

# Human i 2

For me, Thailand conjures up images and sensations that are undeniably positive. What 7 words do you associate with the word Thai? Mine are curry, massage, beaches, Buddhism, food, Bangkok, and Phuket. In the last 24 hours since our arrival, we have experienced them all (except Bangkok), with 29 days to go. We have learned that the food is on par with that in Malaysia, the massages are better, the beaches are much nicer and I won't compare religions.



Our travel day was typical. We requested a late 3 pm checkout due to our 9:50 pm flight which would last 50 minutes and get us into Phuket 10 minutes before we leave. The afternoon is our downtime regardless of where we are due to the heat, so 3 hours in an empty hotel lounge watching Netflix consumed our time. The airport was 70 minutes away, depending on traffic, for an \$11.00 Grab ride. Supper at the airport, with our remaining ringgits, was delicious Penang Curry Noodle soup with a McDonald's ice cream cone for dessert. Immigration, security, and people-watching consumed our final hours in Malaysia.

Sunset at Nai  
Yang Beach

Arriving anywhere unfamiliar at night is less than ideal. We reached the curb of the airport unscathed with my finger poised to hit the Grab icon. Three bars of 4G service was a good sign but that was as far as it went. The taxis were available for a mere 500 baht (\$23.00) for a 5-minute ride. Not a chance! In Thai currency, that was almost 2 hours of massage, so unless the driver was throwing in some kind of happy ending, we would look elsewhere. We were advised to walk to the domestic terminal, 2 minutes away. Grab would be there. Two minutes later nothing had changed. Walk out to the street, someone else suggested. It's a 3-minute walk. At this point, we were just being stubborn, but it is a cool 25 degrees and what the hell. The street didn't cure our IT problems but a chat with a man standing on the corner beside a van got us a ride for 300 baht, only twice the actual going rate. It didn't feel like a win, but we were in Thailand and that was reason enough to be happy.

The sun rose on a beautiful day, in a wonderful resort on the fringe of a spectacular beach with sailboats anchored in the aquamarine waters of the Andaman Sea. Life had returned to our privileged norm and our trip continued under sunny skies. I am writing this on a cushion-filled island in the middle of a swimming pool. The birds and the BeeGees are audible in the background as the breeze gently swirls around us and heads offshore to fill the sails of catamarans defining distant possibilities and the distinct reality that this is another wonderful day.

You might have noticed the photo of the insightful quote regarding travel included in the last blog. As you may know, one of my things is to look at life from varying perspectives. Wisdom can be attained from a t-shirt, an email or a Buddhist Monk, and who is to say which is the most credible source. The street art in Penang also informed me that both Gandhi and the Pope were quoted as having said that 'pineapple does not belong on pizza' so who knows what to believe. False news and misconceptions are everywhere, which makes me wonder what is real. My reality is the sum total of my experiences and observations, like pictures in a scrapbook. The bigger my book

**Today 60 percent of Phuket is covered with forest, rubber and palm oil plantations. Phuket's rubber output helps make Thailand the world's largest producer of rubber.**

becomes, the more aware and comfortable I feel. No matter where in the world I am at any given time, all it takes is an old song playing in the background or a child laughing in the pool and the world becomes very small and comforting. Travel is merely one way to encounter a stream of unique and familiar experiences that intertwine to create an adventure. You can explore your back yard, your thoughts or SE Asia and achieve similar results as long as you are doing so with your eyes open to new possibilities. In saying that, there is one absolute truth that cannot be ignored. Thailand is much warmer than your back yard at the present time.



**The view from our room in Phuket**