

A new Thailand is emerging from decades of tourism success and solid economic growth. Although the Kingdom has recently experienced difficulties, from natural catastrophes to moments of political turmoil, it has managed to retain an unrivalled attraction towards businesses and visitors, while moving upward on the innovation and sustainability ladder.

The proliferation of cafés, terraces, galleries and art centers, and also brand new public transport infrastructure, which the Thai government is eager to expand, have transformed the urban landscapes of Bangkok and Chiang Mai in such a way that both cities are now often referred to as being amongst Asia's trendiest metropolises. In the countryside, the combination of organic agriculture, community tourism, plus a revival of Thai traditional medicines, are bringing back to life the taste of authentic Thailand. This, while public and private initiatives are flourishing to enhance the respect for the environment, to promote the use of alternative energies, and to highlight the country's best asset: a balanced lifestyle in the midst of the Asian continent's economic boom.

Following the success of Travel Green Thailand, Asieinfo Publishing's pioneer eco-tourism guidebook, Travel Different Thailand intends to explore these new Siamese alleys, along which international travellers, policymakers and business leaders alike, can experience the best of this country's positive changes at work.

Richard Werly

writes on Asia and Europe for the Swiss daily Le Temps (www.letemps.ch). Formerly a correspondent in Bangkok and Brussels, he has travelled extensively in Thailand throughout the last 25 years. He is the author of "Jewelry Treasures of Thailand" (2004) and "Travel Green Thailand" (2009).

TRAVEL DIFFERENT THAILAND



TRAVEL *Different* THAILAND

Innovations, Design, Lifestyle

Richard Werly



Richard Werly

TRAVEL DIFFERENT THAILAND

Published and distributed by AsieInfo Ltd.

160/658 ITF Silom Palace - Silom Road

Bangkok 10500 - Thailand

For all enquiries or reproduction rights : richard.werly@gmail.com

A project supported by the Royal Thai Embassy, Brussels

Chief Editor:

Richard Werly

Producer:

Titaya Nilrungsee

Coordination:

Chulamanee Chartsuwan

Supark Prongthura

Design & Artwork:

Tistaya Nakneam

Assistant Editor:

Kaila Krayewski

Contributing Editor:

Cholavit Chulabutra

Photos:

TAT, Richard Werly

Michel Hermann

Cholavit Chulabutra

Margaux Fritschy

Kaila Krayewski

TG photo bank

Advisers:

Veronique Helenon

Special Thanks to:

Ambassador Apichart Chinwanno

Ambassador David Lipman

Ambassador Pradap Pibulsongram

Sarun Charoensuwan

Daniele Dal Molin

Somprasong Khomapat

TAT Photo Department

Bernard Festy

Satwant Kaur

Saravane Khuprasert

Tritaporn Khomapat

Katrien Depauw

Kulkanda Pokasem

Petchpring Sarasin

Sirikanya Noi-arun

Jaran Ditapichai

Bill Booth

Yuwadee Srihuayyod

Copyright 2013 @ Royal Thai Embassy, Brussels

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system without prior permission in writing from the Royal Thai Embassy, Brussels and AsieInfo Ltd.

ISBN: 978-616-321-677-9

Printed in Thailand by Amarin Printing and Publishing Public Company Limited.





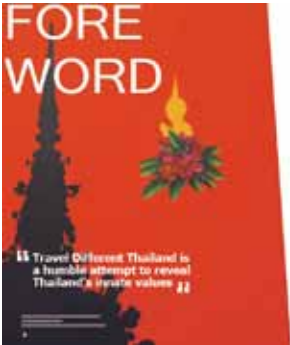
Pak Kred, Oil on canvas
Somwong Tupparat
A piece exhibited at MOCA (www.mocabangkok.com)

“ If one is moderate in one’s desires, one will have less craving. If one has less craving, one will take less advantage of others. If all nations hold this concept of moderation, without being extreme or insatiable in one’s desires, the world will be a happier place....

Moderation, in other words, living within one’s means, should dictate all actions. Act in moderation, speak in moderation; that is, be moderate in all activities. ”

H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej,
From his speech about the concept of
“Sufficiency Economy”, December 4th, 1998

CONTENTS



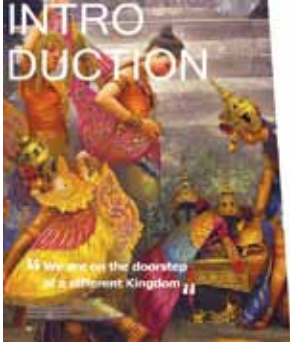
I started writing this after one of my friends asked me to write a foreword for the 2014 edition of the book. I was a bit reluctant at first, but I decided to do it because I love Thailand so much.

Thailand is a country with a rich history and culture. It is a country that has been visited by many people from all over the world. I have been to Thailand many times and I have seen many different sides of the country.

This book is a collection of stories and photos that I have taken from my travels in Thailand. I hope that it will give you a better understanding of the country and its people.

08

Foreword



My intention in writing this book was to provide a glimpse into the life of the people of Thailand. I have been to Thailand many times and I have seen many different sides of the country.

Thailand is a country with a rich history and culture. It is a country that has been visited by many people from all over the world. I have been to Thailand many times and I have seen many different sides of the country.

This book is a collection of stories and photos that I have taken from my travels in Thailand. I hope that it will give you a better understanding of the country and its people.

10

Introduction



Different THAILAND

T

36

Economy



Different THAILAND

I

58

Regional Guide

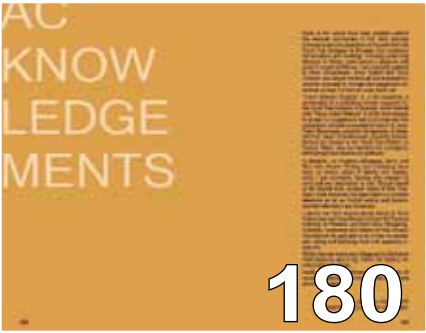


Different THAILAND

T

152

Nature



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

180

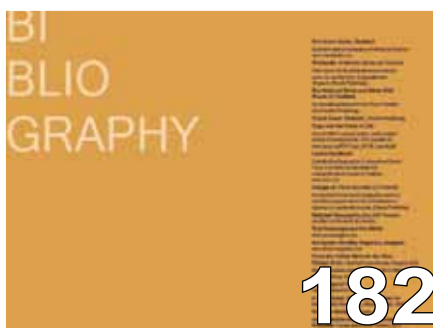
Acknowledgements



Lifestyle



Community



Bibliography



FORE WORD



“ Travel Different Thailand is
a humble attempt to reveal
Thailand’s innate values ”

Angel and 8 Devas 1/2 184x145 Acrylic on canvas
Sittichai Prachayaratikun
A piece exhibited at MOCA (www.mocabangkok.com)

