



We're back in the Great City of Angels!

by Amaru & Suzanne, Sept 19th 2007

No, not that City of Angels, we're in "Krung Thep" meaning "City of Angels" and better known as.... Bangkok!

And this is just a shortened version of its official Thai name. If we were to translate it all we would end up with: "Great City of Angels, Repository of Divine Germs, Great Land Unconquerable, Grand and Prominent Realm, Royal and Delightful Capital City Full of Nine Noble Gems, Highest Royal Dwelling and Grand Palace, Divine Shelter and Living Place of Reincarnated Spirits".

Quite a name for quite a city!

To get here we flew from Zagreb to Frankfurt where we boarded the Thai Airways flight that would take us to Bangkok. I was quite excited to get onboard because I had heard so many good things about this airline...



Suz enjoying her Diet Coke
written in Thai!



The streets of Bangkok
Always a blur!

Unfortunately, it was all a big disappointment... First of all, there are no individual tv screens, which I can get over that fact - if they have some good entertainment on the big screen.

Not so, they were showing some old 70's tv series, and after dinner everything was turned off! The lights, the screen..... everything!! What about the people that don't sleep on airplanes?!?

Luckily I had a good book, a laptop to use for watching some movies and my Creative for movies as well.... and I managed to pass time that way. I can let you all know that I will not be running out in a hurry to get tickets with Thai Airways in the future (unfortunately we are flying home to Sydney with them as well)!

Anyway, I just wanted to get that out of my system....

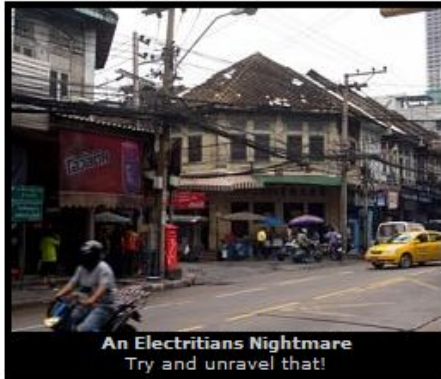
We landed at the new airport in Bangkok which is a big improvement from the previous one and after 30min we passed immigration, picked up our luggage and got ready to start hassling for a taxi into town.

The second you walk out everybody wants to offer you a taxi to take you into the city. We didn't bother checking their prices since we know they are going to charge you at least 900-1000 baht.

Instead, we caught the escalators to the departure level, walked out and just flagged the first cab we saw. The only thing that you usually have to haggle about is for the cab driver to use the taxi meter and not quote you an outrageous price. We were lucky, he turned the meter on straight away and in the end we made it into the city for around 270 baht.



Bangkok Skytrain
The best way to get around the city



Now, Suz and I have both been in Bangkok before, we've just never been here together. We have both seen different versions of Bangkok so for this trip we decided to treat it as if it was our first time in the city.

After checking in to our hotel (we stayed for 3 nights at The Bossotel) we decided to just walk along Silom road with no particular destination in mind. We were a bit tired but excited about being back in Bangkok and Thailand. Now we just wanted to find a nice place to eat some great Thai food.

It's very easy to get a cheap meal in Bangkok by just eating off the street stalls. But since we had just arrived we decided to stay away from them for at least 2-3 days so that our system would have some time to get used to the local bacterias.

Finding a restaurant that is not more than a hole in the wall turned out to be really difficult. We eventually found a tourist place and had our first Thai dinner in Thailand, and unfortunately it wasn't the best. We ordered in three dishes, a Penang Curry, some fried veggies and some squid with garlic and pepper, the two first dishes were fine but the squid was overcooked. It felt like we were eating small pieces of rubber... and to top it all off the meal turned out to be very overpriced. Oh, well... it can only get better from here =)

Walking back to the hotel we decided to treat ourselves and get a nice massage, normally we would have gone for a Thai massage but since we were both tired we just opted for an oil massage. It was very good and we both fell asleep on the bed while we were being massaged, afterwards we just walked the short 20m to our hotel and had an early night (or very very late depending on how you want to see it).



After breakfast the next morning it was time to figure out how to use the river boats and get to the Grand Palace.

We walked down to one of the piers and there was a man sitting there asking us if we wanted to go by the river. We said we were looking to get on the normal boat, he tried to sell us a longtail boat trip and eventually when we pressed on the normal boat tour he just said; "I don't know, I don't sell that trip".

Luckily there was another Thai man there who told us that the boat was arriving soon. He then looked at Suz and said that she would not enter the Grand Palace in shorts and showing her shoulders. Luckily she had that taken care of by having some extra clothes in her bag.

The boat arrived and we got on it and after 5-10min we made it to our pier. Before we walked to the Grand Palace though we caught a quick boat over to the other side of the river to visit Wat Arun, The Temple of Dawn.

This is a striking temple and from a distance it looks to be made all out of granite. Once you get close to it though you see that it's just covered by lots of small mosaic tiles. We strolled the area, climbed the tower to see the view and quickly realized that this is a temple that looks a lot more impressive from a distance.

Well, the next stop on our list was the Wat Pho where the plan was to see the reclining Buddha.





It really is an impressive Buddha statue inside Wat Pho, it's 46m long and 15m high and is supposed to represent the passing of Buddha into Nirvana.

