditions about how to produce and grow their wines. Specifically, they are very particular on the type of barrels, minimum time for ageing, and grape varieties allowed to grow in certain regions. These rich traditions, which have largely remained unchanged, awarded these countries the title of 'Old World' wines.

As the world's footprint began to expand with the British, Spanish, and French colonies, the desire to have wine in these colonies also grew. Places such as the United States, Chile, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand all began producing their own wines. Soon enough these countries became very good at growing different varieties and developing their own styles and techniques. Since they were new to making wine, they didn't have these set traditions and rules to follow, which allowed them to be innovative and experimental with new ideas. The prime example would be the screw cap instead of the traditional cork. A screw cap seals the bottle better, keeping the oxygen out and allowing the wine to stay fresher for longer. Almost all wines with a screw cap will originate from a New World country. Additionally, the New World wines are releasing more innovations wine into the category. For example, Australia's Jacob's Creek experimented with ageing wine in matured whisky barrels, and in 2014 released the Jacob's Creek Double Barrel Shiraz a wine matured in Scotch whisky barrels, making them first in the world to do something like this. In New Zealand and -America, the growing trend of wine in a can, for a more transportable and sustainable packaging, has started to soar. All of these innovations are allowed in the New World of wine but are against the traditions of the Old World.

Where is it going to be in the future?

One of the things that I love about wine is that it is continuously changing and developing, particularly people's perceptions and consumption methods. In recent years wine has changed from being the formal drink your parents would consume on a Sunday night, to the fun and social drink younger people prefer. One of the biggest growing trends in the wine industry has been related to the craze of Rosé, heavily driven by younger drinkers in their mid 20s to 30s. Rosé has also been amplified by big A list celebrities releasing



their own wine labels, like rapper Post Malone, actor John Malkovich, and pop star Kylie Minogue. When before the wine of choice may have been a bold red or oaked white, people's choices have led to new styles and varieties being produced that are lesser known.

Not only are the styles of wine changing, but so are the ways we consume them. Wine has often been a traditional drink served with a meal, but the growing trend of wine cocktails is adapting those traditions. Wine cocktails are a new take on a traditional cocktail, with a wine being its base. This new way of drinking wine has seen huge growth due to Covid-19 lockdown measures, with more people spending time at home concocting their own drinks. Many took the opportunity to post their new creations online helping boost the trend and is likely to be one that we will be seeing a lot of in the future!

Wine has a long history in our shared cultures and is continuing to grow in all different ways. But one staple value of wine that has remained the same, is that wine is meant to be shared. The foundations of wine are built to bring people together. Wine most commonly comes in a 750ml bottle, not just to look nice, but because it is the ideal amount to share with friends, therefore making people come together. Although the wine varieties we drink may change over time, the way drinking wine may change, even the regions where we get our wines from may alter, but one thing that will always remain the same is that wine will always be made for sharing.



APRIL SKIES; STARFRUIT SURPRISE

by Margaret Elizabeth Johnston ND

Welcoming in April with both Thai Songkran and some of our own expat's celebrating Easter, I thought the Starfruit, Carambola, with 91% water, would be a wonderful fruit to highlight! An Easter star and the hydrating needs we all crave during these hot days comes to us on a species of tree native to SE Asia, the Averrhoa carambola. Starfruit, Carambola or Ma-fuang in Thai, fuang meaning "gear", grows all over SE Asia and in Thailand I have enjoyed the deep orange larger starfruits at any season. There are two main types of starfruit, the small/tart and the large/sweet.



The skin is fairly waxy but the whole fruit can be eaten. The flavour is unique and can be similar to an apple, grape, pear and citrus. Some say they are best eaten yellow with a slight greenish tint, but I prefer them when they are more orangey-yellow, much sweeter and just a tad softer, not so crunchy!

These fruits have lots of vitamin C (52% of RDI), most B's and A, are low in sugar (3%), high in minerals and fibre and has high amounts of antioxidants including some zinc. They can be up to 91% water so a great source of healthy hydration also. The ripe fruit and fruit juice has antidiarrheal effects and has been used in Ayurvedic medicines for thousands of years. In the culinary kitchen creativity reigns. In SE Asia, they are stewed in cloves, sugar and apples. China cooks them with fish and in Australia they may be cooked as a vegetable, made into jams or pickled. I discovered Jamaica dries them and uses them as snacks combined with peanuts. The sour variety makes a nice relish





Mr. Souphanya, local market man from Laos

with chopped spices and can be combined with fish or shrimp. I use them as additions to my mangosteen, dragon fruit, mango and papaya tropical fruit platters when treating myself during hot days and look so pretty too with the star shape! Wishing on a star never tasted so good! I am lucky to have found a SE Asian man myself, Mr. Souphanya from Laos, that knows how to organically grow most of my favourite fruits here in Hawaii while I await SE Asia/Thailand to re-open. Shopping at local markets and supporting the local people during these times is a positive human interaction we can have during these times for all involved.

I must mention a slight risk for people with any hard kidney issues like kidney stones, kidney failure or are on kidney dialysis. Starfruit contains caramboxin and oxalic acid. Caramboxin can create adverse neurological effects and oxalic is in many fruits and vegetables but combined with caramboxin and predisposed kidney failure together, I must at least give a slight warning here to not indulge. Taking starfruit juice or even just the fruit on an empty stomach is also not advised for anyone but the normal ingestion of the tropical fruits during the day for most is fine. Please do not let this deter you unnecessarily. It is fine to do juice fasts and fruit fasts etc. as I have written about before, but this particular fruit isn't one of them for that!

The true native range of this plant is pinpointed closer to Malaysia, Indonesia and S. China than Thailand and has never been located in the wild,

like the guava and many other tropical plants. It seems it was domesticated through India and SE Asia in prehistoric times, but it was in the American tropics that it was established just over 150 years ago. Commercial production of starfruit takes place in most tropical places throughout the world now including Hawaii, however, Malaysia is the global leader in starfruit production. The *Averrhoa carambola* are also grown as ornamentals due to the easy pruning of the mini tree-shrubs which can lead to a decorative addition to any garden yet can be worrying for some as an invasive species since they are quick to spread. Carambola flowers throughout the year with beautiful dainty pink and light lavender flowers which against the background of the dark green leaves can be a gorgeous addition to any garden.





The main fruiting season in Thailand is April through June and October through December, which again, for Christmas, is so nice to have the star shaped fruits for decorative fruit platters! One last idea for the kids is to slice the fruit thin and bake them with some sea salt supplying a cute version of snacking. Healthy snacks are always a plus!

I call the painting accompanying this article Blue Skies; Starfruit Surprise because it is in the tropical, glorious, sun filled skies these fruits grow and the element of surprise you enjoy when the fruits are cut in half can be a delight.

