

Day Seven: Chiang Rae

I would describe our hotel in Chiang Rae as “Rustic Chic”. Two nights here before we go to Chiang Mae.



The hotel is located just out of town in a forest environment.



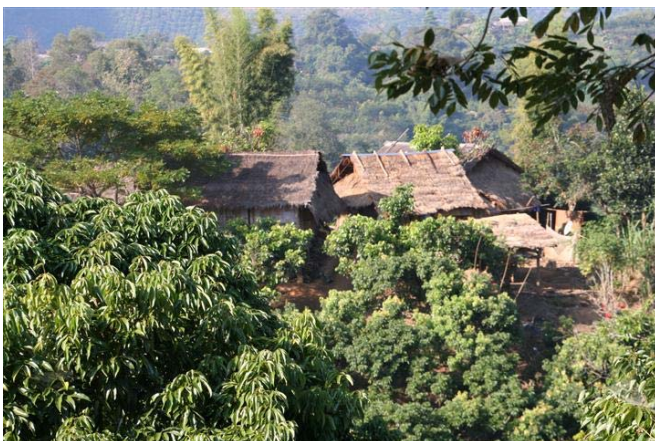
The lobby area, completely open air.



Bedroom has a small balcony which overlooks the forest.



Note how the painting parts in the middle to reveal a large window into the bathroom.



Internet in the room is very spotty which is probably why it dropped the attachment last night, but if I walk down the hallway 50 feet to a small upstairs open air lobby I get full signal.

Today we were off to see some ethnic people who live in the mountains. These are not Thais, they come from Myanmar. They walked all the way, crossed the river and settled into the mountains like they owned the place. As they have a very different



culture to Thai people, the government saw the potential for tourism and agreed for them to stay under the condition that they cannot vote and they cannot move to the city, they HAVE to live in the village.

The government also then provided them with water and electricity. Their part of the deal was to allow tourists to visit their village and they could sell their handicrafts as well as work at a nearby tea plantation to support themselves.

To get into the mountains we had to ride in pickup truck taxis as the bus could not get up there.



Beautiful rolling hills 7500 feet high.



This is the tea plantation where they work.



The people here practice the technique of stretching their necks from when they are babies. Each year one more ring is added around the neck until adulthood. They believe this makes the women more beautiful and attractive to men. They stop adding rings when they get married. The rings are only ever removed in medical emergencies and an adult woman's rings weigh in at about 25 pounds!





Unlike rural Thai people who build stilt homes out of teak, their homes are simpler and are made from palm fronds and bamboo. Roofs are made of rice stalks and must be replaced every 2 years.



They make the most beautiful scarves by hand which sell for about \$3.00.



On the way back from the mountains we stopped off at hot springs and saw the most amazing fishing.

These folk pay \$5 entrance fee then they can fish as much as they like and keep the fish they catch. What is amazing is the way they do it. A square net is suspended from bamboo poles, they lower it into the water for a minute and then pull it up in the hopes of a fish swimming over the large net.

And they do! We saw them catching fish all the time. Our tour guide bought one of the fish from a local vendor who had caught and cooked it. We tasted it at lunch – yummy!!



We returned to the hotel and for lunch and had a hamburger – or as close as the chef could get to making us one, which was shredded beef on a bun with French fries. We were kinda Thai fooded out! Delicious.

The rest of the day we are going to kick back and relax passing up on the night market tour as our next hotel we know is located in the middle of a night market in Chiang Mae. Wendy is going for a two hour traditional Thai massage.



Let's talk about the Thai alphabet.

It is a complicated written language with 44 consonants and 25 vowels! You see where we put two letters together to make a different sound such as ch or sh, they have separate letters for each letter on it's own as well as the sound when they are put together. On top of that they have different accent marks over the consonants which equate to 5 different intonations. There is also no past or future tense everything is in present tense and you figure out the past or future tense from the context of the sentence. They also have no plural versions of words, which is why when they

speak English, they use singular, for example "There are many car in the parking lot". Even our tour guide converts SmartTours (the company we are with) to "SmarTour"

Despite the number of consonants, there is no v in their language, so they change it out for a w when speaking English. "That is Wery nice T-shirt" At least they write from left to right!

Some things we saw along the way...



Not a boat! It's a CHRISTIAN church in the shape of Noah's ark built by Korean missionaries!!

"In your dreams, buddy..."



“The Faces of Thailand” by Wendy Longman Photography:



