



## A Bridge, Some Tigers and so much more...

by Amaru & Suzanne, Sept 23rd 2007

We arrived in Kanchanaburi at noon and the minibus dropped us off on the door step of our chosen accomodation...

We checked in at VN Guesthouse and got a decent room with a double bed and fan that was located in a raft bungalow on the river for only 275 baht which is around AUD\$9 dollars. We knew we had found a good deal but later on when we found out that the place offered free WiFi we KNEW we had an awesome deal!

We strolled around the main area of Kanchanaburi, looking for information on what to see in the area and how to get there. There is a lot to see in the area, the problem is that most of the sights are quite far away from Kanchanaburi town itself.

Because of this, we decided to do a tour the following day to see some of the sights we were interested in seeing.



**Our Accomodation in Kanchanaburi**  
A river raft bungalow



**A great view of the river**  
from our balcony

We also looked into the possibility of doing a Thai cooking class the day after the tour... We had an idea of where we wanted to go, we just needed to see if they had any room for us.

It turned out that we were the first ones to book the class, they said that a few more might join later but if not we would still be able to do the cooking class.

So, with the next few days planned we decided to make our way down to the famous bridge of this area. The Japanese used prisoners of war during the World War II to build a railway from Thailand to Burma... and here they built the bridge that has been popularised by the movie and book; "Bridge over the River Kwai".

We walked and walked and didn't seem to be getting any closer to any bridge. According to the basic map we had (we took a photo of the map in the LP guide) we should have been there ages ago.... We kept walking since we knew that we could not have missed it and eventually got there!

The bridge that is also known as "Death Railway Bridge" is really a small railroad bridge that no one would have cared much about if it wasn't for its history. If nothing else it's a symbol of how cruel humans can be against each other during times of war.

We strolled over the bridge to the other side and on our way back we had to step aside while a train passed over the river... so the bridge is still in use!



**Suz is enjoying**  
a Thai Omelett!



Right next to the bridge we found the so called "World War II & JEATH War Museum" (it has nothing to do with the real JEATH War Museum that is located far away from here and is supposed to be a lot better).

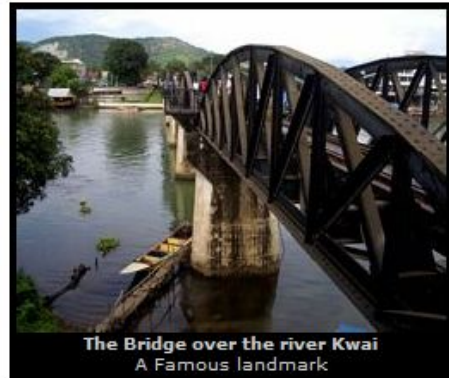
Since we didn't have anything else to do and the admission price was really low we decided to have a quick look at it anyway... And well, the first thing you see when you enter is an exhibition about the origins of the people in this area, not a lot to do with the WWII in other words. The only thing inside which was related to the WWII was a few paper mache figures that were supposed to represent the POW of that time. So it's not really a place which you must see...

Going back to the guesthouse we decided to use a motorcycle taxi each... we couldn't be bothered walking back =)

After a few hours which were spent laying down in our restaurant overlooking the river, having dinner and using the WiFi we decided to find a place in town for a Thai Massage.

And boy did we find a good place, we both agreed that it was the best Thai Massage both of us had received in Thailand, and it was only 150 baht (around AUD\$5), most other places in Thailand charge between 2-300 baht. This place was so good that we ended up coming back to it the next two nights as well...

Early the next morning we were picked up at our guesthouse by the tour operators, stopped at 2-3 more places to pick up some more people and then we were on our way.



Our first stop was the Erawan Waterfalls which are located in the Erawan National Park, one of the most visited national parks in the country. What most people come to see here are the seven-tiered waterfalls.