Happy Spring! May this new season bring some respite to how things have been moving along during wintertime. I am anxious to get back to SE Asia and send you all blessings from across the Pacific headed West! Let us all stay healthy, vibrant, happy and sane!

Check out Margaret's other article in this April edition all about Thai Massage! Keeping our minds and bodies active and healthy during these times is extra important. Treating food as medicine can be a way of eating and eventually, we are what we eat since we make new cells everyday with what we put in our mouths. Enjoy Thailand's fruits and stay hydrated during these hot months! Margaret's paintings can be seen on www.mejcreation.com and one can join her on her other healthy discoveries.





THE ROYAL BANGKOK SPORTS CLUB

by *Leonard H. Le Blanc III*

The Royal Bangkok Sports Club (RBSC) has always been the most exclusive sports club in Bangkok for well over a century. It has maintained its reputation as the ultimate domain of high society. Founded in 1901, the RBSC has seen many interesting events. These include serving as Bangkok's first airport, having the second oldest golf course, the first horse racing track and first Olympic sized swimming pool.

RBSC's history first dates back to 1890 when an English expatriate named Franklin Hurst made a request to H.R.H. Prince Devawongse Varoprakar to establish a club with a sports field and racecourse. Permission was granted by the government in 1892. Land was leased in the Pathumwan District. The club was called the Bangkok Gymkhana Club. But it lasted less than a decade.

In 1901 a group of high ranking Thais and expatriates submitted a petition to the Thai government for a new club "for the purpose of improving the standard of horse breeding and various other field sports." King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) granted his royal assent and the RBSC was granted a charter on 6 September 1901. RBSC assumed the assets of the former Bangkok Gymkhana Club.

The RBSC occupies 227 rai (or 36.3 hectares) of land along Henri Dunant Road named after the Swiss founder of the international Red Cross. The road was previously known as "Thanon Sanam Ma", or Racecourse Road, after the RBSC. Although the name was changed in 1965, Thais still refer the road by its previous name.

The RBSC has always been at the forefront in introducing Western sports into Thailand during the early 20th century. Horse racing started in January 1903. Other sports were introduced including cricket in 1905, golf in 1906. Rugby in 1907 and squash in 1909. A clubhouse was built in 1910. All Western sports were seen as a symbol of modernisation that was a key element of King Chulalongkorn

(King Rama V) drive to present an image to the world that Thailand was a civilized society.

On 6 February 1911, the RNSC was the site of the first aeroplane flight in Thailand when Belgian aviator Charles Van den Born took off and landed at the RBSC grounds. From 1913 to 1914 the RBSC grounds served as the country's first airport, known as Sa Pathum Airfield. Then Don Mueang Airport was established as Thailand's first permanent airdrome facility.

In 1916 there was a dispute over the horse racing prize money being diverted to other RBSC sports. A group of Thai members, who wanted to use the prize money only for house racing, split off from the RBSC to form their own horse racing club. This was called the Royal Turf Club of Thailand (RTCT). This new club catered mainly to Thais, while the RBSC catered more towards Western expats. So the RBSC was called "Sanam Farang" (or foreign racecourse) and RTCT was called "Sanam Thai" (or Thai racecourse). Western expats served as chairmen of the RBSC until 1941 until the Japanese forced Thailand to become its ally. The Japanese occupied the clubhouse during the war. In 1945, H.R.H. Prince Rajadabhisek Sonakul became the first Thai chairman.

The RBSC continued to expand while undergoing many changes through the decades. The original clubhouse was rebuilt and expanded in 1912-1915. New facilities were added including an Olympic size swimming pool in 1933. A sports pavilion was added in 1977. A new multi-purposes sports facility, named the Rajkreetha Sports Complex, opened in 2005. In 1978 the RBSC assumed control of the Bangkok Riding and Polo Club (BRPC) on Witthayu Road which had financial difficulties.

RBSC members have access to all the facilities to do a wide variety of sports. These include badminton, basketball, bridge, billiards, chess, cricket, field hockey, football, an 18 hole golf course, jogging, lawn bowls, martial arts, physical fitness rooms, qi gong, rugby, squash, swimming, table tennis, tennis and yoga. There are multiple bars, dining facilities and banquet halls. However, the main source of income is the horse racing events that occur during the year. These are held on every other Sunday.

RBSC membership is both highly prized and intensely coveted. It has a rigorous application process for anyone seeking membership. The waiting list for those approved is said to stretch for 10 years. The new membership entrance fees are said to be as high as two million Baht as of 2011. The RBSC has retained its exclusivity as the bastion of privilege, status, and prestige in Thailand.

Two artists Different strokes for different folks

by Robin Westley Martin

Art and one's appreciation of it must be one of the most subjective things around... I can remember when I was first introduced to painting. My father – who had been to art school, had finished a portrait of my mother, which was stunning. I, as a five-year old said, “Who is that beautiful lady?” Which goes to prove just how subjective art is. My father had painted my mother from his heart, with all the love he had for her transferred onto the canvas by his elaborate brushstrokes. But a five-year-old boy could not equate his father's vision with his own perception. He only saw his mother as... his mother.

When I was older I was reacquainted with this painting, and was able to see it in a different light. Yes, my mother was indeed beautiful, and had been made even more so by the portrayal of her as seen through my father's eyes.

So, from an early age I had been introduced to art, and my love and appreciation of it has endured throughout my life. In Thailand for over three decades, as a writer or editor for several magazines, I am fortunate to have been able to follow my passion for art in the Kingdom, through having been invited to many exhibitions and galleries, and even becoming friends with some of the artists. Today I would like to introduce you to two of these souls. Two people coming from very different backgrounds, and giving us very different artistic creations to enjoy, when we visit their exhibitions or showings in galleries around town. Or even to purchase one of their pieces, to appreciate in the comfort of our own homes.

First up I would like to introduce you to Arash Groyan. Arash was born in Iran – known as Persia in ancient days in



Teheran, where he studied art at university, gaining a B.A. and a Master's. Arash told me that from a young age he had been inspired by ancient Persian mythology, which continues to stimulate him to this day, in particular from the poem *Shahnameh*.

Shahnameh is an epic poem by Persian poet Ferdowsi, and can be likened to Homer's *Odyssey* or *Iliad*, although it is considerably longer, comprising some 50,000 couplets. The influence this literary masterpiece has had on Arash can be seen in many of his paintings.

Arash Groyan is one of the best exponents in the world of painting Persian 'miniatures'. He has, though, made Thailand his home since 2009 and says said he feels comfortable living here, he likes the feeling of freedom and easy pace of life, and has made many friends... Thai, foreign, and those from both within and outside of the arts community. It is important, he told me, for an artist to feel comfortable in his or her surroundings, in order to encourage the creative juices to flow.

