

Day Five: Lampang



Last night we were tired and simply bought snacks at the grocery store for dinner. Here's a pic from outside the store where they have reserved parking for scooters.

Unlike China where the people's transport is mostly bicycles, here in Thailand there are few bicycles – everyone drives scooters. They are everywhere, and no wonder, because cars are very expensive. The cheapest econobox Toyota starts at \$20,000. Gas is about the same as the USA - \$1.00/liter, which makes it \$3.75/gallon.

This to them is very expensive because minimum wage in Thailand as of 1 January 2013 has just

been raised to \$10 A DAY (up from \$7)!

So our tour guide tried to pull a fast one on us today. She seems to resent the fact that Wendy and I have five seats in the back of the bus to ourselves and calls it the “Bruce and Wendy VIP Box”. So last night she announced to the bus that when we arrive in the morning we should all rotate seats, people in front go to the back and so forth. Damn her, don't mess with my back row!!!

However, I was not really worried. Apart from being experienced travelers, Wendy and I are in the people business and we know psychology.

Firstly, as mentioned before, people once they have sat in the same seat for a while are unlikely to move because this is their comfort zone, they have marked their territory. And more importantly, people HATE to be TOLD to move.

So, this morning we made sure we were the very last people to board the bus, thus giving 27 other people the opportunity of taking over the “VIP room”. Guess what? When we got on, the last row was still vacant and the only place left we could sit! Don't mess with me Tour Guide, I know human nature!

She just shook her head and could no longer accuse us of depriving other passengers – they had their chance. I guess it is finally ours for the duration of the trip as predicted on day one!! Gotta keep this tour guides in line. HEHEHEHE!!

Our first stop this morning was at a factory that makes bronze Buddhas. Interesting but hardly ground breaking so Wendy and I went instead for a walk through the local neighborhood – that's what we like to do – look at local stuff! Of course, Wendy found a local cat to play with.



Next on the agenda was the original capital city of Thailand. The remaining structures are in a large park so we had to take Tuk Tuks in order to get there.



These buildings date back to 1290 AD. Of course it was not called Thailand back then, right up until 1939, Thailand was known as Siam. If you ever saw that old classic movie with Yul Brynner called “The King and I”, that was all about King Rama 4 in Siam. Well, seems as if Hollywood took a few too many liberties with the actual truth in that movie because in Thailand it is banned from being screened in a theater or on TV! However, locals can buy it legally on DVD if they want to watch it in the privacy of their homes.

Up until 1939 Thailand was ruled by the king before finally changing to an elected parliament with a Prime Minister and the King became a figurehead. Thailand was one of few Asian countries never colonized by Britain, but nevertheless still has a strong British influence – they drive on the left like most Asian countries. An exception is Cambodia, their neighbor, who drive on the right because they were a French colony.



On the way back from the ruins our tuk tuk broke down and the poor driver was unable to fix it, so we had to hop on another and he lost his tip (which the tour guide recommended was \$1.00 per person).

Most of the countryside we drove through today was rice paddies. Hardly surprising as Thailand is the second largest exporter of rice to the world after Vietnam. I would have thought it would have been

China, but I guess that country has so many people they EAT all their own rice – none left for export. ☺



60% of Thailand's population are farmers and they are regarded as poor. Only 30% of the population are middle class and the average middle class family earns about \$2000 a month combined income. Teachers' salaries run at \$500 a month.

For lunch we stopped at another quaint ethnic "built for tour busses" style outdoor restaurant. Food was excellent and the meal only cost \$6.00.

We then stopped at a textile factory, very ho hum so Wendy and I went for a walk again. That's what we do when the destination is boring, we walk out into the neighborhood which is always far more

interesting. Our final stop for the day was at a traditional rural Thai farmer's village where we got to explore the village as well as see inside the houses and how they live.



Corn fields with the village in the background.



We might be poor but we got satellite TV!!



After a rather long day on the road we arrived at our hotel in Lampang a little before 6 PM.



Our Hotel – kinda old school room actually has a real key – haven't seen that in years.



The view from our room – you can see we are now in mountain country.

It's time for a little toilet humor...



No, I wanna do it MY WAY!



Most public restrooms are like this, from the street you can watch the men take a leak – too funny!!

I am told there is no WiFi at this hotel because it broke and the repairman has not come to fix it yet. Welcome to rural Thailand! I guess I'll only be able to send this tomorrow.

As I write this Wendy is having a massage in the room. I would take pictures as proof but then this might become a PG rating. She has mumbled with glee it is the best massage ever.

And now for a few random shots.... (next page please)

Cheers!



Pink Eggs and it's not even Easter!!