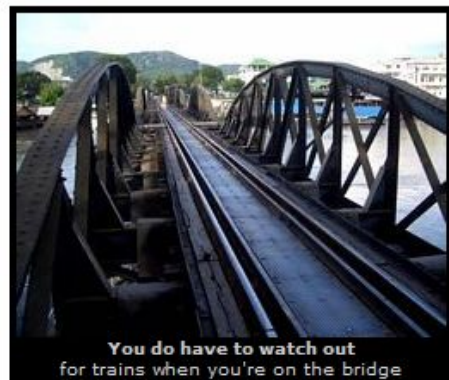
We now had three hours before it was time for lunch, so Suz and I hurried along so that we could get to the top and see all of the waterfalls.

To get to the 7th level of the waterfalls we had to trekk for 2km. At first it was very easy walking along a well paved path but the more waterfalls we walked past the more difficult it got. Suz had enough at number 5 but I really wanted to reach the top so I continued along the steep and slippery path (if you want to call it a path) until I reached the 7th tier.

And then I just walked down to Suz who was waiting at the 5th tier and here we decided to jump in and cool off. The water was very nice and cooling but it was difficult to relax in it since it contained hundreds of small fishes who really liked to come up to you and nibble on your toes. It's a lot of fun but it gets very ticklish as well =)

After lunch the minibus took us to see the "Hellfire Pass". The Hellfire Pass Memorial was created to honor the Allied POW's that died here constructing the Death Railway. It was completed in 1998 by the Australian and Thailand governments.

The trail is around 4km long... Suz and I didn't walk all of it but we did get to see Konyu Cutting where the flickering bonfire lights reflecting in the pass at night gave the place the name Hellfire Pass.





**We're at the World War II Museum**  
With the bridge in the background

Before we headed back to Kanchanaburi we were taken to see the Krasae Cave and there we caught a train for a short ride on the original death railway.

The Thai cooking class the next morning started with a tour to a local Thai market. We had walked around markets before but this time it was great since we had a guide who kept explaining what everything was... We were able to see all sorts of vegetables that we've never seen before and also got to see how Coconut Milk is actually made. Besides the fruits and veggies the market also contains seafood and lots of different meats. Some we knew what it was (a big pig head kind of gives it away) but then again, some we just didn't know.... some kind of rodent we guessed!

Our Thai Chef was named Mickey and we were not quite sure if we should refer to Mickey as him, her or it... He looks like a guy but had long painted nails and was dressed in a miniskirt, quite funny in a way but then again in Thailand you never really pay attention since there are so many of them...

We were given our instructions and cooked a Tom Yum, a Tom Kaa, some springrolls and a glass noodle salad. It was all great but one of the favorites has to be the glass noodle salad. And it was fun cooking it, Mickey first told us to just use a little chilli, only 5 (!!) of them to start with and then slowly increase and add more.

This dish is so hot but it's also so good that you can't help eating more =))



**Some paper mache figures**  
Shows the conditions they had to endure



**Relaxing on our restaurant**  
overlooking the river

We still had a few more dishes to make but we had to run off since we had another tour to catch so Mickey told us to come back after the tour and we could have the other dishes for dinner.

So, we took off and left for the Tiger Temple, this is a monastery where people brought in a lot of unwanted and abandon pets. Some of these were some tiger cubs that were left behind by the poachers when they killed the mother.

The years went by, the tigers grew up, reproduced and all of a sudden a new tourist sight was created. We had heard both good and bad reviews about it and some guide books also tell you not to visit it. We decided to see for ourselves what it was all about.

First you have to line up, then one of the keepers come and grab you by the hand and walks you to several of the tigers while another keeper takes photos of you and the tiger. Since you can only do this one person at a time Suz went first while I waited behind and soon the keepers were back and I got to pat the tigers as well.

So far we couldn't see why we shouldn't visit this place, this was a very cool experience.... I mean, when are you going to be that close to a tiger ever again!?!?

Later on after the tigers were locked in the cubs were released among the tourists and everybody went wild and there were no organized 1 by 1 visits anymore. Everyone jumped on the small tigers, manhandled them, got down with them for photos etc.