Arash said, “As an artist, I'm always active. 2020 was difficult, because of restrictions on travel and a lack of exhibitions due to the worldwide pandemic. But over the past three or four years I have participated in a number of exhibitions, both in Thailand and around the world. The highlight for me, though, has to be an exhibition in 2018, at the Louvre, Paris, that I was shown in. I sold some of my art there, too. An unforgettable moment for me to find acceptance in one of the most iconic and prestigious art museums in the world.”





I have been to several well attended exhibitions and gallery showings featuring the work of Arash and other foreign artists in Thailand. His quiet spoken demeanour as he explains about his latest pieces of artwork to the interested visitors is absorbing... he draws you into his world. But I have seen more to Arash, firsthand. Whilst being an undoubted expert at his own chosen field, Arash is also an erudite scholar. His knowledge of art surpasses all boundaries, and he surprised me, as I heard him answering questions about one of the pieces of art being shown in the gallery. The piece was not his own work, or had not even been created by one of his many friends from the arts community in Thailand. This was a painting new to him. Yet Arash was able to explain in detail about it. From the medium used, the brushstroke work, the technique, the lighting, et al. I don't think the actual artist could have done a better job of explaining about the piece had they done it by themselves.

Arash's talents focus not only on miniature painting, but also include other areas such as Middle Eastern rug and carpet design, stage and set decoration, and jewellery design. Arash has also acted in several films and television series in Iran.

The arts community in Thailand is a close knit one, that I feel rewarded to have been accepted into. A friend of both myself and Arash from this eclectic grouping of talented people, is Leyla Sandshiko, hailing from Elista, not far from Moscow. She has been ferrying back and forth between Bangkok and Russia for the past eight years or so.

Leyla is a rather different kettle-of-fish to the softly spoken (yet passionate) Arash. This is a girl that stands out in a crowd! Diminutive she may be, but her colourful clothing with matching accessories, energetic selfie-taking, and seeming ability to be in two or three places at the same time make her an unmissable focal point of whichever gathering you see her at.

Leyla told me her academic background is very different from that of Arash, studying finance and accounting, following in the footsteps of her mother and father, and other family members who worked in the financial sector for the government. However, it was also her parents who infused



her with a love of art. They took her along with them to art museums and galleries, which she loved, and never missed an opportunity to go to. Her mother and father also bought works of art for their home, so Leyla grew up surrounded by paintings, sculptures and other artistic ephemera. After a few years of working in the business sector as an accountant Leyla decided that the rather sombre world of account ledgers and numbers was not really for her. Which comes as no surprise to anyone who knows her.

Leyla is a bundle of energy, and always stands out in her apparel wherever she goes. After leaving the financial world, she embraced her creative energies and entered the world of exhibition management. She put on events in Moscow and its surrounds that were memorable for their inventiveness. Being at the forefront of these exhibitions gave Leyla another opportunity to showcase her creative skills. Most of the clothes she wore to the opening parties were her own design.

They were loud, colourful, wild, and original... as is their designer. The influential people attending the exhibitions put on by Leyla took notice of her clothing designs, and it was not long before Leyla was making money from sales of her clothing, her designs, and accessories to go with them. She had also found time to create her own art.



Unsurprisingly she favours the abstract genre. She told me that when she is in the throes of creating her artwork (usually in the hours of darkness) she goes into another zone, and does not really know what she is doing. In the morning, when she wakes up, she is often surprised at what she sees on the canvases. 'Bloody hell... where did that come from,' she thinks.

When she came to Thailand eight years ago she naturally gravitated towards the arts community in Bangkok, and was soon a regular at art show openings, where she quickly made friends, and was soon being invited to more and more openings. She has also had several solo and group exhibitions of her own at galleries around Bangkok. The latest exhibition was in Bangkok in January, called 'Counterpunch 2'. Leyla became interested in Muay Thai, after coming to live in Thailand and she says that studying and training in the Thai martial art has given her a new lease of life, and even more energy.

Leyla explained, "The main message of this series of artworks is to never give up! Be strong! Find your passion and follow it. Be free and do what you love and what brings you joy. Never worry what others might think about you. Even if you feel completely broken, stand up over and over again and follow your dreams. Create instead of destroying. Remember that there is always a way out of any problem, always!"

In the annus horribilis of 2020 the art world, the leisure sector, and even the business sectors were sent reeling, thanks to the global spread of Covid-19. Hopefully in 2021 we will start to see a recovery. Things will not be back to normal anytime soon, but there are a few things to look forward to.

Arash did not let the extra free time he found himself with in 2020 go to waste. He worked on his art, and this year he will be having two group exhibitions in Bangkok, and another exhibition in October at the Louvre.



He is also developing teaching courses in Bangkok, working on his jewellery designs, and completing the production of his painting training video courses.

But the thing I am most looking forward to is the collaboration between these people of two very different personalities and artistic styles.

Leyla and Arash have become firm friends. Leyla is going to unleash her wild spirit onto a few canvases, and no one knows what will come out of that, leastwise herself. She will then give her canvases to Arash, who will interpose his own Persian miniature artwork within the free spaces of Leyla's abstract designs. Arash and

Leyla (and myself) are both excited to see what comes out of this idea of Arash's, as it's a juxtaposition of styles that has never been tried before. Look out for it in early April, at a gallery near you. Check out Arash' website, or the Facebook page of Leyla for showtime. Hope to see you there!

<https://arashgroyan.com/>

IG@Leylasandshikoart,

@Lolis2001

FB: Leyla Sandshiko



About the author:

Robin Westley Martin

Robin has been living

in Thailand and SE

Asia for over 30 years.

He first worked as News

Editor for Business in

Thailand magazine, before moving on to edit and write for the Thai Airways inflight magazine, and also Hotel & Travel, amongst others. He continues to work in SE Asia, Thailand, and further afield, as a freelance writer or editor for several magazines, covering a wide range of genres.

E-mail: robinsiam@yahoo.com

Facebook: Robin Westley Martin

Line: robinsiam555



The Pink Christmas Charity Ball, fundraising event for QSCBC



The first 19th century European merchant to reside in Thailand – Robert Hunter

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

Robert Hunter (1792-1848) was the first European merchant to reside in Siam. He was the most important intermediary between the royal court for two decades serving as an unofficial diplomat during the reign of King Rama II.

Hunter was originally from Scotland. His family were established merchants and traders since the early 18th century. They exported tobacco from Virginia to France, but that business ended with the start of the American Revolutionary. They started to manufacture linen, cotton and glass from their home town near Glasgow, Scotland.

Hunter first went to India to learn trading. He arrived in the newly founded Singapore in 1819 and founded a firm called Hunter Watt & Company. While he was there, the British East India Company sent James Low to Siam on the first diplomatic mission in 1824. Low was an officer of the English East India Company. He was also an early student of Thai. Low wanted to enlist Siam's help for the British invasion of Burma and gain an agreement for trading rights with King Rama II. However, Low was not successful.