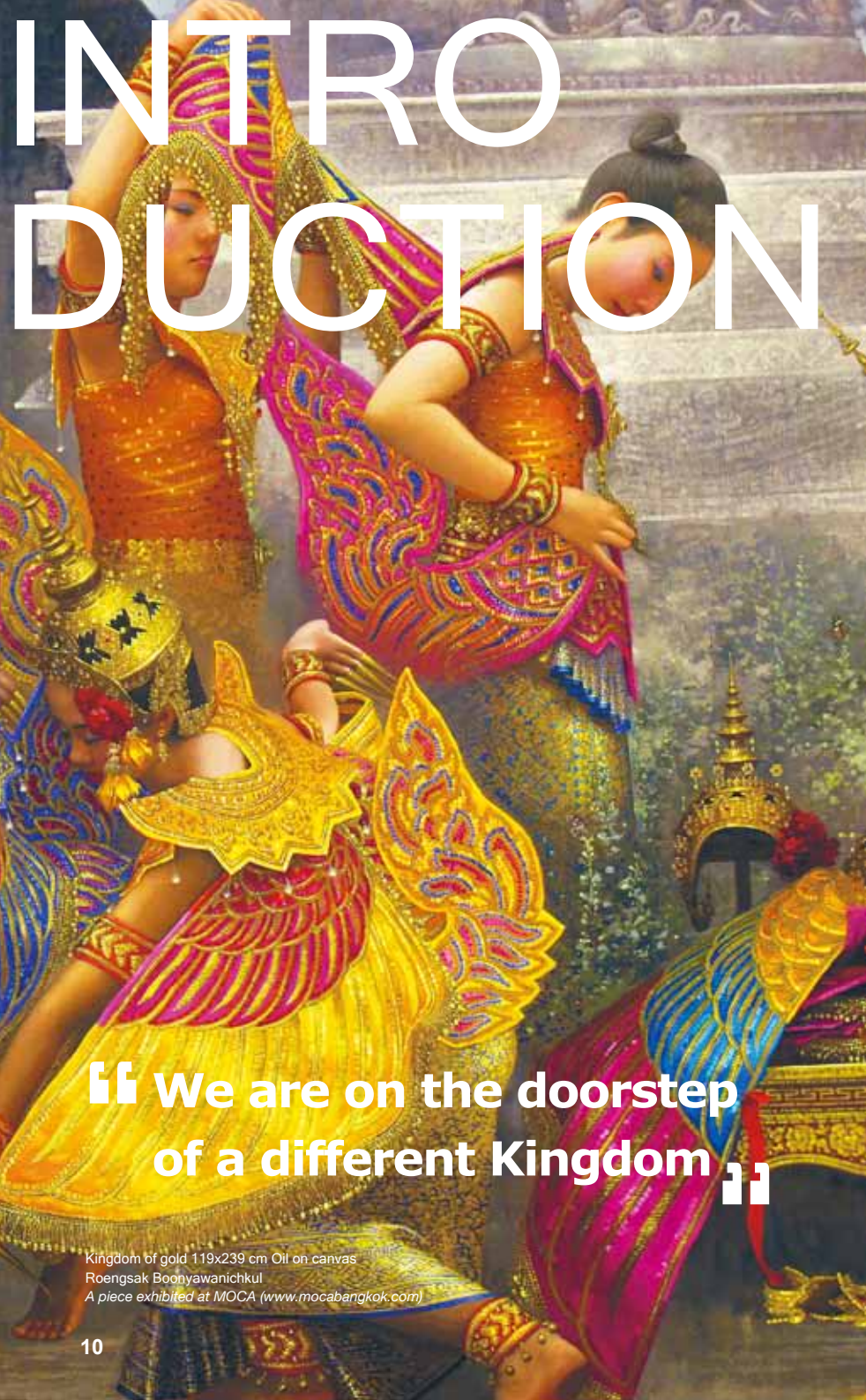
Is Thailand different today, after years of sustained economic growth, a growing affluent middle-class and the hard taught lessons of the 2004 tsunami and the devastating floods in 2011?

The obvious answer is yes. Behind the legendary Thai smile, more and more initiatives - private or government led - are emerging to make our beloved Kingdom more vibrant, more creative, and more attractive.

Our book, produced by an independent team of researchers, aims to demonstrate this modern Thai diversity. From environmental preservation to the resurgence of Thai traditional medicine, from organic rice growing to Bangkok's café culture, Travel Different Thailand introduces you to the Kingdom's newest faces, projects and trends: a community of ideas, actors and ventures which pay tribute to the Thai people's creativity.

Upon closer inspection, the ingenuity that characterises Thailand today does not come out of thin air. The Kingdom's new face reflects its rediscovery of local wisdom, Buddhist and Eastern philosophies, and H.M. The King's Sufficiency Economy philosophy. In this sense, Travel Different Thailand does not endeavour to showcase a policy prescription, but is a humble attempt to reveal Thailand's innate values that emphasise responsible consumption, moderation, conscious use of resources, and development from within, which helps explain its resilience and immunity from the cyclical shocks of globalisation. ■

H.E. Apichart Chinwanno
Ambassador, Royal Thai Embassy, Brussels



INTRODUCTION

ff We are on the doorstep
of a different Kingdom ff

Kingdom of gold 119x239 cm Oil on canvas
Roengsak Boonyawanichkul
A piece exhibited at MOCA (www.mocabangkok.com)



My experiences of Thailand have been decades apart. But ever since my first professional assignment took me to Bangkok in 1988, each trip has brought new, more positive images, all demonstrating the vigorous changes at work in Thai society, throughout the country.

One of the most rewarding experiences was my full year of research on green tourism and environmental preservation for our guidebook "Travel Green Thailand". I then discovered that Thai activists were continuing their tough battle against land encroachment, for the preservation of national parks and for the survival of crucial biodiversity. I also came to realise that a change was occurring within the Thai administration, after years of undisputed support for industrialisation and export-led economic growth. I met provincial governors eager to rehabilitate regional heritage and traditions. I talked with academics who had commissioned studies on the devastating effect of mass and uncontrolled tourism on fragile ecosystems.

Open and thriving, though not far from breaking point, like during Bangkok's tragic political confrontation of May 2010, Thai democracy has proven throughout that it is indeed functioning, though its slow pace and shortcomings are still raising legitimate concerns.

This is why I jumped on the opportunity given to me by the Royal Thai Embassy in Belgium and Luxembourg to produce a new book on Thailand. My first proposal, not surprisingly, as its content was widely-praised, was to recommend a new and updated edition of "Travel Green Thailand",

with the aim of conducting a more complete eco-tourism journey throughout the Kingdom. But soon, my observations and conversations with Thai friends guided me in another direction: sustainable innovations. Don't smile yet. Don't disregard my remarks as your attention is captivated by the exuberant shopping mall extravaganza that has taken Bangkok's heart by storm in the last decade. Open your eyes and ask your Thai acquaintances to set up meetings with professors, designers, architects, café owners, city officials, public transportation experts or water authority officials: all of them will lead you to the new faces of Thailand; to the "Travel Different" experience this new guidebook intends to explore.

