

Post



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Next stop: Bangkok! - March 11, 2023

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Our days fall into categories, and one semi-traumatic category is “Changing cities by air”. Today is one of those days. We’re catching an in-country connection from Chiang Rai to Bangkok at 2:25 pm. We’re switching from cities like Pai, where they have around 4,000 people, to Bangkok, with 15 million in the greater Bangkok area. This may be a shock to the system.

First, though, we have a delightful breakfast at the hotel on the banks of the Mae Klong River. The Legend Resort is huge, capable of hosting a large wedding. The breakfast is truly impressive, with a dozen different 'entrees' or more, and a soup bar. We're pressed for time, so we don't sample everything, alas. We see that they are setting up for a large wedding on the broad swath of grass between where we're eating and the river.

As we pay our bill and head to our awaiting vehicle we see wedding guests streaming in. The ladies are, of course, all dolled up, and the gentlemen are wearing the traditional khaki plaid puffy pants, tied in a loose knot between the legs. These are the type you'd wear if you had an audience with the Maharaja. It all looks very formal, but fun.

Our first stop was to one of the temples in town, the Way Phra Singh. So far we've always been confused as we've gone to these Wats/Temples. They invariably have lots and lots of buildings. Is one specific one the temple? Or does this collection of buildings make up the temple? It turns out it's the latter. The temple is typically made up of a hall, a shrine, a pagoda, an ordination, etc. etc. There are also, typically, a Bodhi tree, which is key to the Buddhist religion, and a Salah Tree, aka a Cannonball Tree. The later does, indeed, appear to have cannonballs growing on it. It also has a most bizarre, and beautiful flower. Thankfully this one is in full bloom.

At this particular temple, on this day, there was an ordination going on. A monk is getting his robe. There is chanting going on, and monks are scurrying about with shallow trays of some grain (sprouted?) seemingly involved in the ceremony. We're told it's something like a three day affair, so if Mom's going to be heartbroken that she's losing her little boy, by the end of the third day, she's worn out/down.

From the temple we walk the short distance to the middle of town. We find a street vendor from whom to buy a replacement watch for Karen. The one she brought didn't take kindly to being soaked in the salty brine of the sea. The replacement cost about US\$15.

A bit further along we turn into the biggest indoor market in town, and it's huge. Perhaps a kilometer in either direction. We walk past booth after booth, each specializing in typically one thing. One had nothing but flip-flops, another fabric, another brasiers. There were fish booth (lots of them) and meat or chicken booths. I see a large rodent scurry across the floor between two booth selling fish. It isn't that crowded, but more than a couple of times a motorcycle drives past. Hey! We're shopping' here!!

At one point we turn towards the meat section. They obviously sell, and buy, the whole animal. We see parts we didn't care to see. They had blocks of congealed blood. They had big trays of just one part, like chicken feet. It is truly fascinating. Karen thought she knew how to cook, but this would be a whole new world. Back on the street there are still lots of stores. One has pre-made 'gift packs' for your favorite monk, complete with stuff monks like or need.

There is also a store that has all kinds of gifts for your loved ones who had passed. These are bought by the Chinese. There are coins, money, a house, a car, shoes, etc. and everything was made of paper. You presumably buy it, burn it with the understanding that XYZ departed loved one is going to get this pair of shoes, and poof, that person, on the other side, now has a nice new pair of shoes. Hm.

We hike to the second of the three temples we'll be touring. It has the right trees and the right assortment of buildings. It also has a Temple museum we tour and inspect all their notable temple stuff. There are statues and pictures of famous monks from years gone by. There are big suspended all metal drums. They have glass pieces that look like bells. They're actually in the shape of the pagodas that every good temple has, but they're about three inches tall. We can see, in each, some relic -- like ashes or a finger nail -- from some important monk of the past.

Our third temple is The White Temple. It's kind of like when the late Steve Jobs says he has "one more thing" at a product unveiling. They've saved the best for last. This place is way over the top. It's not misnamed. It is white, but it's immensely ornate. It starts you on a path, outside, going through hell, on to the inside, into today's world, and ending up in nirvana (assuming, of course, that you've followed the teachings of the Buddha). It was well worth the trip.

We eventually have lunch at the White Temple and then drive to the airport. We check in, get rid of some luggage, and say our sad goodbyes. Before long we're jetting up through the haze of Chiang Rai towards Bangkok on Thai Smile airways. Alas, Bangkok looks just as hazy as from whence we'd come. We recollect our luggage and meet "Nan" (pronounced like Nancy, but with fewer syllables). We load into our vehicle for the next few days, piloted by a gentleman we'll know as Mr. Wee. The van should be big enough, there are just the two of us and it seats nine, plus the guide and driver.

At the hotel we promise to be in the lobby at the appointed hour and say goodnight. We head up to our room. We hike to a relaxing dinner out and are soon back in our room in bed.

Photos



Part of the breakfast offerings: Pork Porridge with a plethora of condiments and noodles



Getting set up for the wedding



We wonder if we've seen the bride to be at the resort. They do have a picture of her at the entrance to the ceremony, but it doesn't help.



A Buddha (actually many) at our first temple. We're getting pretty good at knowing his positions.



The temple's pagoda



The very bizarre and beautiful flower of the
Cannonball Tree



At the market a coconut grinder, silent for now, sadly



Little live birds, and live fish, you can buy so you can let them go



Yes, it's an indoor market, but there were motorbikes zooming through every so often



These aren't gansta fish, they're sea mackerel. You can tell by how their heads have been positioned (after they've been steamed).



Pre-packaged gift packs for your favorite monk



FARNSNIENTE 



Gifts for the dearly departed. Burn them and your loved one will receive them.



The oh-so-over-the-top White Temple



Going through hell on your way to the
White Temple



About three gazillion metal leaves, each with a prayer written on it. Purchased to help fund the temple.



Nan, in Bangkok, explaining what we'll be doing tomorrow

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