In the early 1820s, foreigners started to return to Siam after a hiatus of almost 140 years since all foreigners were expelled in 1688. In July 1824, King Rama III ascended to the throne. In a canny move, Hunter arrived in Bangkok that August bearing a gift of 1,000 muskets as the Siamese were preparing for war with Burma. Hunter spoke to the Minister of the Treasury (Phra Klang) and received the right to trade with other foreigners on behalf of the royal family and nobility. After receiving permission, Hunter was allowed to settle in Bangkok. In 1840, the King directed a prominent three storey building be erected in Thon Buri along the Chao Phraya River for his residence and business concern then



called the “British Factory” (or what trading posts were called by Westerners then).

Hunter also obtained permission from the King for other Europeans, then living on house boats, to also build home along the riverbank. Many quickly moved ashore and built new houses. With no British legation in Bangkok, formal diplomatic relations or treaty, Hunter served as an unofficial British representative handling visitors and trading between Siam and Singapore with great success.

In 1825, Hunter wed Angelina Sap, a half-Siamese, half-Portuguese lady.

She was also descended from Constantine Phaulkon, the famous 17th century Greek adventurer who was probably the most famous foreigner in early Siamese (or even in all Thai) history. Angelina taught Hunter to speak both Thai and Portuguese fluently. As there were no other English speakers (or Thai speaking foreigners) at court, the Hunter wielded enormous influence in trade negotiations and diplomacy by his ability to speak fluent Thai. As Christian missionaries and diplomatic missions began to pour into Thailand, Hunter was instrumental in guiding them. He also helped Henry Burney negotiate a successful trade treaty in 1826 between Great Britain and Siam. In 1831 Hunter received the distinguished title of “Luang Awutwiset” which honoured his service in

supplying weapons to the kingdom.

Hunter was directly involved in introducing the most famous Thai personalities to the world (before 1965 Miss Universe winner Apasra Hongsakula, 1988 Miss Universe winner Porntip Nakhirunkanok, Tiger Woods and U.S. Senator Ladda Tammy Duckworth), namely the original “Siamese Twins,” nicknamed Chang and Eng (meaning “left” and “right” in Thai). In 1824, on a trip up the Chao Phraya River, Hunter spotted what he saw was a “strange animal.” It was the shirtless twins bathing along the river. He instantly saw the lucrative financial opportunity by displaying the twins to the public on an international tour. He first befriended the twins and their family, then sought permission from the King to bring them to England on tour. The twins and the family were agreeable, but it took five years for permission to be granted. In 1829 Hunter and his American business partner, a sea captain named Abel Coffin, sailed to Boston in 1829. They were an instant sensation. They went to New York to continue their successful tour and then to London. After their success there they toured the British Isles to great acclaim. However, the pressure of business in Siam forced Hunter to leave London for Bangkok. He departed on 28 September 1830. Coffin bought out Hunter’s interest in 1831, but Hunter kept in



regular contact with the twins for years after.

Hunter then went into partnership with another British merchant named James Hayes. The 1826 Burney Treaty allowed more trade privileges for all the British merchants based in Singapore, but Hunter & Hayes completely dominated the market in Bangkok. They had a monopoly on imports from the U.K., but that concession was only limited to textiles from Liverpool. However, their business was overwhelming in exports. This was due to the monopoly they held on European type square rigged sailing vessels that the royal court could use for their own trading interests.

This business arrangement between Hunter and the Siamese government could not last forever. As trade rapidly expanded throughout the 1830s, the King and nobility obtained their own sailing vessels. They now began to trade with foreign merchants who were crowding into Bangkok

other than Hunter. Due to his rapidly falling profits, Hunter decided to trade in opium. This illicit trade was expressly strictly forbidden. But King Rama III had to tread lightly on the matter as he was worried about Hunter’s threat to summon the Royal Navy to defend his business interests. The King knew the fledgling Siamese Navy would be no match against British warships. However, disrupting opium shipment at sea was one thing, seizing illegal goods at the port was another.





In 1839, Hunter & Hayes suffered great losses when the Siamese government suddenly monopolised teak exports. Then in 1842, they suffered ever greater losses when the King imposed heavy customs duties on sugar and seized Hunter & Hayes' stock to collect on the overdue customs bill. From close trading partners, both sides were now bitter rivals for trade and business.

The final straw was when King Rama III and Hunter fell out on the purchase of a steam warship. The First Opium War (1838-1842), involving Great Britain and China, had widespread regional repercussions. King Rama III was worried about British intentions towards Siam. He ordered a large supply of weapons and a steamship named the *Express* just in case the British attacked Siam. However, the war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 and the British did not attack Siam. By the time the steamship finally arrived on 11 January 1844 there was no need for it.

The negotiations between the King and Hunter quickly grew to be contentious. It is unclear if the King refused to pay for the vessel, or if Hunter quadrupled the price on delivery in an extortion attempt. Matters came to a head when Hunter threatened to sell the vessel to the Vietnamese, Siam's sworn enemy at the time. The King was immediately outraged at this naked threat and Hunter was immediately expelled from the Kingdom. Hunter departed Bangkok on *Express*, bound for Singapore, on 24 February 1844.

Upon landing in Singapore, Hunter immediately lodged a complaint with the colonial governor. The governor proved to be non-committal. So Hunter took the *Express* to Calcutta and saw the head of the East India Company.

Hunter stated that King Rama III had violated the Burney Treaty. He also wanted the establishment of a British counsel in Bangkok, British warships to be dispatched to intimidate the Siamese and a renegotiation of the import duty. Eventually, the Governor General of India ruled that the dispute was a personal one between Hunter and the King of Siam and wisely took no action. Hunter did make good on his threat to sell the *Express* to the Vietnamese but at a great loss of profit.

One of Hunter's assistants at the firm, Christopher Harvey, ran the business while Hunter was away. Hunter returned in July 1844 to collect on his outstanding debts then dissolved the business for good. Hunter left Bangkok for good on 29 December 1844. He returned to his native Scotland and died in Glasgow on 7 September 1848.

Hunter's son, Robert Jr., remained in Siam and maintained better relations with the court. He died on 19 April 1865 and was buried in Bangkok's Protestant Cemetery. Hunter left an uneven legacy in Siam. It was said Hunter unsuccessfully mixed shrewdness and arrogance, zeal and kindness. In 1850, during James Brooke's unsuccessful mission to extend the terms of a freer residency for Europeans, King Rama III specifically cited Hunter's behaviour as the reason to reject any new agreement. The King distrusted Europeans for the rest of his reign. When King Rama IV ascended to the throne in 1851, trade relations became more cordial. The King signed the Bowring Treaty in 1855, trade between Siam and Great Britain saw a tremendous expansion.



