

Post



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Mar 11, 2023 · 5 min read

The Jade Buddha's summer outfit change - March 12, 2023

Updated: Mar 27, 2023

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Today's our first day in Bangkok, so it's be good if we really know the city's name. Formally, as of maybe last year, the city's name is Bangkok. Prior to that it had other names, and certainly is still referred to by other names by the locals. One source says it's real name is "Krung Thep Maha Nakhon". At the end of today's post I'll include the city's FULL name, which makes it the country capital with the longest name of any in the world.

But first thing we do is head out of town. We're going to a "train market" and after that to a floating market. It's not a short drive but man, traffic was (relatively) light. Why? Ah, of course. It is Sunday. We're told that during the weekdays it's a mess. We wiz by construction, between the north- and south-bound lanes. They're building a whole new freeway. It will be on top of the freeway we're on. We see regular tremendously tall and wide supports that will carry the new freeway. If the size is any indication it is going to be huge and impressive. Based on how much more work they have to do, it's going to be a while.

So what's a train market? When we get there it's moderately crowded. We're gingerly walking down train tracks with many other people. There are buildings on either side and the width between the buildings is about one train's width, plus maybe an extra foot or two (where we are). It opens up a bit further along. The buildings have shops and cafe's and they have awnings extending out over the tracks. In 10 minutes a passenger train is supposed to pass through, one of eight that will happen today.

We grab a coffee and the appointed hour approaches. Shop keepers roll up their awnings and take the products off them, and the tourists and sales people walking on the tracks start to cling to the walls, as do we. Soon a massive passenger train (massive as viewed from 6" away) slowly lumbers through. Us and everyone else on either side of the moving train are taking pictures, as are the passengers on the train. After the 10 or so cars go by, so close to us we could easily spit on it, people jump back onto the tracks to take pictures, on the tracks with the train slowly receding into the distance. Wow. Immediately the awnings roll back out and the merchandise is again near and on the tracks.

We shop (well, look) as we pick our way down the tracks. We see the same products and foodstuffs, fish and chicken, pork and beef, tons of vegetables. It's always amazing. After a bit we're off to the floating market, another sight to behold. There we gingerly step into our narrow non-motorized boat and get seated. We're warned repeatedly not to put our hands on the outside of the boat (to avoid getting crushed by another boat or the edge of the canal). Off we go, making two lefts, power boats of the same shape zipping by in either direction.

Once in the commerce lane of the market the game is afoot. There are products to be sold and we're the marks to who are supposed to buy them. There are merchants on the building's front porches, on the "shore", with lots of touristy merchandise, and they grab our boat and suggest that we consider buying something. They quickly size up whether we're likely to do so, and if not, they let us go. If we're too far for them to reach, they take a pole and pull us in. Some of the merchants are in boats themselves and glide up and attach their boats to ours to gauge whether a sale might be made.

There are genuine sales being made, especially for vegetables and fruits. And people are buying beverages and meals. Some people are considering the hats or tee shirts or tacky ash-trays on offer. We glide on and are processed and sent on our way again and again. Once through the very long gauntlet we're on to empty booths, we're told due to covid. 30 years ago this is the way commerce would be done. Now it's for tourists, mostly.

Back on land, after more boating and one large Komodo dragon, we're back ashore and on to our next adventure. We drive back into town and have lunch at a sidewalk street vendor, and eat at a small table on the sidewalk. It's good and spicy and exotic. After lunch we go to a huge Wat (temple) across the street. It has an enormous solid gold Buddha. We're told that, like Mohamed, Buddha requested his followers not make statues of him. Mohamed was successful. Buddha's followers, in Thailand, have so far made at least 44,000 Buddha statues.

Back in our van we head to the Royal Palace. On the walk in we see a huge, green lawn across the street. It looks great for festivals. Most of the time the fence around it is closed (otherwise the homeless would set up camp). When the king dies (thankfully not too often) he is mourned and lies in state for a while (like a year) after which he's cremated in public, sitting up in a very fancy flammable wood casket, in this park across from the royal palace. Wow. That happened eight years ago.

At the palace we go see the Jade Buddha. It's impressive. It's not huge, but it's all jade, and it has a great wardrobe. Well, three outfits. The king's duties aren't too many, but changing the jade Buddha's outfit three times a year? That's one of them. He just did this a few days ago, into JB's summer togs. When we were there, the officials were carting off the big, long, heavy staircase that give the king access to do the costume change. What luck!

Will we possibly see the King, what with these being the palace grounds? Well he's here (for the Jade Buddha's clothing change, and to visit his daughter who's in a coma after a heart attack and stroke), but normally he's not here. Where does he live? Bavaria, Germany, of course. He does fly here when needed. By that, I don't mean he's flown here. He is a pilot and loves to pilot the Thai version of Air Force One.

After seeing more of the palace grounds (wow) we have a Cold Thai Red Tea with Milk on ice, yum! And we hop into a Tuk-Tuk for a short ride over to the reclining Buddha. He's (what) like 48 meters long. He big. He used to live, er, recline, outside all the time. Rama the fifth, I believe, had them build an appropriate Roman looking building to house him. He looks to be in very good repair and very relaxed. That his eyes are open and that he has a pillow says he's resting and not

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Ah, yes... The full name of the city of Bangkok is:
Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon
Rattanakosin Mahinthara Ayuthaya
Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani
Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan
Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya
Witsanukam Prasit.

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