A country of style and smiles, Thailand is now adding a third 's' to the equation, in the form of 'smart'. More ecologically-conscious, bright architects are looking at energy-saving houses and building designs. Recycling has become the motto of numerous municipalities and islands worried about the uncontrolled accumulation of waste. Organic food production is on the rise in rural country areas. Traditional medicines and plants are being finely-packaged and sold in the most glamorous department stores. Camping, biking, and hiking are no longer just the turf of western-influenced aficionado micro-groups. Believe it or not, over the past few months, shops could not cope with the demand for state-of-the-art bicycles in Bangkok, the capital city where cars still reign supreme.

I have seen it. I can confirm it: we are on the doorstep of a different Thailand. So let us open its doors together. ■





Abacus Number 1
110 x 320 cm Mixed media
Kamol Tassanchalee
A piece exhibited at MOCA
(www.mocabangkok.com)



Lifestyle

Thai resort architecture is leading the pack in Southeast Asia



Different THAILAND



A lifestyle revolution is quietly taking place in modern Thailand, along

with its economic development and the emergence of an internationally exposed middle-class. It roves around a key concept: a more balanced and eco-friendly way of life.

In this “different”, but equally-attractive land of smiles, quiet revolutions are taking place, like the Bangkok cycling uprising. Though difficult to imagine when you get stuck in the Thai capital city’s legendary jams, two-wheel lovers are on the rise and their passion is contagious. What can you expect from Thailand as urban, travelling, fooding and partying ways of life are rapidly changing in the Kingdom? Travel Different Thailand investigates. ■



The era of paradisiac and unspoiled Thailand has been over for quite some time. No one can contest that throughout the Kingdom, its hard fought economic boom has both lifted millions of people from poverty, and endangered part of the country's rich traditions and extremely diverse environment.

These changes have not, nevertheless, wiped the country of its appeal and charms. Well-traveled by European visitors, the Kingdom has, on the contrary, moved away from the clichés of the glossy tourism magazines to the design pages of luxury books or tablet applications. Best hotel, best design, and best spa are common accolades easily noticed by whoever takes a bit of time to discover the land of smiles. The Green Leaf Hotel Foundation, dedicated to promoting environmentally-minded practices and behaviours in the hotel industry, is thriving. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has designed a Seven Green Concepts policy plan, and has made it a priority. Metropolitan administrations in Bangkok and Chiang Mai, and also Pattaya, are focusing on improving public transportation, promoting waste recycling, opening cycling lanes and preserving municipal parks.

Tremendous changes are also taking place in people's lives. As Thai society is becoming more sophisticated, and more "intoxicated" by western standards, creating a style and consumption-oriented society, the traditional simplicity of the Siamese way of life has

A land of traditions and culture blended with full-scale modernity, Thailand received more than 20 million visitors in 2012.

On the rise with the rest of Asia, Thailand remains an authentic tranquility haven.

Ayutthaya Expo 2020



"Redefine Globalisation: Balanced life, sustainable living". This is the theme chosen by the Thai authorities to promote the

Ayutthaya bid to host the 2020 international expo, summarizes Thailand's aspirations.

Competing against cities in Turkey, Russia and Brazil, Ayutthaya aims to prove that its ancient history, linking Siam, through trade, to the rest of Asia and to the world, is a formidable asset after the undeniable success of Expo Shanghai 2010. A vote, conducted by the Paris-based Bureau International des Expositions, is due to take place in 2013.

More information: www.thailand-expo2020.com



had to adapt. Take the Thai school of architecture: led by renowned architects like Duangrit Bunnag, it is now a thriving creative industry exporting its talents. Take the Thai cinema: thanks to the international success of directors like Apichatpong Weerasethakul or Nonzee Nimibutr, Thai movies are collecting prestigious awards. Take Thai food: packaging, marketing, selection of ingredients, and respect for international food safety standards have made it one of the finest international cuisines, turning renowned Thai chefs into global celebrities.

We deliberately chose, in 2009, to promote green tourism with our first guidebook, Travel Green Thailand. The time has now come, we believe, to highlight other sectors in which a different Kingdom is emerging.

This chapter, centered on the Thai way of life, strives to be both an exploration and a reminder. We've been contemplating the problems brought about by the surge of cars, construction, industrial parks, and tourists flocking to some hugely crowded coastline haunts. We've always kept in mind the efforts of the European Commission to promote better standards around the old continent, where national, regional and municipal governments are determined to make their cities more liveable, with help from the return of tramways, hugely popular bicycle rental programs and amazing networks of cultural sites, from museums to concert halls.

Smart food, smart health, smart heritage... these are the three dimensions of the Thai lifestyle we believe are at the heart of this "Different Thailand" we invite you to discover with us.

Bon appétit, bonne santé, et bon voyage! ■

Modern art exhibitions ► in places like the Crystal Design Center, MOCA or TCDC are on the rise in Bangkok. But for many Thai artists, the northern city of Chiang Mai remains a favorite destination.

Salvador Dali. Glass fiber sculpture 134x70x180cm
Watchara Prayoonkum
A piece exhibited at MOCA
(www.mocabangkok.com)

A Provincial Awakening

Bangkok is not Thailand, and the new trends in Thai lifestyle are certainly not limited to its capital city. Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, taking advantage of their cooler climates, have become magnets for numerous intellectuals and academics who get the urge to escape Bangkok's heat and stress. Foreign residents, especially those looking for a quiet and pleasant place to retire, are also flocking in.

For those willing to enjoy the seaside, Hua Hin - thanks to its proximity to Bangkok - is also proving very attractive, while history lovers, and amateurs of the Old Siam atmosphere and serenity, continue to praise Ayutthaya, Sukhothai and Lopburi.







Traditional massages are provided at spas throughout the country



Smart Food

Eating in Thailand is not to be neglected. On the contrary, Thai culinary art is at the center of Siamese culture, along with its ancient traditions of welcoming and cherishing visitors. Blessed with an abundant and fertile nature, the country harbours numerous recipes. But changes are afoot. Organic food is on the rise; elegant packaging has become standard. These changes and others like these are moving the country towards a more healthy, balanced lifestyle.

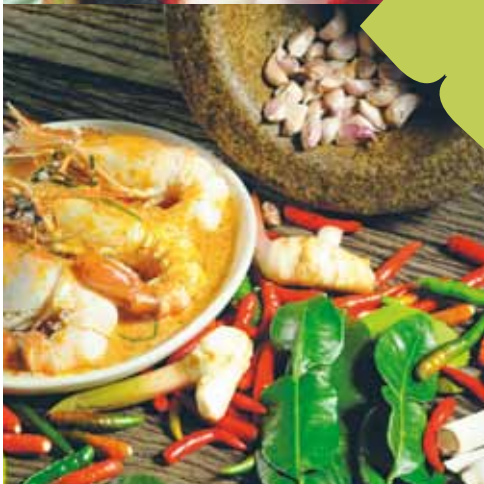
More info: agrithai@skynet.be



We are all experiencing the downside of modern lifestyle. Too much focus on speed, communications, and copy-paste attitudes...the widespread global impact of fast food. Is Thailand in itself a remedy to these worrying trends? Not quite. Food habits have also changed rapidly in the country, to the point where leading Thai doctors are warning national authorities and corporate actors about the rampant rise of obesity.