Well, after seeing a huge Buddha we moved on and finally reached the Grand Palace area. First stop in the area is the Wat Phra Kaew, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Why the name you might ask? Well, it contains an emerald Buddha... or at least that's what they first thought it was, it was later discovered that it's a Buddha statue made out of jade.

After seeing the Emerald Buddha we walked around the Grand Palace area for a while, seeing more impressive buildings, a guard change and some funny signs before we moved on.

Since it now was time for lunch we decided to visit the main backpackers area of Bangkok, the infamous Khao San Road...

For some reason most young travellers that arrive in Bangkok decide to stay in this area. I guess it makes it easier for them to have everything catered for westerners. It's quite interesting to do some people watching in this area though, for some reason everyone that travels here has to get a tattoo, braid their hair and walk around in fishermans pants. I can understand the last if you are by the beach.... but in a major city?!?

Well, we stayed in the area long enough to have some lunch and then we caught a taxi back to our area.



Taxis in Bangkok are great by the way, as long as you can get them to turn on the meter that is...

On our last day we caught the Skytrain to the Silom area and walked around some of the big shopping malls in the area. After a few hours strolling the malls we made our way down along Sukhumvit road until we reached Soi Cowboy.

This is one of the main girlie bar areas that Bangkok offers, unfortunately it was too early in the afternoon so the place was quite boring. Instead we made our way to another girlie bar area called Nana Entertainment Plaza. Now, by the time we reached this area, night had arrived and all the neon signs were blazing.

We had done other girlie bar areas before such as Patpong and Patong in Phuket, and while they also contain these bars with the Thai girls they're also areas for shopping or for partying. Nana Plaza on the other hand is just for older men to pick up small Thai ladies...

We had seen these behaviors before, but somehow it was just more disturbing here...

On our way home we also walked past the Patpong area.... the third of the main girlie bar areas. This street isn't that bad though, it's more show than sex. And it also has a large market selling all sorts of piracy stuff! We had a quick look at it but didn't see anything that we liked and it just seemed that every single stall was selling the same stuff.





On top of the Wat Arun
looking out towards the Grand Palace

That evening we had a good simple dinner from a street stall, the best way to enjoy the foods Bangkok has to offer... and the fact that it's really cheap doesn't hurt either =)

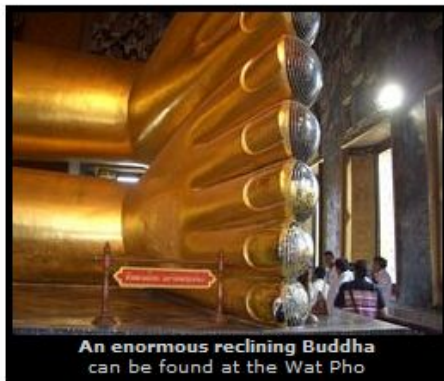
The next morning we made our way to the train station to catch the train to Ayutthaya to see some ruins...

We knew what to expect from Bangkok, but it still takes you by storm everytime you visit... you step out of the airport into the stifling heat, jump into a taxi trying not to think too much about how much more dangerous it is to ride a car than an airplane, you ride through the organized chaos that Bangkok traffic offers and eventually try to breathe through some of the polluted air!

But then again, that's Bangkok and once you manage to make it through these small first few steps and into the city you'll discover how nice people really are, how good the food is and how many interesting things there are to see there.

The first time you come to Bangkok though.... don't really believe anyone that tries to tell you that a temple or a sight is closed for the day or for just a few hours, or that a place is just open today... And don't believe the Tuk-Tuk driver that will drive you somewhere for peanuts if you just stop at his friends place for a short visit.

Like I said, people are very friendly, even more so when they try to con you =))



An enormous reclining Buddha
can be found at the Wat Pho



Suz in front of the
46m long reclining Buddha



Even its feet are huge...
and very ornate!



The architecture surrounding
the Wat Pho



Plenty of Buddha statues
everywhere!



"Don't trust strangers!"
Nowadays they warn you...



**We're entering the
Grand Palace Area**



**At Wat Phra Kaew
Temple of the Emerald Buddha**



**The Grand Palace
in Bangkok**



**More guardians
surround these temples**



**Now that's a nice statue
Very shiny!**



**Looking out over the area
which is part of the Grand Palace**



**Devotion
Offerings to the Buddha**



**Don't sit or stand...
pretty much anywhere!**



Suz walking
along the corridors



The Great Hall
the most impressive of buildings...



The Royal Guard
...just in the process of a guard change



I don't want a dress...
You gotta love their translations!



Tuk-Tuk
Cool to ride but a hassle to get...



Visiting the Zoo...
also known as Khao San Road



Gorgeous flowers
can be found everywhere



Suz and some of the
yummy food we've been having



Gotta love the signs for the toilet
They seem to be struggling



MBK
One of the big shopping centres here



Waiting for the green light
...very colourfull



Bangkok traffic
Organized chaos...



Soi Cowboy
...one of the girlie bar areas



Nana Entertainment Plaza
is another...



Lots of these sort of bars called
Charming, Love or something similar



Feel like a snack??
Nothing like some fried insects...



Patpong has plenty of girlie bars
and houses a large market



Want a cheap knock off?
There's a good chance you'll find it here



Hmmm...well!!
Told you it was a girlie bar area...



The famous "Prik Nam Pla"
Fish sauce with chilies...

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