

Post



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Mar 4, 2023 · 3 min read

# Caution: Elephant Crossing - March 5, 2023

Updated: Mar 13, 2023

[Photos](#) | [Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

No monkey business today. This day is all about the elephants. Yesterday Nat picked us up at the Chiang Mai airport and Arm (pronounced 'Am') drove us to our hotel, but today we see neither of them. We're supposed to be picked up in front of our hotel for an elephant experience at 8 a.m. We're supposedly going to feed them and bathe them and who knows what all.

With that in mind we have a quick but complete (and yummy) breakfast at the hotel and are soon being picked up. The ride to the elephant sanctuary is 90 minutes, so we aren't excited to be hustled into the back of a truck. It was covered and the bench seats were a tad padded, but yikes. There are already two guys from Manhattan Island aboard, and soon we have someone from Southern California and two separate Canadians. It was cozy. A stop for coffee at a 7-11 and Karen and I are moved up front, to the cab, to make more room for everyone. That was more comfortable.

On the ride up we pepper our driver with questions and learn all about adopting and caring for elephants. Our driver has some siblings going to school in the US... one in "New Jersey" (am I pronouncing that right?)... at... Princeton? [Nice school]. Another sibling is in Connecticut at... Yah-lay? Y-A-L-E... (We correct and congratulate him).

At the sanctuary we see our four elephants from afar: Grandma, Mom, Son ("Naughty Boy") and Dancer. Only Mom and Naughty Boy are related. Grandma is just so called because of her advanced age. We all put on Karen shirts. The tribe who takes care of the elephants are the Karen tribe, and these are the shirts they wear. By so doing the elephants think we're nice and will feed them, rather than try to shoot or harm them.

Soon we're offering the elephants bananas, which they grab dexterously with their trunk, or we get them to open their mouth so we can put the banana in directly. It's a lot of fun. After that it's time for bamboo. They pick some up with their trunk, hold down the rest with a foot, and break it off. It's fascinating. After a while we all go for a walk and end up down stream in the taller grasses (Yummy!) and eventually the elephants are down in the stream with us. Before too long we all head back. We take pictures of all of it.

It's time for a break for them (and us) while we also eat. After lunch we change into swim suits and wade into the stream with the elephants. We use big bowls to wet them down and give them a good scrubbing. What with beer at lunch this turns into one big water fight. Next it's over to the mud pit to give them mud baths. Karen doesn't do any of the water sports, and I forgo the mud bath, but it's fun, nonetheless.

Finally it's time to head home. We make a short stop at some local crafts spots for tea and dessert. The 90 minute drive home is long and dusty.

After cleaning up in the room we head 'down town' for the night market. It's Sunday, so this is the really big night market. And it's close to a full moon (lunar day) which is a big deal for all the many Buddhist Thai people, and so this one is really big. They've shut down the Main Street for at least 1.5 kilometers and many of the intersections are also blocked off for a ways in either direction. It's massive and there are a ton of people.

Over the course of the evening, at different 'booths', we buy and eat: Vegetable Potstickers, two orders of Pad Thai, an order of green papaya salad (yes, please, spicy!), a free coca-cola (they were giving away), and for dessert: egg custard tart and chocolate filled puff pastries. We later add up what we paid... in total (not per person) it was under US\$5. And it was good!

Full and exhausted we walk back home. Tomorrow we pack up and head out for a new city. Good day. Good night, elephants!

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## Photos



Scott and a whole bunch of nose hair



Karen in a Karen shirt, as always making her clients happy with food



She followed me home, can I keep her??



Karen being attached by a trunk



A banana for you...



Karen giving Grand Ma a banana. The great ones always make it look easy.



Where does all that food go. OH! Never mind.



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Actually it's dried and used to make paper  
for the tourists!



We: down by the river. Way above us? The  
elephants!





Bath time (Scott in his white shirt and sunglasses)



The gang



Where we got our Pad Thai. It's a motor bike with a kitchen bolted to the side.



The Sunday Night Market. It went on for ever!!

[Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

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