CAPTAIN BUSH LANE

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

It is fascinating that up to a dozen Thai Thanons (or avenues or streets) and Sois (lanes) have been given 'farang' nicknames. At least one, Henri Dunant Road, was given a name change back in 1965 (formerly known as Thanon Sanam Ma), but the several others include Soi Bearing (actually Behring or Sukhumvit Soi 107), Rue de Breast (Thanon Charoen Krung Soi 36), Wireless Road (Thanon Witthayu), New Road (Thanon Charoen Krung), Soi St. Louis (off of Thanon Sathorn), Soi La Salle (Sukhumvit Soi 105) and Soi Nana (actually it is the name same in Thai since Nana is an Indian family name, the family owns all of the Nana area and beyond), Soi Cowboy (off of Thanon Asoke) and Captain Bush Lane (Soi Charoen Krung 30), is perhaps the earliest 'foreign' nicknamed thoroughfare here.

Sir John Bush (1819-1905), an English sea captain commonly referred to as Captain Bush, was actually an Admiral in the Siamese Navy. He was very influential in the development of Bangkok as an international port. He served during the reigns of King Rama IV and King Rama V and commanded several Royal Siamese vessels. Captain Bush also managed the Bangkok Dock Company and served as Bangkok's Harbour Master, a very important position at the time. The Soi where he used to reside is named in his honour.

Captain Bush Lane is noteworthy in early Bangkok history for its concentration of important expatriate businesses, buildings and residences either on the lane or in the immediate area from the mid-19th to the early 20th century. Early in the 19th century there was little more than a small Chinatown in the area, Charoen Krung Road was just an elephant track through the jungle. The first Thai

building in the immediate area was a Buddhist temple called Wat Kaeo Fa. The first foreign structure built was the Portuguese Embassy, the oldest diplomatic residence in Thailand. It was first established on the site in 1820 on land granted by King Rama II. With the signing of the Bowring Treaty, then foreigners started flooding into Thailand. Numerous legations and consulates were established in this area. Business started to flourish as trade quickly expanded.

Charoen Krung Road, the first paved road in Thailand, was opened in 1864 to serve the expat and Chinese communities. In 1888 Captain Bush Lane was built. Along with several European expatriates, consular officials and Captain Bush, all resided on the Soi. Also in 1888 part of the Wat Kaeo Fa temple grounds were used for the first foreign bank here, The Hongkong and Shanghai Bank. This operated out of the old Customs House building. In 1890, it relocated to a permanent office on the mouth of Khlong Phadung Krung Kasem. That building lasted until 1977 when it was demolished to make way for the Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel.

Also on the temple grounds was the United Club built in 1888. It was an international expatriate social club for Western expatriates. Its members included British, German, French, and American nationals. The club was described as having a large well laid out area with billiard rooms, card tables, a reading room, tennis courts, a bowling alley and dining facility inside the building. But in 1903 the British Club members split off due to some unremembered dispute to form their own social organisation called the British Club.

The Southern plot of the temple grounds was rented to a French beverage company called Societe Française des Distilleries de l'Indochine. This firm constructed an office building, later to be called House No.1, sometime between 1907 and 1925. It was built of masonry and load bearing walls. It was a two storey building done in neo-classical style with tiles on the first floor and teak wood on the second floor. It had a hipped roof with diamond shaped tiles over a timber frame.

The Northern plot of the temple grounds was rented to the Louis T. Leonowens Company, Ltd. They built offices and warehouses. One warehouse, next to House No.1 was probably constructed between 1907 and 1913. This structure is now the only remaining building left from the company's ownership.

In 1898, the foreigners living in the area sent in a letter of complaint about the stench coming from the temple due to its service as a cremation ground and pig sty. An official investigation was ordered, and the temple eventually was relocated.

Captain Bush Lane is colourful reminder of the early past foreign influence on Thai history.

The first time I ever heard the name Thailand: WAT TRIMITR WITTHAYARAM – TEMPLE OF THE GOLD BUDDHA, BANGKOK

by Leonard
H. Le Blanc III

I remember exactly when I heard the story when and how the solid Gold Buddha image was discovered at Wat Trimitr for first time. I was in the 5th grade. It was a beautiful spring day back in April 1962. And I was reading about how and when the priceless statute was found in a world geography textbook that had interesting vignettes from countries around the world, including Thailand.

The story went that an old temple in Bangkok was being moved to new quarters in the mid 1950s. Among the items to be moved was an old, large plaster or stucco-covered Buddha statue. It was late in the day when the workers hooked the statue up to a crane and tried to hoist it up onto a truck bed, but the restraints unexpectedly broke. The statue was dropped, being too heavy to lift and the covering was cracked. The workers just left the statue where it was since it as getting too dark to work any longer. However, that night there was a terrific rainstorm.

When the workers returned, the next morning, they saw something glittering beneath the cracked covering which had been partially washed away in the rainstorm. Upon further investigation it was discovered that inside the outer covering was a gold Buddha image. The rest of the covering was quickly removed. They found it was a solid gold Buddha worth millions of dollars that had sat on the temple grounds for several decades, unbeknownst to everyone. The explanation said that the Buddha statue was covered up to prevent it from being melted down during the Burmese invasion of Ayutthaya in 1767. I was fascinated to hear about this very exotic land.

The solid gold Buddha is known in Thai as Phra Phuttha Maha Suwan Patimakon. This Gold Buddha statue is the world's largest. Like almost all of Thailand's history, the solid gold Buddha's origins are obscured in myth or legend. As the Thais left no written records, what records they did have were religious tracts. Almost all of them were burned, did not last or lost in centuries past. Art historians and experts believe that the statue dates from the 13th or 14th century being crafted during the Sukhothai period. The statue shows Indian influences from the egg shaped head that was typical of the statues made at the time.

Most probably the statue was moved from Sukhothai to Ayutthaya in 1403 when Thailand's seat of power was moved.



Art scholars believe the statue was covered in either stucco or plaster, painted over and then inlaid with coloured glass to disguise it when Burmese invaders attacked and overran Ayutthaya in 1767. So, it escaped the fate of all the other gold and gold covered statues that were melted down and taken away when the city was sacked.

After moving the capita to Bangkok in 1782, King Rama I started to construct many temples in Bangkok. He ordered any Buddhas that still could be found in the ruins of Ayutthaya to be brought to Bangkok for installation. During the reign of King Rama II, the solid gold Buddha was first installed at Wat Chotanaram in Bangkok and later moved to Wat Trimitr when Wat Chotanaram was closed down. Originally called War Sam Chin Tai, Wat Trimitr and is one of the oldest temples in Chinatown. There were three Chinese men who were friends that helped construct this temple for the purpose of merit making. In 1939, the temple was renamed Wat Trimitr Witthayaram literally means three friends.

When the big Gold Buddha statute was moved to Wat Trimitr, the grounds were small and there was no place to display it. So, it as kept under a simple tin roof in storage and forgotten about for some 20 years. About 1954 a Viharn building had been constructed to house the big Gold Buddha. It was moved on 25 May 1955, then the Gold Buddha was discovered. It was found there were actually nine parts that could be disassembled using a key hidden in the base to allow for easier transport.