The Kingdom, nevertheless, remains, above all, a destination of tastes, spices, and extraordinarily fine culinary traditions. Combined with the search for more green-minded tourism, the Thai food sector has also combined with rural areas to develop agrotourism, with tangible success. In villages, tourists can be taken to rice fields, rice transformation sites or, more recently, vineyards. ■

More info: www.boi.go.th



SUTTHAWADEE CHAROENRATH

Organic Agriculture
Promoter



From organic rice brand “Sukho” to
“Hong Thong Life” natural food products,
this computer programmer-turned-activist bets
on a return to traditional Thai values

She welcomes you dressed as a farmer, in a rugged blue shirt traditionally worn by rural folks in the Thai countryside. But behind her is a clear sign of modernity: a Bangkok Airways plane landing at the Sukhothai Airport, owned by the Kingdom's second carrier.

A brainchild of the airline founder and president, the Sukho organic farm surrounds an open-air terminal and a control tower standing in the middle of a...believe it or not...zoo, with giraffes and water buffaloes. Here is our interview with one of Thailand's leading promoters of organic food, who is convinced that Thai people will grow tired of the excesses of modernity.



“ This is a
long-term
venture with
a social
mission. ”

Is it not a contradiction to have an airfield in the middle of an organic farm?

Since its inception, the Sukhothai Airport farm was set up both as an original production unit and as an agricultural showcase for local and international visitors. There is no better place than an airport, where people land and gather, to serve as an observatory. But don't be mistaken: we are not producing organic food here for the sake of tourists' viewing pleasure. Our Sukho rice brand, available in three colors (black, red, and white) and its sister brand Hong Thong, are now widely-distributed in local stores and cooperatives. Tastes are changing. It has taken us 15 years to reach the stage we are at now, with 70 employees working on the farm, producing vegetables, fruits and eggs, all without the aid of any sort of chemicals. This is a long-term venture with a social mission.

How do you manage to make Thai people understand the difference between organic food production and common agriculture?

Our best way of explanation is through focusing on lifestyle, and bringing it back to the food-health relationship. Organic food, we explain, is not only an agricultural matter. People do realise the benefits of organic farming when we tell them it will have an impact on their

body and health. Look at recent Thai history, we tell them: Thais once lived an organic lifestyle before chemicals from Europe and the US were introduced here. Our agricultural model did not change because there was a need to change it, but because we let the market decide for us. For sure, other concerns are important and organic is not the solution to all problems. Food safety and food security are equally-important and when it comes to mass production, the use of chemicals changes the equation. But again, are we satisfied with the food we eat? Are we happy with the agricultural products we find in stores? The answer I get, when I talk with my friends, is no. Behind organic farming lies a desire to rediscover the real taste of Thai fruits, vegetables, and rice. Once again, we are betting on a lifestyle change.

Can your Sukho farm become a symbol of change? An agricultural flagship for the generations of Thais to come?

I must admit, we don't have that many young visitors. Not many students are coming here to learn about our practices and their impact on health, and more generally, society. Why? I believe the main reason is that we don't advertise. We are farmers, not producers eager to find new markets and make our products popular. Organic food

production, though taking off these recent years, is not yet a national reality. You've got to understand the Thai farmers' concerns: many villagers are interested in our work. They come and ask questions. But they simply don't know how to market organic products. In addition, the present government program to subsidize Thai rice is encouraging people to produce more. Nevertheless, I notice how much rural people care when I exchange ideas with them: they all remember their grandparents' way of life, the farms of yesteryear. They remember the tastes, when agriculture was not polluted by chemicals. I call it the "organic nostalgia".

Is it not the time to focus on marketing, to bring in more explanations, and more educative materials promoting organic food and Sufficiency Economy agriculture?

You are right to make the reference to the "Sufficiency Economy" concept promoted by H.M. The King. Organic farming is one of the keys to changing our

way of living and consumption. Shall we do more? Shall we go out in the streets, or in the basement of department stores, to call on people to buy our organic products? I don't think marketing is the only solution. We've got to put our efforts towards the development of a different way of life, of a more sustainable Thailand. Do we want to balance our lifestyle, to avoid the excesses of modernisation, to counter the widespread use of chemicals in all sectors, from industry to agriculture? Do we want a healthier way of life, where traditional values are not only dissertation subjects, and do not land in museums? I do believe we have every means we require to take this much-needed "Thailand turn". ■

The selection process
taking place of Hong
Thong Thai rice at the
Sukhothai Airport farm





Smart Health

Thai traditional medicine is back. While Thailand has become an undisputed regional hub for medical tourism, thanks to its state-of-the-art hospitals and clinics, herbalists, masseurs and traditional healers have regained prestige, and specialised healing-oriented talk-shows have become hits. The extraordinary success of Thai massage, and of the Ayurvedic spa tradition makes the country a truly healthy land.



Thai herbal medicines are classified according to ten “tastes”: astringent, oily (nutty), salty, sweet, bitter, toxic, sour, hot (spicy), bland and aromatic. Each taste corresponds to a certain therapeutic use. Another classification lists Thai herbs strictly by their effect on the body.



Hot springs and saunas have always played an important part in the Thai traditional pharmacopoeia. Herbal saunas are used in treatment of multiple diseases, especially for respiratory problems, infections or skin diseases. The southern province of Ranong, facing the Andaman sea, harbors the well-known Raksawarin hot springs.



The physical body, in the Thai system, is made up of the same elements that permeate the entire universe: earth, water, air and fire. The interaction of those elements is therefore the key to remaining healthy and it is of vital importance to keep them balanced throughout one's life. The primary goal of traditional Thai regimens is to maintain the vitality and balance of the four elements.



Bergamot is one of the many Thai fruits and herbs used for medical purposes. The Government Pharmaceutical Organisation (GPO), a state enterprise under the Ministry of Public Health, has been successful in continuing research on Thai herbs used as drugs and health supplements. Among them are: hoary basil, lemongrass, used as a diuretic; lime, which has anti-flu properties, and sacred basil (*Ka-Phrao* in Thai), which exhibits antimicrobial properties.



The Wat Po temple is the traditional Thai school of medicine. Located in Bangkok, facing the Chao Phraya river opposite the Temple of Dawn, this facility was established in the late 1700's under the founder of the Chakri dynasty. Well-known for delivering massage diplomas, it is also the centre of Thai herbalism, though classes here are taught in the Thai language.



Smart Heritage

Trying to put order in Thailand's chaotic urban developments is a daunting mission. But some actors are putting their energy, often followed by their money, into it, so to save the country's architectural, spiritual and folk heritage. Newly-opened museums are becoming a common sight in various provinces. Thai universities are paying more and more attention to traditional architecture and folk wisdom. Modern Thai designers are getting their inspiration from the past, using bamboo, wood, and recycled materials.



Thai traditional architecture landmarks

are being well-documented and preserved. In the heart of Bangkok, in the middle of the Sathorn business district, the house of late Prime Minister and statesman Kukrit Pramoj, is a must-see. Often booked for social events, it is nevertheless open to the public, and constitutes the perfect alternative to the world-renowned Thai house of Jim Thompson, the American spy-turned-silk trader who disappeared in the 1960's.



