

Day Eight: Chiang Mai – White Temple

We left Chiang Rai at 7.30 AM this morning and headed for the White Temple. This is a sight that is quite amazing and definitely over the top – makes you think you are in Las Vegas.



This pure white temple was built by a wealthy and famous Thai artist. In his youth he was a bad boy and got into a lot of trouble, but for a short time he became a monk and learned to be a better person.

As one of the richest men in Thailand (his paintings start at \$20,000 each) he decided to not only honor Buddha, but also the King. Every King before Rama 9 has had a temple built in his honor but not the current King. Rama 9 did not want to waste government money on himself. So this artist, using his own money, bought the land and began building this HUGE temple complex at his own expense to honor King Rama 9. What you see here is just a small portion of what he has planned. It is estimated that it will take another 70 years to complete. The artist is 58 years old now, but has financed the whole thing to completion. The detail in the carvings, designs and sculptures is amazing.



Luke, I am your father...





We then stopped off for tea at “Cabbages and Condoms” again, you will remember the chain restaurant of that name, started by a guy who is trying to educate the poor people about using condoms, and all profits from the restaurant go to charity. The “Cabbages” part of the name comes from their basic crop. The villagers can grow and buy cabbage anywhere. This philanthropist wanted condoms associated with cabbages so people would realize how easy condoms are to get – just like cabbage. The restaurant is decorated with condoms all over – shirts, vests, dresses, pants, elaborate displays, etc. This little girl is blowing up condoms to help her mommy... kinda weird sight I must say.

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We then stopped off at an umbrella factory where they make paper for the parasols from mulberry trees and use bamboo for the rest of the umbrella. The most interesting part was they have a lot of artists their and for \$3 they will paint a design onto anything you want, your shorts, t-shirt, whatever you want. The paint is permanent, washable and color fast. After this was a ceramic factory, but we get bored with this stuff so found a bar to have a beer instead!



Along the way we stopped off to watch the local rice farmers harvesting the rice from the rice paddies.

We finally arrived in Chiang Mai to our absolutely fantastic hotel. It is located right downtown and is extremely comfortable. Definitely a popular tourist area, as you walk down the street, you see bar, restaurant, bar, massage parlor, bar, bar, massage parlor, bar, etc.!!



View from our 19th floor window. I love the fact that Thailand still has smoking rooms.



The room is huge, Wendy is in the separate "office".



Wendy having an in-room hour long massage for \$16.00!!



Street in front of the hotel, bars, restaurants and massage parlors as far as the eye can see.



I am thinking this means "Take off your underwear"



It's quicker than Fast Food...



"French Fried" = Old French Fries?

Unlike Bangkok where we thought the prices inside the hotel were a tad expensive. This hotel is substantially cheaper by a longshot! Beers in the mini bar are \$1.75 and a hamburger and French fries from room service is only \$5 (compared to the \$20 burger we paid in Bangkok for the same thing. However, the burger in Bangkok was waaaaay better!). Tonight for dinner we are ordering in....Australian FILET MIGNON delivered to our room for only \$14!!!!

The only meal included in our tour was breakfast and we've had to pay for all our own lunches, dinners and drinks (and you all know how much we drink!!). On arrival in Bangkok we changed over \$300US into Thai Baht. Here it is 8 days later and we still have 1400 Baht left = \$50US. Which means the two of us are eating and drinking like a king and queen for about \$31US/day. And believe me – we are NOT scrimping!!!

Did you know Elmer Fudd is Thai? (Wabbit Season!!) Thanks Bradley for pointing that out to us!

Tomorrow we're off to ride elephants in the jungle. Wendy is quite excited as she learned a baby has recently been born.

Cheers!