



## Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



### Lanta, Phi-Phi and Phuket

by Amaru & Suzanne, May 3rd 2006

So the minibus to Koh Lanta...what can we say about that? Well, it took us around 5-6 hours from the moment we stepped on the minibus in Khao Lak until we stepped off at Koh Lanta.

The minibus was on time and picked us up at Poseidon Bungalows at 8.00am as promised. We then made our way into Khao Lak and picked up another couple that also were going in that direction. So now, off to Lanta we thought....which is to the south. Imagine our surprise when we found ourselves in Khao Sok National Park (again) which is to the north. It turned out that the driver was picking up another 4 people here as well. Once we did that we headed south and reached Krabi town, here we were to change to another Minibus that would take us all the way to Koh Lanta. The only problem was that this Minibus didn't have adequate legroom nor was the airconditioning working properly, so this meant that it turned into an extremely long trip (even though it was only about 90min).

After enduring 90 min in the heat and with our legs just wanting to run away from us, and after having to wait and travel over 2 car ferries, we finally arrived on the island. The Minibus then stopped at a touristcenter and a few guys jumped us and started asking us where we were staying and such. When we told them that we didn't have any accomodation yet they threw themselves on us with their flyers....this is good, this is nice, this one is cheap....blah, blah, blah....



Our Resort  
Not too bad huh?



Suz  
Relaxing in the pool

Anyway, as we didn't have anything booked and didn't have any plans on where to spend the night we let them take us to their resort to check things out. The place was called "Lanta Riviera Resort", we arrived and a lady was showing us the rooms, we settled on a room that had aircon, queen size bed, hot water shower and a TV for 600 baht per night, they told us that this was low season prices, normally this sort of room would have cost 1800 baht....not too bad.

The rest of the day we just spent at the resort, swimming in the pool and just relaxing. The next day we rented a motorbike for the day and left to explore the island. We went up to the main town of Koh Lanta, Ban Sala Dan, here we looked around and booked my diving trip to Hin Muang/Hin Daeng for the next day. Later on we just kept riding around the island exploring and seeing new areas. We went to a viewpoint, we

saw the old town, we saw the sea gypsies etc. All in all a long day and after sitting on a bike for so long our bums were a bit sore so we went back to our resort and chilled in the pool for a while...

So the next morning I was up at 6am to get ready for my dive, I was picked up at 6.40 and we headed back to the main town where we jumped on the boat that was going to take us to our divesites. Meanwhile Suzie spent the day at the resort, sleeping, laying by the pool, eating and generally doing nothing...

I was on the boat for 4 hours before I even reached the first divesite, I spent the time by doing some reading and then trying to sleep, but eventually we made Hin Muang. All geared up we were divided into groups, I was to buddy up with a guy called John (an American....need I say more), he was around 45-50 years old, had just started diving and thought that he knew it all. Anyways, we got into the water, went down to around 32 meters and started making our way up slowly while just watching everything around us... 10 minutes into the dive I spot a Manta (or so I thought) and we went wild (again). I managed to snap a photo of it and also make a small movie of it before it left us, we all thought it was going to come back in over us like they always do, but not this time. Ah well, the rest of the dive went well, saw lots of beautiful corals and different fishes. At the end of the dive we started heading toward the surface since we were running out of time and John starts to make some weird signs, neither I or our divemaster knows what he wants so we all head to the surface. Once on the surface John says that he wanted us to share our divemasters air so we could stay longer under the water....he says that he has done that before with other divemasters and that it never has been any problems before....sigh...



Soaking  
Why do anything else?



Sunset at Lanta Riviera  
The view from our beach bar

Anyway, once we get back on the boat I get a bit seasick (which is weird, I worked for almost 7 months doing boattrips from Khao Lak to the Similans and never got seasick then) so I decided to lie down for a while, drink water and just wait it out. Lunch was being served but I passed on it.

After around 90 min it was time for the second dive, this time at Hing Daeng. Same deal this time, we went down to around 22 meters on this dive. The main difference with this dive was that we had quite a strong current that we had to swim against so there wasn't that much time to just hover over anything. This was an even better divesite than the previous, even though we didn't see anything in particular. Once we came up from the dive the boat headed back home and after another 4 hours we were back on Koh Lanta. The dives were great but it takes way

to long to get to them...

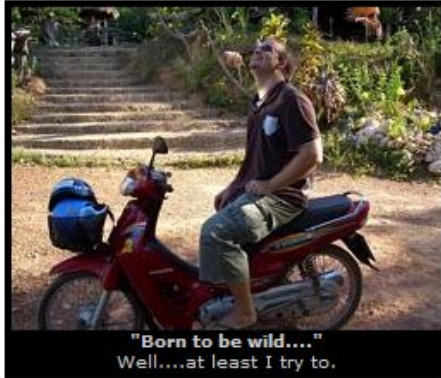
When I was diving Suzie had purchased our tickets to the island of Phi-Phi and early the next day we went to the harbour. onto the boat and off we went.

