

Post



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If it's good enough for Angelina and Brad - March 6, 2023

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As has become our custom, we're up early. We are leaving today. We have to be packed and meet our tour guide and driver at 7 AM. We check out and pick up our breakfast which is in a paper bag. It is comprised of milk, orange juice, two small croissants each, and a triple decker sandwich with some pressed meat and cheese with mayonnaise on white bread. It's better than it sounds (but not much).

Our first stop is a ways away. It is close to the highest point in Thailand. The higher we go the cooler it gets. Not only do we enjoy that, but apparently so do the plants. After a fairly long drive through the city and then countryside, we get to a hilly area with lots of plantings under long, low plastic held up by hoops. We're told that inside are flowers, fruits and vegetables.

We are in the Doi Inthanon National Park. Our first stop is to an imposing waterfall (Wachiranthan) named for the current king. They named it for him when he was just the prince. Talk about sucking up!

A bit further along we get to the botanical gardens (Royal Agricultural Station Inthanon) within the national park. It's readily apparent that we're not the only people here. But almost everyone else is a local, and most are in traditional costume. This includes the women, but also many of the men and lots of the children. They are very colorful! Why? We're told that it's a lunar day, which means it's a full moon. This is a holy day for the Buddhists. 2,500 monks, we're told, will see the Buddha today. We're not quite sure what that means.

The gardens are truly spectacular. The flowers are very artfully planted, with different areas devoted to various types of flowers. A large number of them are in bloom, and all are healthy and beautiful.

We wander through the plantings, up one path, and down another; through a door and under an archway. Eventually, we get to a very large pond again with flowers planted all around. There are a pair of big black swans and some cygnets, floating on the water. Local children are feeding them pieces of lettuce, and consider sharing their chewing gum. They think better of it. We're told the pond, and its plantings, were created for the King's 80th birthday.

We have coffee which we learn is also grown nearby. Do we want sugar? No, thank you. We take a sip and realize we definitely need sugar. It is strong! We're told that 100 or so years ago a large number of Tibetan refugees settled in this area. Their political party back home lost and they had little future opportunity. They are very hard-working and the local government is happy to have them. They still wear their traditional dress, and grow the fruits and vegetables on the hills nearby.

The government has a system, whereby they handle the drying of the fruits, keep a portion, and return the rest to the growers to sell by the side of the road up here. That's our next stop. We are tickled by the variety of dried fruits and vegetables, nuts, coffee, and other products on offer. We are able to sample just about whatever we wish. They also have alcohols also made from their fruits.

We end up buying a bottle of strawberry spirit. 30% alcohol. Pretty good for 9 AM. We also buy dried plums, strawberries, bananas, and tomatoes, plus purple sweet potato chips. Everything really has wonderful flavor and visual appeal. Like the Dutch and their tulips, these are some talented gardeners.

Next stop are the two Buddhist temples close to the mountain's summit. They're impressive and we learn much about Buddha's life and how to pray properly. They were built as tribute for the 80th birthdays of the previous king and queen. (Keep that in mind, Karen and I have birthdays coming up every year.) Our shoes are always left at the entrance. Spiritually cleansed, we drive to the actual summit. It's lush and cool (51°). We hike a nature trail (and actually hit the highest point in Thailand) after which it's time to drive for lunch.

Google translate does its best to decipher the Thai on the menu. Lunch is good, but here in the boonies the protein is randomly cut up and it's up to the diner to figure out what's good to ingest or not. This isn't what we're used to back home.

We get some sweet green tea to go and we're off for our final two hours of driving of the day. The terrain goes from green and lush to dry and sparse. It does this a couple of times en route. At the restroom break the facilities are a couple of squat toilets with a barrel of water and plastic bowl to flush. We're told not to put the toilet paper in the toilet. Apparently we left Kansas long ago.

The Fern Resort, where we'll be staying for the next two nights, once welcomed Angelina and Brad. They were married then, now they're not. We hope this place had nothing to do with that. The facilities are mostly outdoors and it's gorgeous. The trees are massive and towering. We can see why Brangelina would stay here. Dinner was delicious, more like back home. Alas, it being a religious holiday... no alcohol [served by the hotel]. There's always tomorrow.

Photos



Karen says this is 280 m tall and I believe her



Ooooooh, pretty



Karen, Nat, and some really big azaleas.
(Or maybe they're just in the foreground.)



A local lad in traditional costume for the
lunar day. a black swan swims in the fore
ground.



So many choices!



And they go on forever...



A present for the previous king's 80th.
What do you get a king who has
everything?



The current king and his flight attendant/4th wife (wink, wink, nudge, nudge)



Tell me Elon Musk isn't jealous of this bad boy!



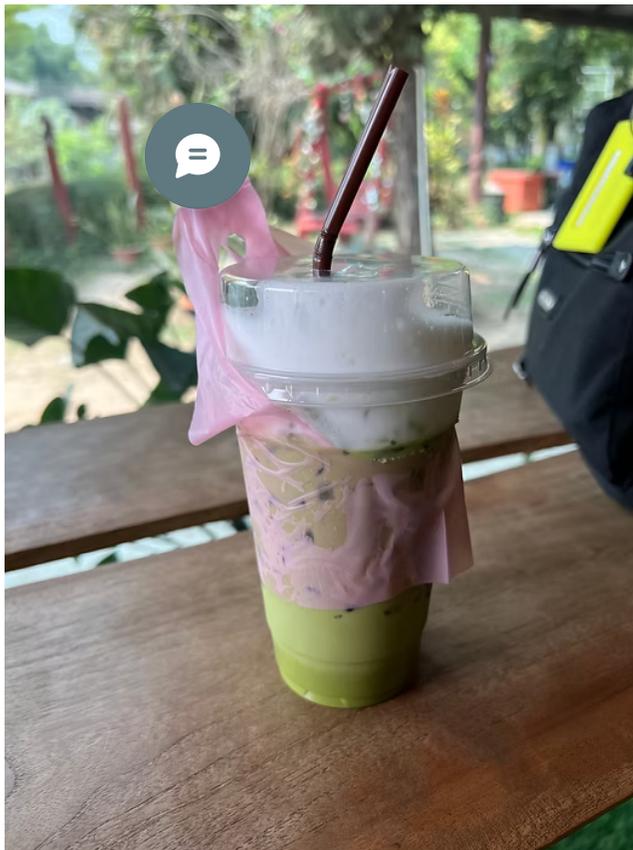
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Scott and Karen at the highest spot in Thailand. Karen just happy to be almost as tall as Scott, for once!



lunch



Iced green tea (with handle).



Angelina and Brad (with the hotel owner)



This (our room) is not where Brad and Angelina stayed, I promise you.

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