



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



Mantas, Mantas and more Mantas!!

by Amaru & Suzanne, April 23rd 2006

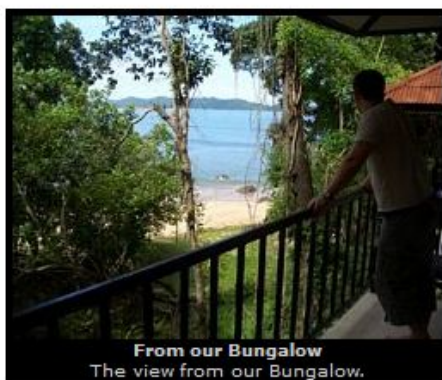
Alright....so we haven't really had the time to write until now, sorry for the delay, but we've been busy busy.

When we left you guys last time we were just about to leave Singapore. Everything went without a hitch, we got a taxi around 5.30am and got to the airport with plenty of time to spare before the flight. I started to feel a bit sneazy.... always happens when I spend time in a really hot place and the aircon is freezing, so I got myself a nice chicken noodle soup for breakfast.....yum!! We later found a place that had free Internet and also X-box games for anyone that wanted to play. So we both checked our emails, read about some local news at home (Suzie read about "The Biggest Loser" and I checked the Icehockey score for my local team Färjestad) and then we both played a boxing game, Rocky I think, against eachother.....needless to say I beat Suzie =))

Anyways, the flight to Kuala Lumpur was perfect, only about 55min and in clear weather. We arrived and before we did anything else we tried to find where our next plane was to leave from....we couldn't find it so we decided to just pick up our luggage and then find the plane. Once we've cleared immigration and customs we were jumped by all the taxi drivers...."taxi, taxi....where is your hotel, you have hotel??" We told them that we were flying out again and they all disappeared at once. We then found out that to take our next flight (Airasia) we had to change terminal. There were two choices, either taxi for 40 Ringits or Shuttle for 1.50 Ringits. They said that the ride was going to take around 50min so normally we would take the cheaper option but since we were coming down to 2 hours before the flight we wanted to be there on time, and so we took the taxi.....after changing some money of course...



Poseidon Bungalows
Amaru's old work place



From our Bungalow
The view from our Bungalow.

Of course we had misheard the malay english and it turned out to be 15min....not 50! And not only that, when we finally were seated on the plane and stated to taxi out we could actually see the international terminal.....about 400 m away. So we drove around in a taxi for about 15-20min for a distance that would have taken us not even 10 min to walk!!!

Ah well..... at least we caught our plane.

So, after another flight, and around 90min later we landed in Phuket, Thailand. Once in the airport we started to get prices for taxi to Khao Lak (which is around 70km away from the airport), the first price was around 1600 baht....nah, too much. The next one was around 1300 baht and still a bit to much, once we started to walk away they asked us

what we wanted to pay, I just said 1000 baht and that's final....they looked at eachother and we got it (we were later told by some people in Khao Lak that it was a good price, had to get it lower).

The taxi drivers in Thailand are quite funny.....in a scary weird way....they like to drive fast. The only time when the driver actually slowed down was when a heavy rain fell on us so hard that you could barely see the road.

We arrived at Poseidon Bungalows, where I used to work, and were greeted by my old boss Olof who owns the place. We checked into our bungalow by the sea (this is a new bungalow to replace the ones that were washed away in the Tsumani 2004). Since I was very curious to see what Khao Lak looked like a year after I left we got a motorbike and drove the 6 km into the main street of Khao Lak.

There were some major changes, the biggest one being that the main road now has 4 lanes and that there is a sidewalk on the side instead of just sand. It looks much much better now with the lights that lined the street at night.



Our Bungalow
Our Bungalow at Poseidon Bungalows.



The new Restaurant
Built after the Tsunami '04

We met up with Alex, a german guy that I used to work with, had some dinner and then went for drinks. While we were having the drinks a cop walked into the bar and told the owner that no alcohol was to be served after midnight. We got the explanation that the next day was an election day and therefore no alcohol is to be served....fair enough.....but what about us poor foreigners that can't vote, can't we have a drink?!? I guess not!