The boatride went well and after 90 min we arrived at the island. At the pier we were attacked by people wanting us to stay at their resorts. After having spent around 15 min looking at the different places we finally decided to stay at "Phi Phi Villa Resort" and payed 800 baht for the first night. Once we checked in and saw the room we were both a little disapointed considering what we came from in Koh Lanta. It was no Bungalow this time, only a basic room with no a/c, only a fan and a dodgy looking bathroom. The worst thing about the place though was the water, we know that we aren't supposed to drink the water in Thailand, but when you are showering you always get a little bit of water into your mouth.....and this water was really really foul!!

Despite the bad start of our stay on Phi-Phi we soon discovered that the rest of the island is just as beautiful and picturesque as we'd imagined. We spent the day by swimming in the ocean, walking and discovering the island and even made it to the viewpoint of the mountain that day. This entailed walking up several hundred stairs followed by a very steep path to reach the top. Doing this in the middle of the afternoon in this heat and humidity isn't the best of ideas we could tell ya!! Once on top we were both drenched in our own sweat, but the view was definately worth it!! We could see all of the bay of the island and we could also get an understanding on the devastation of the Tsunami in 2004.



Tsunami signs  
These are everywhere!



**"Born to be wild..."**  
Well....at least I try to.

We were trying to get our picture taken by holding the camera on us and a girl passed by and asked if we wanted her to take a photo of us, sure, why not... So she took our photo and we just chatted a bit, it turned out that she and her boyfriend had climbed all the way up here with no water and no money to buy any water either so we suggested that we'd buy them a bottle. They didn't want to accept it at first but we insisted and got them a bottle for 20b (basically nothing....around 70 Australian cents). We just thought that if we were in their situation we would have loved if anyone would have bought us some water....good karma as we saw it.

After sitting on the top of the mountain and enjoying the view for a while we made our way down again and jumped into the ocean to cool off (well....cool, and cool...at least we got wet). It was low tide so we just had water up to our ankles but it was fine, we just sat down in it and soaked and relaxed from our walk. While we are sitting there I spot a 100baht bill in the water and pick it up, weird. 5 min later when we are getting out of the water we notice another 100baht in the water and pick this one up as well. We look around, see no more notes and no one looking for money either so we keep the money and see it as an act of goodwill....good things come back to you!!

That evening we just walked around the main village, found a place to eat and caught the second half of the movie "The Beach" (we saw a few places showing that movie.....fitting). After that we decided to get some Thai massages, the last time we got them was in Khao Lak. This time the massage was a lot firmer, almost to the point when it hurts, but afterwards both of us were very, very relaxed.

The next day we went on a boattrip around the two islands of Phi-Phi, we saw the famous Maya beach (from the movie "The Beach"), did some snorkeling there and then moved on. During this day we stopped at several places around the islands and either did some swimming or snorkeling, or just a bit of both. Suzie and I were pretty much the only ones to be sitting in the shade most of the day. Suzie was talking to a british lady that came in under the shade and she was saying that she needed a break from the sun, Suzie just responded that we were from Australia and have sun all the time and know the damages it can cause. The lady replied, I'm from the UK, we never have any sun and I take all I can get....



**Food, food, we love food!!**  
Always great food wherever we go...



**Diveshop**  
The shop I ended up going with...

We saw a Dutch guy that was a bit red even before the trip started, he sat under the sun the entire day (from 9am until the boat came back at 4pm) and he looked like a lobster by that time, neither one of us wanted to know what his night would be like.....ouch!!

We had some dinner, managed to see the first half of "The Beach" and could compare what we had seen today and then we just had an early night since there wasn't to much to do and neither of us felt like going out that night.

So, the next day we jumped on another boat (so many boats) and made our way to Phuket. After some haggling we managed to get a minibus for 500baht that we shared with two Irish girls. We were to be taken to Patong Beach and halfway the driver stops, the door is opened and two girls try to sell us accomodation. The Irish girls say that we can get it cheaper than the 1000baht they are offering us and I know that I can get it cheaper so we say no thank you, we find our own. They just slammed the door on us and walked inside their building.....the driver seemed pissed off too...who knew where we where to end up.

In the end, the driver drops us off, says Patong and then points to another travelagency; You fix other transport and accomodation in there..... yeah right, we just grab our bags and start walking along the main street. After a few minutes we managed to get our bearings on where the beach was and such and just tried a hotel along the way. For 500 baht we managed to get a room with aircon, Tv, hot shower, king size bed and a mini bar...now how about that...