The statue is 3.01 metres wide, 3.91 metres in height and weighs 5,500 kilograms. On 14 February 2010, a large new building was opened at the Wat Trimitr Temple to house the Gold Buddha. The image remains one of Bangkok's most visited tourist sites. It remains very fascinating.

SECOND TIMES THE CHARM – LOUIS T. LEONOWENS

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

For good or bad, the family name Leonowens continues to be spoken in Thailand more than 150 years after Anna Leonowens and her son, Louis, first disembarked on the ship *Chao Phraya* in August 1862 here in Bangkok. If Louis's mother is still reviled for her libel against the Kingdom through her two memoirs and further writings, then Louis Leonowens is still held in high esteem as one of the country's most prominent and astute businessmen since his return to Thailand in 1881.

Louis Thomas Gunnis Leonowens was born on 25 October 1856 in Lynton, Western Australia. His parents were born in India. His mother had Anglo-Indian ancestry that she made great pains to hide for social reasons. His mother, Anna Edwards Leonowens, worked as a teacher; his father, Thomas Leon Owens (later spelled Leonowens) worked in the commissariat as a clerk. In 1857, the family moved to Penang where Thomas was a hotel manager. He died unexpectedly of a stroke in 1859, leaving the family impoverished. Anna returned to Singapore and started a school for the children of British Army officers until she was invited to come to Thailand to teach English to the wives and children of King Mongkut (King Rama IV) in 1862. Anna sent her daughter, Anna, to England to be educated and went to Bangkok with Louis, then five years old.

Louis was educated by his mother along with the other royal children in the Grand Palace for almost six years. While his mother and he were in England on a vacation in 1868, King Mongkut suddenly died. However, Anna was not invited to return to Thailand to teach again. Eventually she found her way to New York City while Louis continued his studies in England. By 1874 Louis had been reunited with his mother in the U.S. but soon he ran up some bills and fled the country leaving with his debts behind. He would not see his mother again for 19 years. In 1881, Louis returned to Thailand. He was 25 years old.

If there was ever the right person at the right place at the right time with the right skills – and the right connections in



Thailand – it was Louis T. Leonowens. He spoke fluent Thai, has the closest connections with the royal family, was highly intelligent and extremely ambitious and Thailand trade was going to soon see a great expansion. He was immediately commissioned as a Captain with the Royal Siamese Cavalry by King Chulalongkorn (King Rama IV) and served until 1884. He entered the teak trade as a concessionaire just as the upcountry timber business was exploding. This was due to the accelerated demand for strong, rot resistant wood for Royal Navy ship masts, flooring, furniture and other crafted items.

Louis married Caroline Knox (1856-1893) in Bangkok. She was the youngest daughter of Sir Thomas George Knox, the British consul general to Thailand (1868-1879). Caroline's mother was Prang Yen from a Thai noble family. It is interesting that Caroline's older sister, Fanny, married into the royal family without permission. Thomas and Caroline had one son, Thomas Knox Leonowens (1888-1953) and a daughter, Anna Harriett Leonowens. Caroline died unexpectedly in 1893 and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Bangkok. Louis later remarried to Reta May (1880-1936) in 1900, but they had no children.

Louis quickly became one of the leading businessmen in Thailand. He eventually branched out into representing manufacturers of Champagne and whisky, typewriters, engineering products and building materials, insurance companies and handling general merchandise plus exporting other hardwoods. Louis finally consolidated all his business interests in 1905 into one company called Louis Thomas Leonowens Company, later called Louis T. Leonowens (Thailand), Ltd., an international trading company. However, after 1906 Louis became less involved with directly running his company.

In 1913 Louis eventually left Thailand for the U.K. in 1913. He died during the great influenza pandemic in 1919 and was buried in Brompton Cemetery in London along with his second wife. However, his company continues under the Getz Group.

Louis had a reputation for generosity and eccentricity. On the teak posts supporting the balcony of his home that still exists, he carved the heights and names of his visitors. Louis is also commemorated through one of Bangkok's most noted landmarks, The Giant Swing (Sao Ching Cha). In 1920, his company donated the teak wood to reconstruct the swing after it had fallen into disrepair.



RISING SEA LEVELS THREATEN BANGKOK

by Leonard H Le Blanc III

The biggest looming threat to Bangkok today are rising sea levels. Climate change is causing global warming. There have been numerous studies that have been conducted about rising sea levels caused by human induced climate change. It was concluded sea level rise is due to manmade climate change. There is no question there is extensive literature about climate change, sea level rise, sustainability and planning for the expected catastrophe.

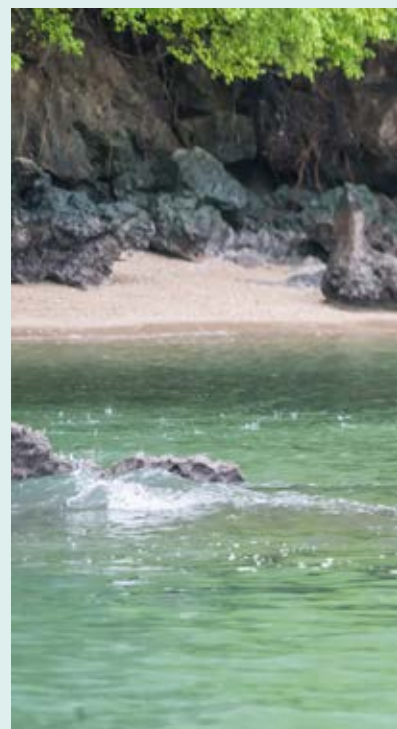
However, there are only a few options written options to counteract sea level rise and no concrete planning for the inevitable catastrophe. Most studies approach this topic from an engineering standpoint, including proposals for sea walls, dikes, groins or jetties, earth berms (or tall mounds of dirt), physical barriers, construction of barrier islands, sand replenishment of affected beaches and other technical options. However, nothing can be found to date that addresses the human side of the equation, the looming problem of moving people or populations away from affected coastal areas.

There is no question that the sea level is slowly rising. It will soon pose a grave hazard to the world's population, commerce and livelihood. It will have a direct impact on earth's sustainability. Even now there has been serious incidents of flooding, stronger storm surges from large cyclones, hurricanes or typhoons, shoreline and land erosion and other physical problems like seawater encroachment into land based fresh water sources. There is a general scientific consensus that sea levels have been rising at approximately two millimetres per year since 1850 according to scientific measurement and record keeping.

During the Pleistocene Epoch some 18,000 years ago, or during the last Ice Age, it is estimated that the sea level was 100 metres lower than in the present time. The sea level has already risen 10-12.5 centimetres in the last 50 years. Recent scientific studies of sea level change have shown that the average increase or rate of rise has been between one - three millimetres/year. It is now estimated that by the year 2070 that sea levels may be 20 - 70 centimetres higher than at present. Some scientific studies have stated that if all the ice melted in Antarctica and Greenland, then sea level would rise by some 75 metres.