**We're visiting the**  
Erawan Waterfalls



**There are 7 waterfalls to see**  
You just have to hike to them all

We didn't like this part at all and the small cubs didn't seem to be enjoying themselves either. After the first 10min or so the crowd thinned out a bit and the small tigers started playing with each other so it was a bit better.

So, as long as they can get this under control we don't see any harm with people visiting the tigers. A lot of people say that the tigers are heavily sedated but when they were walking them back to their cages they sure were active and started small fights with each other.

We made it back to Mickey later that afternoon and finished the evening by cooking a Green Curry and a Papaya Salad (which is really spicy as well). We ended up cooking 6 different Thai dishes that day (and eating them), not bad!

The next morning it was time for us to leave and go back to Bangkok, we managed to get a minivan ride there for 150baht. Two hours later we were in the heart of Bangkok and we caught a taxi to the airport. It was time for us to visit Khao Lak once more!

The Kanchanaburi area was absolutely wonderful, we saw lots of things but there is still a lot more to see. Since it's so close to Bangkok we might just have to come back on another trip...



**Waterfall number 1**  
We have started the hike



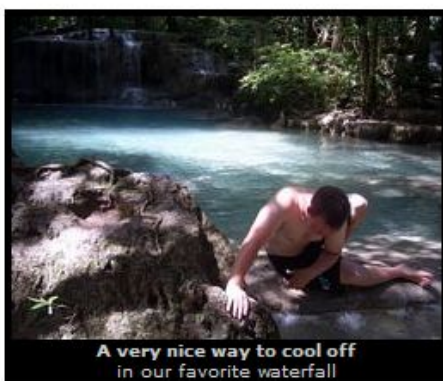
**All the waterfalls**  
are great



**Waterfall number 5**  
was our favorite one



**Made it all the way**  
to number 7



**A very nice way to cool off**  
in our favorite waterfall



**These waters contain lots of small**  
fishes who like to nibble on you



The waterfall provides a good massage



Suz is surrounded by butterflies



Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum  
A memorial for all of those that died here



That way...  
to the Hellfire Pass!



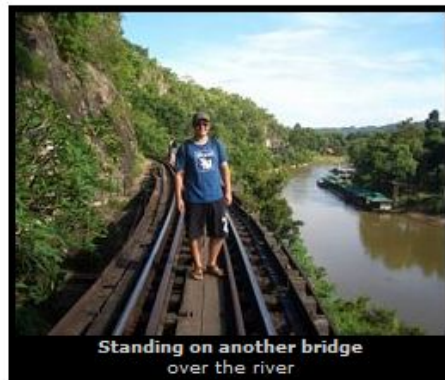
The memorial has been created by the Australian Government



This is where the Burma - Thailand railway ran



Looking at Konyu Cutting  
Now known as Hellfire Pass



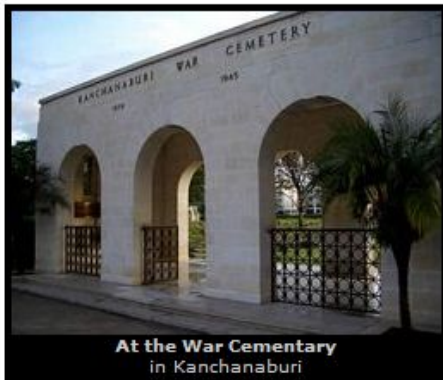
Standing on another bridge over the river



An original rail  
from the World War II



Riding a train on the track  
... and everyone wants a photo



At the War Cemetery  
in Kanchanaburi



Plenty of graves  
of unknown soldiers



The massage place  
we kept coming back to



A Thai Cooking school  
We just had to do it!



Visiting the local markets  
is a fun experience



Lots and lots of chili  
can be found here



**Fresh fruits anyone?**  
We don't even know some of these...



**Some good ice coffee**  
The local way (from a plastic bag)



**Our teacher Mickey**  
telling us what to do



**Suz and I**  
All dressed up =)



**Preparing the ingredients**  
For our Tom Yum



**Frying the filling**  
for our spring rolls



**Tasting our Class noodle salad**  
Deliciously spicy



**Deepfrying the Spring rolls**  
They were good!



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