We got a motorbike and made it to other beaches such as Kata and Karon, we had some lunch at the viewpoint overlooking Karon beach and then we went to the big shopping centres just to have a look around. That evening we walked along the main party street, Bangla Road, and checked out the spectacle....



**A manta??**  
Or so we though, it isn't, "just" a Devil Ray

Lots and lots of people trying to sell you all kinds of crap such as; pirate DVD's, t-shirts, suits and all kinds of different souvenirs. The most annoying of them all are the suit people, almost always Indians (India, Pakistan or Nepal....can't say for sure from where they are), and they always want to shake your hand and ask where you're from.....why?? Well, because then they can keep you there, so I just say yeah yeah, don't shake their hands and just walk on.....do I look like I wear a suit?!?

Also, the most funny thing of it all....the Katoys, or for you who are not familiar with the word, the ladyboys. There is a side street dedicated to them and they are all standing there showing off their stuff. Some of them are just too obvious to tell but there were one or two who both of us would have mistaken for a girl.

Today is our last day in Patong and in Thailand for that matter, when we finish writing this, we'll make the streets, get some dinner and then just take it easy for the rest of the night, that and the fact that we are running out of all of our Bahts and don't want to take out more.

Next stop....Penang Island in Malaysia!





**Suz heading for the boat...**  
...towards Phi-Phi.



**Model material...**  
...in my dreams!!



**Just like out of a Bond Movie**  
...my name is Medina, Amaru Medina!



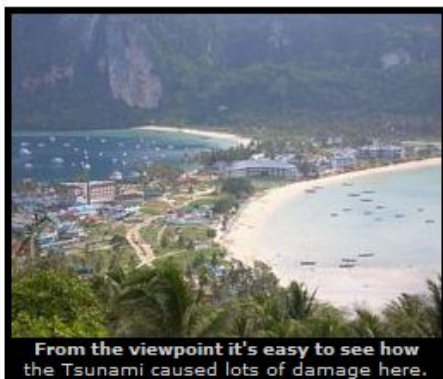
**Tsunami sign**  
Part of the hardest hit area of Phi-Phi.



**Stairway to hell...**  
...lots and lots of them!!



**The viewpoint**  
Beautiful, well worth the pain to get here...



**From the viewpoint it's easy to see how**  
the Tsunami caused lots of damage here.



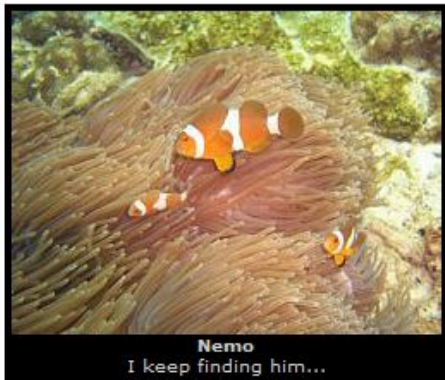
**On the boat**  
We choose to stay out of the sun



**Maya Beach**  
The famous beach from "The Beach"



**Nice Corals**  
Spotted while snorkeling at Maya Beach



**Nemo**  
I keep finding him...



**Suz snorkeling...**  
above me =)



**My poor feet keep slamming into things or getting blisters, or just cuts from bamboo....**



**Nice beach**  
One of many we found along the trip.



**Looking browner by the day...**  
....Suz might be, I still look like an albino.



**Phi-Phi by sunset**  
Low tide on the harbour



**Suzie shopping**  
Not really haggling either...



**Phi-Phi fishes**  
Big fishes along one of the streets



**Surprised on my way towards...**  
...the Pharmacy for more Band-Aids.



**Lemon Juice was what I asked for**  
...got Orange, two days in a row.



**Toast...**  
Vegemite toast, missing a piece of home.



**Enjoying a Pineapple Shake on a hot day**  
A cold nice fruit shake does wonders...



**View over Karon Beach**  
From the restaurant we stopped at in Phuket.



**Ice Coffee time**  
Enjoying a Mexican Ice coffee.



**Katoys in Patong**  
The ladyboys really put on a show..



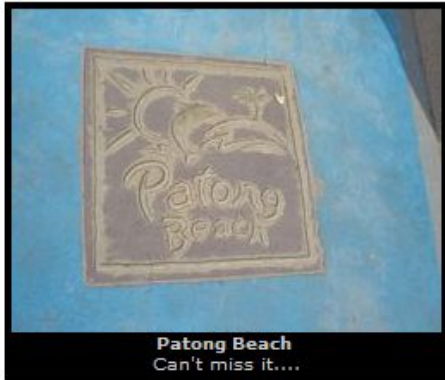
**Katoys in Patong**  
And grabbed all the guys for photos



**Bangla Road**  
Main party street of Patong



**"Wanna Taxi, Wanna suit, Wanna DVD"**  
NO!....me wanna go away!



**Patong Beach**  
Can't miss it....

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