

# ( I HATE SCOOTERS ! )

## 1) THAILAND IN GENERAL...

This was our very first trip to Southeast Asia. In summary, there were three significant highlights.

1. The Thai people are extremely kind. While travelling I loved local people in Africa, in Central America, in Scandinavia and some other European countries. But it is my humble opinion that in this area Thailand is on a different level.
2. With the American dollar, tourism in Thailand is extremely cheap. Admission fees are so low, cabs or Tuk-Tuk's are just a few bucks, and food costs pretty much nothing (couple of cents). It is expensive to fly from America to Thailand (it's literally on the other side of the World) but once you're over there you don't spend much.
3. No matter how much time you spend over there, you will never understand that culture. Everything is so different, based on unknown roots, and expressed in a way I would never understand. This is something I like a lot – that's why I like traveling. One example here – we went into a cave. Normally – in caves – you just observe stalagmites and stalactites. 😊 Well.....in this cave we unexpectedly ran into some Buddhist artefacts, and even more surprisingly there was a sculpture of a dead Buddha body laying down on the floor in the corner of the cave. And local people bring drinks to this corpse and open them. Because (logically) a dead man can drink but he is not able to open the bottle, right??!!



Or here is another thing I would never understand – the discrepancy between the ultimate kindness of the people, and their brutal art :





## 2) MOTO-TOUR COMPANY & OUR GROUP

“Big Bike Tours” company was a lucky choice! Everything went as planned and scheduled, they were spoiling us with great food and hotels, and the bikes were in good shape and well maintained. Our guide was Ohm (27 year-old Thailand native). I loved his name, and one night (after a few shots of whisky), I was trying to explain to him that he has his own law, and that he is responsible for the fact that the electric current through a conductor between two points is directly proportional to the voltage across the two points. I still think that he didn't understand my joke, and that he is sure that my brain got severely damaged during the transcontinental flight (laughing). The other members of the group were retired guys from New Zealand. They were so nice, and kind and cool and funny – we were extremely lucky! Also it was pretty exciting to meet some representatives of the nation that drinks more than the Irish 😊

Here is the line up:

Ohm (guide)	Thailand	Kawasaki Versys 650
Woodie	Scotland/New Zealand	Triumph Speed 400
Malcolm (Woodie's son)	New Zealand	Honda CB 500X
Pete	New Zealand	Honda CB 500X
Ewan	New Zealand	Triumph Speed 400
Paul	New Zealand	Kawasaki Versys 650
Rebecca and Me	USA	Triumph Tiger 900 Rally-Pro

**( DIE SCOOTERS DIE ! )**

### 3) MOTORCYCLE

This trip was my very first experience with Triumph Tiger. Liquid-cooled, inline 3-cylinder with decent torque. Really cool bike. Excellent fast responding engine delivered pretty good performance in the mountain terrain where we've spent most of our riding days. Only the brakes could be little better – something I had to adjust to.



And one day we realized that there's an illegal passenger quietly traveling on the frame of our bike...



#### 4) TRAVELING WITH TURKISH AIRLINES

This was the first time we've ever traveled with Turkish Airlines. They were OK, nothing bad, nothing special. Except one weird anomaly. After the take-off, once the plane reaches the cruising altitude, the crew shows up with bed linen and starts working on your bed. You have to get up and let them do their job. We still have no idea why they can't do it before the passengers board the plane. And one funny thing – the chef is wearing full “costume”, including the hat – pretty practical on the plane! 😊 Their seats in business class look like the hibernation capsules from the Alien movie – they can form a pretty comfortable bed for Rebecca and pretty uncomfortable bed for me.



They had an interesting coffee / tea maker - it looked like from 1890 to me.....



Overall the traveling was as OK as such a long journey can be. We crossed 13 time zones, so after a while you have no idea if it is day or night, if you should be getting ready for some breakfast or if you're still digesting the dinner, etc... On the top of that, there's another aspect, specific to us Coloradans – descending from 7 thousand feet to zero. Anyway.....our first flight from Denver to Istanbul took 12 hours, second flight from Istanbul to Bangkok took 11 hours, and then (as a bonus, I guess) there was a short flight (90 minutes) from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. When we were explaining all this brutal traveling to our Kiwi-Friends (expecting some sympathy), they told us: "You Americans stop whining, and have a beer!"