The diversity of Thai style

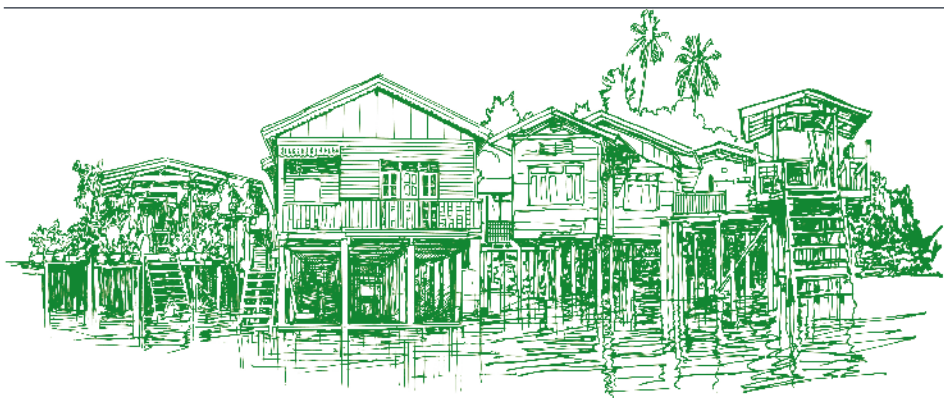
is what makes it so appealing. In the north of the country, the Lanna style reigns supreme. Lanna refers to the Northern Thai Kingdom around Chiang Mai, which flourished between the 13th and the 18th centuries. Influence from Myanmar are also predominant in this part of the Kingdom, due to its proximity. A key feature of traditional Thai construction is teak wood, whose logging has now been severely restricted.



Thai meditation centres have become spiritual magnets, for both locals and foreigners. Often surrounded by green hills and lush tropical forest, they offer Thai language and English courses, dispersed throughout indoor and outdoor meditation areas. The meditation focuses on the centre of the body, as both a gateway to higher consciousness and an energy centre.

The Bangkok metropolitan

administration and the national government are fighting hard to overcome the city's infrastructure bottlenecks and to find solutions to its progressive sinking. Built on the Chao Phraya river delta, and formerly known as the Venice of the East, the "City of Angels" sinks from 1.5 to 5.3 cm each year, and a big part of it is already under sea level.



Preserving rural arts,

skills and jobs has been the main focus of Thailand's OTOP (One Tambon One Product) project launched in 2001. Successfully, this initiative has brought to the public quantities of products - food, handicrafts, fabrics, and more - which otherwise could have been decimated by the tsunami of international brands that have flooded Bangkok's busy streets. An update of the program, OTOP Plus, was launched in 2012 to provide greater opportunities for OTOP entrepreneurs.