This side effect is melting glaciers, snowfields and sea ice, so the world's oceans have been seeing an incremental rise in sea level for hundreds of years. Manmade global warming is a phenomenon that is fueling ocean levels to rise. Due to more heat in the air and the oceans, heated water will expand thus making the problem much worse. In one scientific analysis, it was found that all coastal areas will be heavily impacted by rising sea levels. As the world's population increases in most non Western countries, urban coastal and adjacent areas will be the centre of those population increases and flows into centres for higher income earning opportunities. This means urban areas are growing as rural areas lose population. Global warming poses further serious risks, and a study by the OECD has estimated that 5.138 million people in Bangkok may be exposed to coastal flooding by 2070, the seventh highest figure among the world's port cities.

Some of the world's largest or most important low lying seaport cities at great



risk will include New York City; Kolkata, India; New Orleans, Louisiana; Miami and Tampa Bay, Florida; Hong Kong and Shanghai, China. Also some low elevation parts of the U.S. like the much of the states of Louisiana and Florida are also at grave risk of being permanently submerged.

It is estimated one third of the world's population lives within 56 kilometres of a coastline. More than one third of the world's economic infrastructure are concentrated in coastal regions with elevations below 1.5 metres. Scientists have stated that a 0.3 metre sea level rise will push shorelines back about 30 metres. A 1.5 metre sea level rise is estimated to push shorelines back 136 metres. It has also been estimated that in the year 2020 that 65% of the world's population will live along the coastal margins. Another report states that 20% of the world's population already lives on coastal areas that might be inundated or changed dramatically if sea levels rise even one metre. Low lying river delta areas with densely packed populations in Bangladesh, Nigeria, China, Malaysia, India, Egypt and Thailand will be at the great risk. The populations of island states are at most immediate risk because of rising sea include the Kiribati, Seychelles, Nauru, the Maldives, Palau, the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The city of Bangkok is at additional risk because of decades of unrestrained pumping of groundwater. This is causing saltwater intrusion especially when the Chao Phraya River has a low flow. It allows saltwater to push into the fresh water aquifers in coastal areas where fresh water is being withdrawn faster than it can be replaced. This is also causing the southern part of the Chao Phraya River valley, where Bangkok is situated, to subside. Coupled with the rise in the Gulf of Thailand it is



estimated that by the year 2030 major parts of Bangkok will be submerged.

Many millenniums ago, what is now Bangkok, was at the bottom of the Gulf of Thailand. The mouth of the Chao Phraya River was at Lopburi, now 150 kilometres Northeast of Bangkok. However, many scientists have stated that Bangkok will once again, if not soon, be at the bottom of the Gulf of Thailand due to rising sea levels. The gravest threat to Bangkok and the surrounding area is being eventually submerged. The city is especially vulnerable to sea level rise over many other major cities in the world.

Bangkok suffers from two grave handicaps. First the city has an average elevation of only 1.5 metres above sea level. Second is due to extensive ground water pumping over the decades, this action has lowered the city's land elevation. Although ground water pumping has been somewhat mitigated over the years, there are some parts of the city that are now 1 metre below sea level. Some scientists fear that Bangkok and its 12 million inhabitants will be submerged at the start of the next decade. Compounding the problem are several other factors. The land's subsidence in the whole area has increased the risk of increased flooding. Bangkok was already prone to periodic flooding due to its low elevation and an inadequate drainage system. Additionally, the city's drains are frequently blocked by trash and rubbish, especially plastic waste.

The city now relies on flood barriers and augmenting drainage from canals by pumping and building drain tunnels.





Even so, parts of Bangkok and its suburbs are still regularly inundated. Heavy downpours resulting in urban runoff overwhelming drainage systems. Runoff discharge from upstream areas are major triggering factors. Severe flooding affecting much of the city occurred in 1995 and 2011. In that later year, most of Bangkok's Northern, Eastern and Western districts were flooded, in some places for over two months. Coastal erosion is also an issue in the Gulf coastal area, a small length of which lies within Bangkok's Bang Khun Thian District.

There are some individuals who cannot wait for official help to relocate elsewhere or defend themselves where they live from rising sea levels. The local people there are not waiting for the Thailand government to intervene to protect them from rising sea levels, preferring to take matters into their own hands. There are several examples of individuals conducting self-financed self-help projects to prevent the encroachment of seawater into their inhabitations and to protect their homes and farms or land based fisheries. Some Thai farmers and fishermen at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River have already erected earth berms by themselves to prevent the Gulf of Thailand's waters from encroachment onto their lands and homes.

The rising sea waters have been affecting, or ruining, their livelihoods.

This is also being done in other places around the world. In Thailand, traditional teak wood houses have been long placed on stilts in low lying river areas for well over a millennium. This was to avoid both seasonal monsoonal and typhoon flooding plus avoid wild animals, insects, thieves and snakes. Residents in the Amazon River valley in Brazil have long built their houses on stilts to avoid the annual Amazon River high flooding levels. During half the year portions of the Amazon forest are naturally flooded up to 20 kilometres from the river by several metres of water. Houses have also been built in stilts all through SE Asia due to the annual monsoonal flooding in Laos, Cambodia, Burma and Vietnam. In another example, dozens of large summer homes along the New Jersey beach are already being elevated and placed on large stilts.

There are only two solutions to his looming problem. Either protect people in place by some means or move everyone to higher ground. It will be financially and physically impossible to do either or both, i.e., move everyone to higher ground or protect every coastline.



Recreating the street food experience at home

by Erin Bennett



Part of what makes Thailand so appealing to expats is Thai cuisine. And it used to be that you could sample it on the cheap through the country's world famous street food scene, which for so long has been lauded for its portability and its flavourful offerings. Sadly, a ban on street food beginning in 2014 debilitated a once booming street food scene, with vendors forced off the sidewalks where they used to serve some of the most scrumptious yet affordable dishes this side of the world.

This decision to clear Thailand's sidewalks and walkways didn't necessarily 'kill' the country's street food scene, but its impact is far reaching, having caused a loss of livelihood for many and reduced profits for others. It also means that street food, so accessible everywhere once upon a time, is now a bit more difficult to get, and just a tad pricier as opposed to many years ago. But at least there is a silver lining: You can recreate the street food experience right in the comforts of your home! And the guide below will outline exactly how you can do that.

Get the right kitchen tools and equipment

First things first, make sure you have the kitchen tools and equipment commonly used in making Thai street food. In particular, you'll need a wok, as it is vital to Thai cooking – and in Asian cooking as a whole. That said, the best woks are seasoned cast iron or carbon steel ones, which means they have been warmed, cooled down, and oiled so that dust won't accumulate on the surface.