It got even worse the next night, we went out in a big group for dinner, Suz and I, Alex, my old boss Olof and his girlfriend and then another german friend Michael. When we tried to order beers they told us that we couldn't..... and this is in the evening.....the election took place a few hours ago.....dammit!!! Anyways, after dinner we went to Alex's place to have a drink, he had some Bacardi that we enjoyed =))

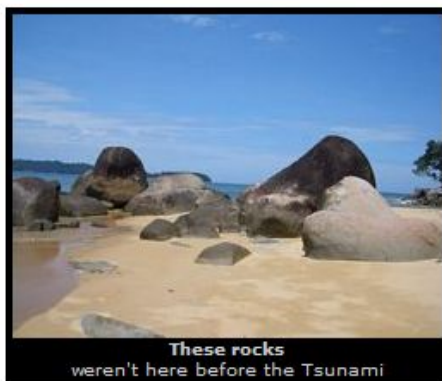
So now to the big event.....the boat trip.....the place we stayed at, Poseidon Bungalows, has it's own boat in which they do snorkling trips to the Similan Islands. At the end of the season they do a Staff trip and we were invited to come along. So the ones that went along were; Suz and I, Olof and his girlfriend Oy, the two germans Alex and Michael and also the two swedish staff from Poseidon, Marcus with girlfriend Oh and Maria.

I was pretty excited about the trip, not only to see the beautiful locations again, but also to be able to show Suzie these places. And also because I now have an underwater housing for my camera so I can take my own underwater photos...



Thai Food
Mmmm.....doesn't get any better than this

Usually we leave in the morning, but this time we decided to sleep on the boat in the Thap La Mu harbour and then get an early start. We had a few drinks to celebrate and the night ended up with Alex dropping his glasses in the water..... not nice!!



These rocks
weren't here before the Tsunami

The next morning the boat started out around 5.30am, we reached our first stop, Koh Bon, about 4 hours later. When it was time for breakfast neither Suz or I could stomach the beautiful food offered to us. I had a hangover and Suz was seasick (still trying to find her sealegs).

At Koh Bon we started out with just some snorkeling, and almost at once we saw what we wanted.....a Manta Ray.... these magnificent creatures can be around 3-4 meters in wingspan, and when they swim they glide in the water..... just amazing.....some of the best things that can be spotted in the water.

I tried to get Suz to get in the water to see them but at the time she was so sick that she just didn't give a damn about Mantas, Sharks or UFO's....

So after a bit of snorkeling we went back up for lunch and then got ready for our first dive, once in the water the Mantas found us again, and again, and again.....they just kept coming to us and we were in heaven.....when we got back to the boat Suz was there screaming at us; "I saw the Mantas", she eventually got better, did some snorkeling off the back of the boat and saw the Mantas.....she now understood what the whole deal was about =))

So this went on for about three days....we did some amazing dives at Koh Bon, Koh Tachai and Richeliu Rock....not to mention the snorkeling at the same places plus Surin National Park where we came across an unbelievable white Manta!!!!

Altogether on the trip we saw at least 10 different Mantas, one was almost all black and one almost all white....it was the trip of a lifetime, we said it and other people like Michael who has been working here for about 10 years agreed. We can also add that the food that we ate on the boat has been the best so far on our trip.

We arrived back to Poseidon late that night and had a quiet one as we were leaving early the next morning to Khao Sok National Park.....

Stay tuned for the next update!!



Suzie
With a nice flower in her hair



Michael and I enjoying
dinner without beer, damn elections!!



SangSom
A typical drink, served with coke and lime



Khao Lak
View from the mountain



Main street of Khao Lak
New Main street



Suzie on the bike
Suzie with her helmet on.....good girl!!



Tsunami Sign
One of the Tsunami Signs that we saw...



Diving time...
The diving crew!



Moray Eel
They are a bit freaky aren't they?



Amaru
Yup, that's me in my element!!



Fishing
We did some fishing between the islands



Suzie
Heading towards Koh Tachai for the night.



Underwater
Just another shot under the water



Lots and lots of fishes
A big school of I don't know what fishes =))



Turtle
Found a turtle trying to hide from me...



Mantas galore
Nothing compares to this feeling



Manta
Another Manta, bring 'em on.



Found some Lionfish.....
love them as well =))



Cleaning Shrimps
Found some shrimps as well...



Dancing Shrimps
More shrimps.....these ones having a party!



Ahhh....
I know this one....starfish!



Beautiful
So many colors



Suzie
Suzie trying to escape the photo



Sunset
One of many beautiful sunsets in Thailand



The White Manta
The White Manta, something special to see!



Suzie and I
Last night on the boat...



Koh Tachai
Last dive at Koh Tachai



Hitching a ride
The trumpetfish is a lazy one....



Nemo
I found him!!!



Alex
Alex and some coral...

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