## ( SLOW DEATH TO ALL SCOOTERS ! )

### 5) ON THE ROAD...

Vehicles drive on the left in Thailand, and speed limits are largely ignored. This was my first experience with left-hand traffic – no big deal. Only intersections and roundabouts represent some challenges. Having the most powerful bike in the whole group, I was the sweeper, which also meant that I just followed the group which made the left-hand traffic pretty easy.







This was a funny moment when our guide missed a sign, and led us to the road which was under construction and the red mud was up to our ankles...





## 6) TEMPLES & MONASTERIES

They are absolutely everywhere! Some of them are really beautiful, some of them are looking cheap with all that fake gold decoration and artefacts. Matter of taste, of course. However, you can safely bet that on the top of every hill or in the open field you will find a sculpture of Buddha.







This is famous White Temple (Wat Rong Khun) in Chiang Rai town. Per our guide, this is one of the ten most known temples of the world.....



However, besides all these prominent highlights, we were enjoying some forgotten small “no name places” like these....



These furry fellows live in some of those temples as permanent residents.



**( NO SCOOTERS IN HEAVEN PLEASE ! )**

**7) DIFFERENCES**

Differences are pretty significant in Thailand, especially between the North and the South. Look at this view from our hotel room in Bangkok.....



.....and this is how Thai people live on the northern part of the country, close to the Laos boarder.....



In this village women still wear neck rings for ornamental and cultural purposes. We felt really sorry, especially for those little girls.



**( NO MERCY TO THE SCOOTERS ! )**

## 8) CHIANG MAI, BANGKOK AND ISTANBUL

When we finished the motorcycling, we decided to spend one more day in Chiang Mai. Then we flew to Bangkok (for 4 days in town, on the coast and the islands), and we've finished our vacation in Istanbul, Turkiye (2 stop over days on the way back home).

Plenty of Buddhas.....



The most famous is this “Temple of the Reclining Buddha” (“Wat Pho”)...





I don't blame him for lying down – he's got flat feet !

China town in Bangkok....



A street.....



Being busy at work (info center in Pattaya)



When I mentioned low prices, here is a good example. This lunch (two soups, two bowls of noodles and meat, and three bottles of coke) was less than 3 dollars.



Power boat, heading to Coral Island.



Grand Palace in Bangkok.....



This was a very cool unknown temple – no people, laid-back energy, smell of opium and relaxed atmosphere.....





Unlike all other countries in this region, Thailand has never been colonized. However, there is still some British influence present in certain areas.  
**Afternoon tea is one of them !**



Moments in time....







We watched three Thai Box fights (aka Muay Thai).....wow, that's real !



This was such a great experience – the floating market. You can shop from your boat by the bank, or from boat to boat.



These ladies are sooooo self sufficient. They have BBQ and plenty of beer in their boats.



Istanbul – such a big difference from Thailand. But the architecture is interesting too....



2,000 year old water reservoir, located under the city of Istanbul :



## 9) .....AND FINALLY - THE SCOOTERS !@#\$\$%^&\*!

Perhaps (when reading this article) you might end up with a feeling that I have some sort of an aversion to scooters. Right? Well....yeah.... I DO!!! As mentioned above, the people of Thailand are the kindest people ever! Until they jump on their scooter. Then they are immediately transformed into blood thirsty creatures. They are absolutely everywhere, they defy all the laws of physics, and they fear nothing. When on the bike I was permanently scared that I hit somebody. Eventually I developed a phobia of seeing scooters everywhere – in my lane, in the opposite lane, in my hotel room, in the bathroom, etc....and I am 100% sure that when we were sleeping in the bed a few scooters passed through between our sleeping bodies.



## 10) FINAL SIGH

One of our best vacations EVER !



.....and if you're ever down, if you are unhappy in your life or if you think that everything around you is so wrong then keep in mind that it could always be much worse - you could work as a street electrician in Thailand !

