

Day Three: Bangkok – Floating Market

You know what they say about the best plans....



As mentioned before we were going partying on New Year's Eve. Out to dinner followed by a Thai Cultural Performance and then watch the fireworks from the riverside. Good plan, sounds like fun. Then yours truly came down with a vicious attack of Pharaoh's Revenge, Delhi Belly, Gyppo Guts or whatever you call than nasty thing you get when you inadvertently drink local water or eat fruit that has not been washed in purified water. In my case I stupidly assumed that the purified ice the hotel provided for drinks was the same ice they used to cool a wine bottle, so I was using the water and ice from Wendy's wine cooler for my scotch. Bad freakin' mistake!

I spent the afternoon and most of the evening paying homage to the porcelain Gods or curled up in a ball on my bed. Wendy went off to the dinner and show and left me to stew in my own misery (on my instructions). When you feel that bad you want to be alone!

But it all worked out in the end because Wendy said the dinner was mediocre and the show was boring – she fell asleep. By the time she got back to the hotel at 10.30PM I had woken up and was feeling well enough to have a scotch (NO ICE!) and we watched the fireworks from the picture

window in our hotel which was nothing short of spectacular as our window directly overlooked the barge where they were launching the fireworks. Those of you on FaceBook probably already saw the video I posted. So it was all good. Hello 2013 a full 12 hours ahead of home.



This morning we headed out early to visit the floating market – yes, the very same one from the Bond movie, The Man with the Golden Gun. The first part of the ride was by bus and along the way we went past a salt farm.

They farm salt water from the ocean dry it out and extract sea salt which they sell along side the road as can be seen on the left with the salt in those white bags. We also stopped at a rural home to see how the rural people live.

The final part of the trip was in the very same traditional boat that James Bond used in the movie.



That long pole in the back is attached to a stainless steel prop sticking out 6 feet behind the boat, this steers and powers the boat and they can lift the entire thing out of the water in shallow areas. I estimate they run up to 25 MPH.

Wendy and I got the front seat and what a ride it was, speeding down the narrow canals. The boat is long and narrow making it rather unstable at slow speeds, so the driver belted it whenever he could. There aren't any no wake zones in Thailand!



The floating market is INSANE. People are in their little boats cooking food, selling wares and whatever they can to make a baht. The characters were amazing; we could have spent the whole day there just watching them. Wendy took some fantastic photos but then by accident reformatted her SD card, thereby losing her pictures. She was very upset, but fortunately we travel with two cameras so we didn't lose everything from what was our most memorable day so far.

We stopped off at a wood carving place where the artists carve out the most beautiful carvings and furniture out of solid teak.

After this we went to "Cabbages and Condoms" (no, that is not a misspelling) a Thai chain restaurant that celebrates the condom, of all things!



The dress the mannequin is wearing is made completely out of condoms



I don't think this picture even needs a caption



You saw it here first!



This lovely lady's name is Nar, and she is the attendant on our bus. She cleans the bus but more importantly sells us beer on the bus for \$1.50

Here's thing about bus tours. As seasoned travelers we have a couple tricks up our sleeve. Human nature dictates that when people climb onto a tour bus for the first time, they will select a seat and from habit will continue to sit in the same seat for the duration of the tour.

So it is imperative you grab the perfect seat the first time you get on the bus. So, the first question is how many people are on the tour and secondly, how many seats in the bus? In our case 29 people on the tour and luxury coaches seat between 40 and 50 people, so that leaves quite a few empty seats, so to maximize the space and comfort the best place to sit is right in the back. Typically if you grab 2 of the 5 seats in the back row, as long as there are other seats available everyone else will sit in another row.



The very first night when we arrived even after traveling for 42 hours, dead tired, we had the presence of mind to grab the back row, and it worked! So far (and I am sure it will continue for the next 2 weeks), Wendy and I have had 5 seats to ourselves. Meaning we each have a window seat and three seats in between to put our crap on or lie down on a long ride!!

Back to the tour...

Our final stop for the day was the tallest temple in Thailand, it is almost 500 feet high!

We did have an incident though, every tour group has one of these and you just have to put up with it. There is one person who is always late, gets lost, asks stupid questions, loses their stuff, etc.

Our tour was no different. A lovely Columbian lady from Miami traveling on her own this morning couldn't find her glasses and delayed departure by 30 minutes. Then at the last stop she got lost and it took an hour to find her, she was finally delivered to the bus by a police motorcycle!

Needless to say no one was impressed because 5 people (including Wendy) had made reservations for massages back at the hotel and they missed their appointment due to arriving 2 hours later than scheduled.

Some things I saw along the way....



Three's company...



They don't care if the kid breaks his skull! Just so long as mom and dad wear helmets!

Now I did look a little further into the alcohol sales after 5 pm thing, because what the tour guide told me made no sense.

Alcohol sales are from 11am to 2pm and then again from 5pm to midnight. The actual reason the government imposed this is to try to prevent underage kids from buying booze by closing alcohol sales

when they get out of school. OK, I don't want to be insulting here, but do you REALLY think that is going to work? Why not just enforce the existing law by imposing severe fines and charges on selling to minors like every other country in the world does?

But the good news is that you can buy liquor at 7-11 stores (after 5pm). My duty free bottle of whisky I bought in Korea is reaching the final dregs so it was time to replace it. Right outside the door of the hotel is a 7-11 where I obtained a liter bottle of 100 Pipers Scotch whisky for the princely sum of \$15.

God bless Thailand!!