Different Roadmap to ... Meditation

Name

Province

Wat Ram Poeng

www.watrampoeng.com

Chiang Mai

Dhamma Abha Vipassana Centre

www.abha.dhamma.org

Phitsanuloke

Wat Luangpho Sodh

www.en.dhammadakaya.org

Ratchaburi

Wat Phummarin Kudi Thong

www.watphummarin.com

Samut Songkram

Wat Sai Ngam

www.watsai.net

Suphan Buri

Wat Marpjan

www.watmarpjan.org

Rayong

Wat Phra Dhammajak

Chaloerm Prakiat

www.buddhaviharn.info

Nakhon Nayok

Wat Pa Sai Ngam

Ubon Ratchathani

Ban Sawangjai

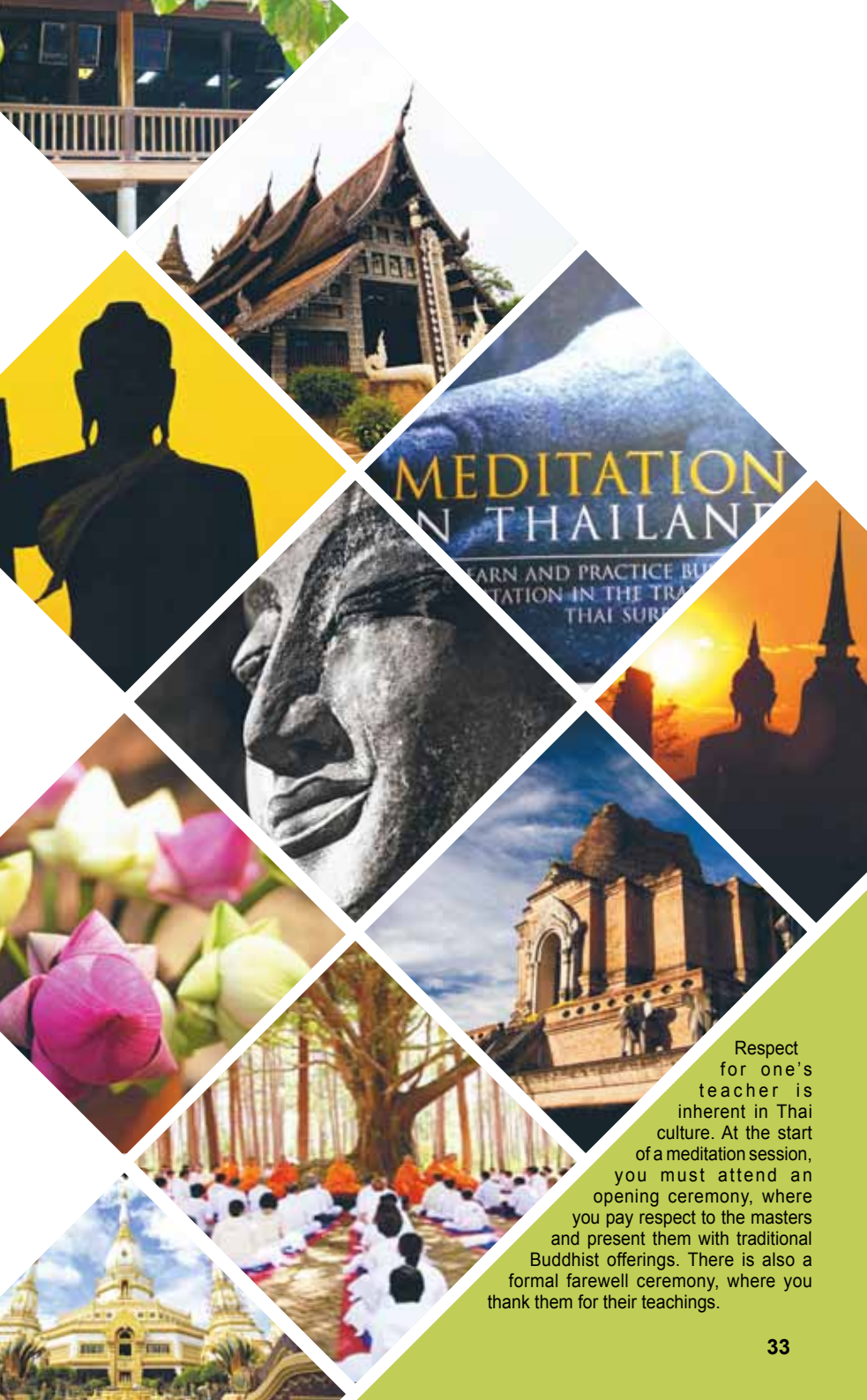
www.vimokha.com

Nakhon Ratchasima

Suan Mokhapalaram

www.suanmokh.org

Surat Thani



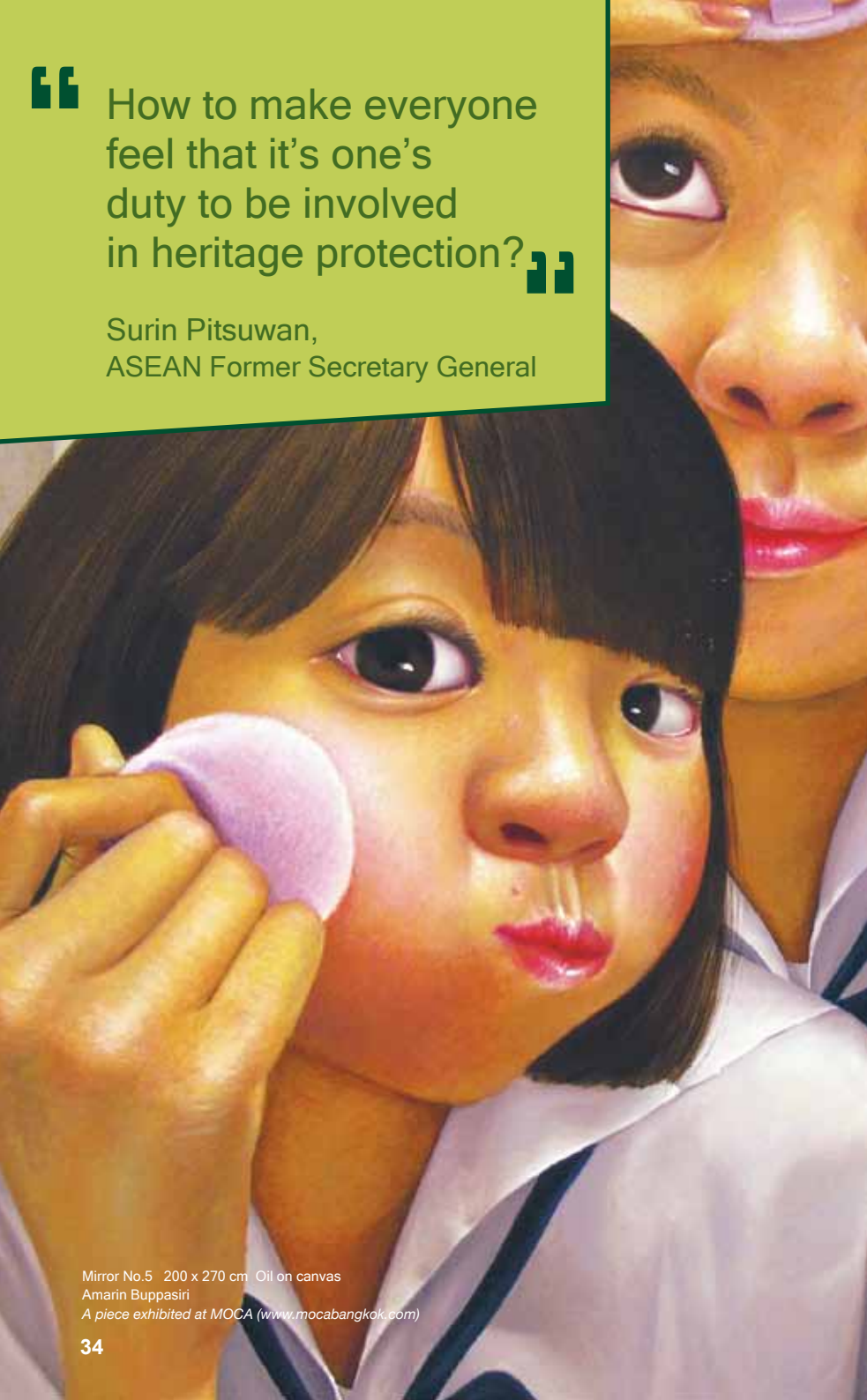
MEDITATION IN THAILAND

LEARN AND PRACTICE BUDDHIST
MEDITATION IN THE TRADITION OF
THAI SURIN

Respect for one's teacher is inherent in Thai culture. At the start of a meditation session, you must attend an opening ceremony, where you pay respect to the masters and present them with traditional Buddhist offerings. There is also a formal farewell ceremony, where you thank them for their teachings.

“ How to make everyone
feel that it's one's
duty to be involved
in heritage protection? ”

Surin Pitsuwan,
ASEAN Former Secretary General



Mirror No.5 200 x 270 cm Oil on canvas
Amarin Buppasiri
A piece exhibited at MOCA (www.mocabangkok.com)



Economy



The Bangkok mall district of Siam is proving itself
a powerful engine of the Thai economy



Different THAILAND

Thailand has recently managed an incredible V-shaped recovery.



The statistics speak for themselves: despite being severely affected by the 2011 floods which affected the whole region, the Thai economy is still, by far, a success story. While the countrywide flood damages have been estimated to have cost up to 15 Billion USD, bringing to a halt more than 400 large manufacturers, the Kingdom's private sector has, since then, sustained an incredible boom fed by both a rise of internal consumption, and a huge inflow of international funds. As a consequence, the country has achieved a 6.4 percent growth rate in 2012, and the Thai Baht remained above most of the regional currencies, to the point of triggering concerns among local exporters. ■



In the long-term perspective, the trend is also very positive: essentially export-oriented, the Thai economy is going through a promising modernisation, roving around three priorities set up by the national government, in line with the 2015 ASEAN Economic Community objectives.

Its first priority, illustrated by the allocation of huge budgets to infrastructure projects, is the revamp of industrial parks and special economic zones.

Thailand's authorities are indeed deploying tremendous effort to convince the corporate sector and the provincial administrations to get greener, and to adopt a more sustainable mapping in the long run.

This is being confirmed nowadays in Bangkok by the alternative options put forward regarding the State Railway plans to develop the Makkasan area. The Association of Siamese Architects (ASA) is calling for a zoning concept, which will include an industrial/heritage exhibition centre, a botanical park, a craft lifestyle village and a connection with the airport link. "The big trees on the site are national assets," is a constant reaffirmation by Pongwan Laksus, Vice President of the ASA.

The second national priority is the upgrading of social schemes, whose goals are to avoid rising inequalities, and to address the problematic social fractures between the

The world's largest rice producer, ► Thailand is a major global agricultural player. To protect Thai farmers from the world market's erratic prices, the government has put in place an ambitious, but controversial, revenue guarantee scheme for farmers.