You'll also need a mortar and pestle, preferably granite, as you will use it to make different kinds of pastes, like chilli paste and green curry paste. An alternative would be to use a food processor or blender, though you'll be sacrificing flavour if you go that route. That's because pounding herbs and spices in a mortar lets you extract every bit of flavour, thereby making them more flavourful as compared to cutting them into tiny pieces using a food processor.

Another thing you will need is a rice cooker, as some Thai street foods like Khao Kha Moo and Moo Ping are served with rice. The former – pork cooked in soy sauce,



sugar, and spices until juicy and tender – is served with ordinary white rice. The latter – grilled pork skewers – often comes with sticky rice. So, it goes without saying that you will need a good rice cooker if you want to try these kinds of street food.

Fortunately, the best rice cookers nowadays make cooking rice a breeze. They are also innovative and incredibly multifunctional, with features that are beyond what meets the eye.



Pad See Ew

Pad See Ew is basically just fried noodles prepared with soy sauce. You'll need sen yai, or Thai flat rice noodles (300 grammes), your choice of chicken, beef or pork (200 grammes), Chinese broccoli, garlic, an egg, light and dark sweet soy sauce and some sugar.

Now, heat the wok and add some oil. Once the oil is hot, sauté the garlic and then stir-fry the meat. Toss in the rice noodles, along with the Chinese broccoli plus 1 tablespoon of light soy sauce, ½ tablespoon of dark soy sauce, and ½ teaspoon of sugar. Stir and cook the noodles for a minute or two, adding some oil when they get dry.

Then, push everything to one side of

the wok and crack open an egg on the empty side. Scramble the egg before mixing it with the rice noodles and meat. Fry for another 30–45 seconds and your Pad See Ew is ready to serve!

Kao Niew Ma Muang

Kao Niew Ma Muang is tasty treat of sliced mangoes served with sticky rice and coconut cream syrup. For this dish, you'll need ripe mangoes, rice, coconut milk, sugar, salt, and cornstarch. Start by cooking the rice, making sure that you wash it 5–6 times to get rid of the extra starch.

Then, set your rice cooker to the sticky rice option. At the same time, make the coconut syrup by heating the coconut milk, sugar and salt over medium-low heat.

For instance, there is a keep warm function that will keep your food warm, but not burnt, for hours. There is also a steam option, which is perfect for prepping vegetables – key staples in some Thai street food such as Pad See Ew and Som Tam.

Finally, it would be great if you had a grill, as that means you can prepare all-time favourites, like Thai Chicken Satay and Sai Ooah. You can also use it for family barbecues, get together, and special occasions, where you can cook Thai style barbecue.

Try these recipes

With your equipment on hand, you're now ready to cook some awesome Thai street food. Here are three recipes to get you started:



For this street food, you'll need 500 grammes of boneless pork shoulder cut into strips, 3 minced garlic cloves, 2 tablespoons of caster sugar, 1 teaspoon of salt, 1 tablespoon of fish sauce, and 125 mL coconut cream

For Moo Ping, the key is marinating the pork at least overnight. So, create the marinade by combining all non-pork ingredients into a bowl and adding about a tablespoon of vegetable oil. Place the pork into the marinade and set aside. The next day, put the pork on bamboo skewers, grill, and then enjoy!

Add the coconut syrup into the cooking rice in two batches, with the second batch coming after you have stirred the rice. Once the rice is cooked, set the rice cooker on warm mode and make the coconut sauce by heating coconut milk in a saucepan and adding cornstarch liquid.

Whisk and let cook for a minute or two. Your Kao Niew Ma Muang is now ready!

Moo Ping

Moo Ping is actually just pork barbecue skewers. But they are made with lean meat that makes them more flavourful and satisfying, especially with the sticky rice served with them.



Of course, good food is better enjoyed with loved ones or familiar faces, and that is often the case when people make their way to Thailand's food vendors. So, prepare the food as best you can, then eat and share them with your family (and friends when get-togethers are okay again). In this way, you'll be able to truly recapture the Thai street food experience – but in the comfort of your home.



Social gallery



“Footloose Gals” celebrated New Year 2021 and birthdays of Susan Chan, Susan Lim and Jong Somvaranee at Regent on the Park 3 on January 29th, 2021.

On Wednesday, 24th Feb. 2021, International Women's Club had an opportunity to visit Med Park hospital. Health talk on confusion & complexity of Covid-19 and the vaccines with Asst. Prof. Mondej Sookpranee, Infectious Disease Consultant.



Group of friends got together to celebrate the Chinese New Year of Metal Ox on Wed. 17th March, 2021 at Ah Yat in Arnoma Grand Bangkok.

It was celebrated in traditional way done in Singapore and Malaysia by having Lo Hei, toss for prosperity.



Members of the International Women's Club of Thailand (IWC), led by President Manjit Walia, recently hosted the Club's first Business Meeting where activities for 2021 were discussed followed by a Heart to Heart themed luncheon graced by a few VIP guests from the diplomatic corps in the Ballroom of Eastin Hotel Makkasan.



Pictured from left are:
Anu Chopra; Stephanie Lim; 2021 IWC President Manjit Walia; Madame Tanty R. Budiman, wife of the Indonesian Ambassador to Thailand; Khunying Kingkaew Uathavikul; Mukda Sorensen; Evonne Avril Manaya, Cultural Officer of the Philippines Embassy in Thailand; Bing Arias





Shakuntla Gurbani, Hope
Esperenca Philunthanakul, Tetsuko
Wilberg, Agneta Bekassy De Bekas,
Winda Braun, Sara Guzman,
Jindarat Jhumsai Na Ayuddhya,
Arlene Rafiq, Ronelle Stoessel,
Mukda Sorensen, Radha Rathke,
Annabelle S Daokaew.



A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

Atomic Theory is fundamental to science learning. Our Year 1 children are amongst few in the world learning and exploring these concepts at such a young age, adding science literacy to their fundamental knowledge.



Atomic Theory
for Year 1



Bangkok Patana School
The British International School in Thailand
Established 1957

www.patana.ac.th
admissions@patana.ac.th
Tel: +66 (2) 2785 2200

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

EXCLUSIVE TOUR

with our

**FOUNDING
HEAD OF SCHOOL**

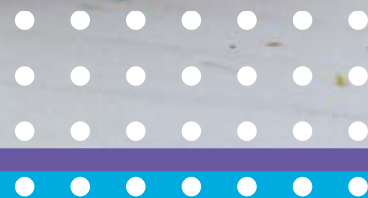
Cameron FOX

**S A T U R D A Y
M O R N I N G S**

As a design-driven school, we empower our learners to think and act like designers, we help them build the confidence to lead their own journey, and prepare them with future-ready skills.

VERSO International School's curriculum is aligned to the New York State Education Department Standards.

**HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS
NOW OPEN**



admissions@verso.ac.th

+66 2 080 6200

www.verso.ac.th