Thailand has recently managed an incredible V-shaped recovery

A Roadmap for Innovation

A number of government agencies have been set up this last decade in Thailand to promote innovations in numerous fields of activity. Their work is normally promoted to foreign investors and companies by the Board of Investment (www.boi.co.th), but establishing direct links with their labs and experts is recommended to be kept aware of potentially lucrative new developments and researches in the country. Three institutions lead the pack: the National Innovation Agency (www.nia.or.th/en), Thailand's Productivity Institute (www.ftpi.or.th) and the Rice Research Center (www.ricethailand.go.th).



haves and have-nots in a country where the recent political upheavals have demonstrated the existence of fault lines between the masses and the elite. The minimum daily salary has been increased to 300 Baht, in line with recommendations from the Geneva-based International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the social experts from the European Commission's Directorate for Labour (EC). The social security scheme put in place under the Thaksin Shinawatra administration is being revamped. A controversial but popular rice farmers support programme, consisting of setting up price guarantees for Thai rice growers, is set to remain, though adjustments are expected, due partly to international pressure and risks of distortion of the global rice market.

Thailand's third economic priority is to raise the level of research, innovation and brain input in the country's corporate sector. A national innovation agency has been created, identifying key concepts and ideas. New recruits, trained in the best European and American universities, are given a free hand to develop ideas and projects.

Though Thailand continues to thrive thanks to its dedicated workforce and its regional hub location, things are changing and its economic landscape is very different from what it was in the 1990's. Observers were, then, writing about Thailand's turn. What we are now witnessing is Thailand taking off for good. ■

Confronted with the growing electricity demands on its industries and cities, Thailand is looking for alternative and renewable energy, promoting investments up to 155 billion USD per year in that sector. Southeast Asia's largest solar plant, a 44-MW project called "Sunny Bangchak", was connected to Thailand's grid in early February 2013. ▶

Night Festival in Sukhothai Historical Park ▶

Energy and Environment

An official member of the ASEAN Centre for Energy's network, the Bangkok-based Center for Energy Environment Resources Development (CEERD) promotes technical cooperation, planning and modeling on energy-environment economics. It has been commissioned by the Danish aid agency, Danida, to promote renewable energy technologies in the Kingdom, and is a regular partner of the European Commission and the Asian Development Bank. www.ceerd.net





SORAJAK KASEMSUVAN

President, Thai Airways International



Thailand's flag carrier has a global ambassador's role to play in the country's rebranding, as a competitive, but authentic, destination.



Smooth as Silk has been Thai Airways International's leading slogan and advertising matrix for generations and it remains very much so. But confronted by fierce international competition, led by Middle East based airlines, Thailand's national carrier has been recently feeling the urge to add newer content and significance to these emblematic words.

Also an acronym for "**Travel Green**", TG - as Thai Airways is known to travellers - has embraced the national efforts to redefine "**Thainess**" and enhance the Kingdom's appeal worldwide. A former diplomat, its new President and CEO Sorajak Kasemsuvan has accepted to share with us, in the airline's Bangkok headquarters, his combined vision of TG's business prospects and Thailand's future.

Does Thai Airways International bear a special socio-economic responsibility, in a time of acute sky rivalry between traditional national airlines and their regional low-cost competitors?

The title of your book, **“Travel Different Thailand”** says it all. Thai Airways has to be different to remain the Kingdom’s best ambassador. Bringing an added value to our passengers, making them experience the best of Thailand’s changes and modernity, is therefore one of our prime responsibilities. Like all other Thai flagship companies or conglomerates, Thai Airways cannot be insulated from our national socio-economic realities and challenges. And that is equally true inside or outside. Take our staff: we are now dealing with a new generation of employees, in their mid-30s, who have different objectives and aims from their predecessors. They are proud to serve our customers and, in the meantime, eager to do something for the country. The question of environmental preservation is proving to be a test case: hundreds of our recruits are turning up whenever we organise forest replantation operations and nature preservation initiatives.

In the recent years, Thai Airways International has been campaigning hard to promote green travel. It has also implemented numerous Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices and recommendations.

Are you an isolated case? Is the Thai corporate sector following your example?

Such an awareness can be seen everywhere in Thailand. For sure, our concerns about the impact of nature’s destruction have been raised by the traumatic 2011 floods. But I believe this is also a long term trend: the legendary Thai smile, though still present and very much alive, cannot be this country’s only marketing argument in a time of global decisions and global competition. Anybody can smile. Anybody can greet you with a “wai” (the traditional way of greetings, hands joined in front of you), as Singapore Airline’s crew do to welcome their passengers. To me, the real challenge of tomorrow’s hospitality industry is to demonstrate that your words are coming from the heart. I call it, as far as Thailand is concerned, the “water jar” syndrome: traditionally, Thais put a pottery jar full of water in front of their houses, so any passing visitor or guest can drink and freshen up. We should always keep this example in mind and ask ourselves the question: are we offering enough to our customers? Do they feel the difference when flying with us?

One of the main challenges for the Thai economy is the current regional integration process, with the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. Is Thailand ready to cope with those changes?

One of Thailand's prime targets is Asia's affluent middle class. The way Asian societies are moving up the social ladder is changing the world. In China alone, dozens of businessmen are becoming millionaires daily! But how do we interact with this newer, promising Asian clientele without undermining, or neglecting, our longtime clients from Europe or the United States? What is very true for Thai Airways matters equally for numerous Thai businesses: our customer mix is changing and we have to make sure we are not throwing some categories overboard. In this context again, our capacity to prove how Thailand can remain "different" will play a decisive role. This "difference" lays in our balanced lifestyle, in our capacity to be innovative, with new designs, new concepts and new products. I count on the Europeans to help us in this search. Traditionally, they have been close to Asia. Many of them are fond of our countries, our culture. Europeans are our best allies in this search for added value.

So the Thai economy's V-Shaped recovery, largely due to the rise of internal consumption, is sustainable in the long term ?

The ASEAN Economic Community will give us at Thai Airways, and will give Thailand, a brand new horizon on which to thrive.

Europeans may not realise anymore in Europe what it's like to cross borders, to be able to migrate and resettle, to experience the cultural mix, brought in by closer regional integration. These changes are ahead of us here, and I am confident that we can make the better of it. But once again, the European connection - because of your own experience - will prove crucial. We, at Thai Airways, are counting on our European destinations as major hubs and major source of revenue. Brussels, where we recently started to fly, is a promising one. Russia proves to be a major touristic partner nowadays. Our future does not rely solely on ASEAN and Asia. We shall remain connected to Europe and the rest of the world. To be truly different, Thailand shall be truly global. ■





Smart Energy

Visitors from the European Union ought not to expect to find, in Thailand, an avid quest for energy savings. Enjoying an unprecedented economic boom, the country is thirsty for oil and electricity, like most of its Asian neighbours. Meanwhile, the international challenge of rising energy prices is being felt hard in the Kingdom, with leading companies like Thai Airways having to adjust in a painful way. A collective push to invest in renewable and smart energy is therefore to be expected. The government has even made it a national priority.

www.energy.go.th

Solar panels

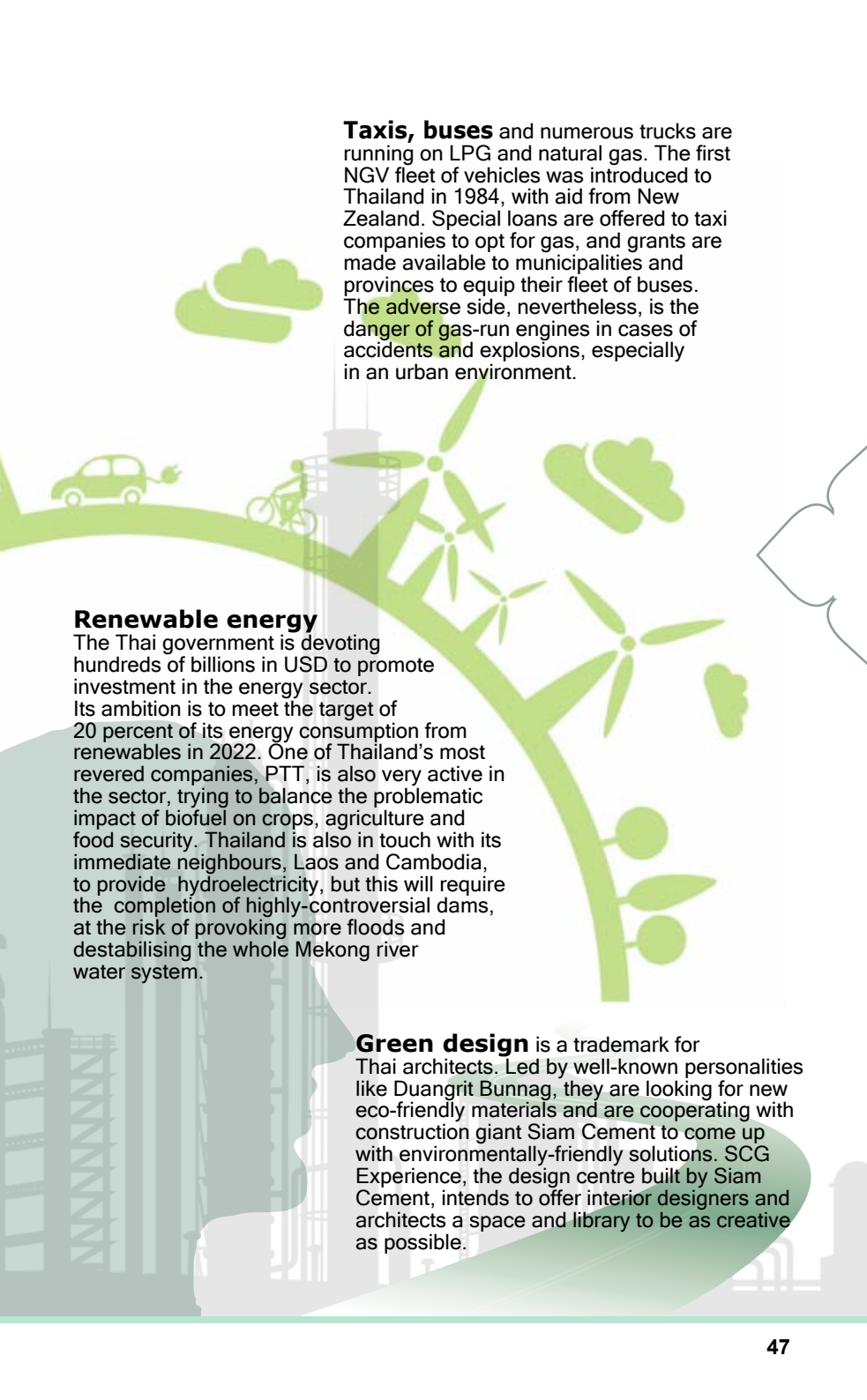
The obvious source of renewable energy available in Thailand is solar. Showered with abundant sun, the country can easily plug in and make the best use of it. Already in place in numerous tourism hotspots, and widely-used on islands where the ability to import fuel is scarce, solar panels can make a difference, especially if their price continues to drop. Expect this sector to boom in the coming years, especially if ASEAN - following the example of the European Union - makes it a regional priority. Utilising panels from China, a lead project owned by Bangchak Public Petroleum (BPC), is "Sunny Bangchak" located in Bang Pa-In, Ayutthaya, 40 km outside Bangkok.

The construction sector

is now becoming concerned about the environmental impact of materials, and about the need to be energy-friendly. Contrary to Europe, the challenge in Thailand is not to make buildings more isolated from the heat, but to make sure fresh air flows inside, thus not requiring extensive use of air conditioning.

Saving on fuel consumption

is becoming a priority for many leading Thai companies. Thai Airways International, aware of its impact on the environment and concerned about the rising costs of energy, encourages technological and innovative developments to control greenhouse gas emissions. Biofuels are already used on certain commercial flights.



Taxis, buses and numerous trucks are running on LPG and natural gas. The first NGV fleet of vehicles was introduced to Thailand in 1984, with aid from New Zealand. Special loans are offered to taxi companies to opt for gas, and grants are made available to municipalities and provinces to equip their fleet of buses. The adverse side, nevertheless, is the danger of gas-run engines in cases of accidents and explosions, especially in an urban environment.

Renewable energy

The Thai government is devoting hundreds of billions in USD to promote investment in the energy sector. Its ambition is to meet the target of 20 percent of its energy consumption from renewables in 2022. One of Thailand's most revered companies, PTT, is also very active in the sector, trying to balance the problematic impact of biofuel on crops, agriculture and food security. Thailand is also in touch with its immediate neighbours, Laos and Cambodia, to provide hydroelectricity, but this will require the completion of highly-controversial dams, at the risk of provoking more floods and destabilising the whole Mekong river water system.

Green design is a trademark for Thai architects. Led by well-known personalities like Duangrit Bunnag, they are looking for new eco-friendly materials and are cooperating with construction giant Siam Cement to come up with environmentally-friendly solutions. SCG Experience, the design centre built by Siam Cement, intends to offer interior designers and architects a space and library to be as creative as possible.



Smart Tourism

Nobody can deny Thailand's tourism appeal. Each year, more than 20 million foreign travellers take the time to visit the Land of Smiles, while more than 60 million people used Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport in 2012. The question of tourism sustainability, nevertheless, is becoming more acute and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is leading the way towards the answer, with their efforts to convince tour operators and hoteliers to adopt and implement its "Seven Green Concepts". The time to act has come.



Community tourism

The European Union has been granting financial support to TEATA, the Thai Ecotourism Association of Travel Agents, to develop ecological standards and norms, and to find appropriate ways to strengthen the local communities. Some superb successes have been seen, like the tourism program developed in Ban Na Ton Chan's village, Sukhothai province. The Association of Community Tourism, with the commercial promotion of OTOP products, is seen as a key to financial sustainability.



Seven Green Concepts

TAT's leading campaign to promote green services and ecological awareness is slowly but surely having an impact on Thailand's tourism image and offerings. At the annual ITB fair in Berlin, numerous international professionals are commending the Kingdom's effort to promote sustainable tourism, secured by increased involvement of the local population.

7greens.tourismthailand.org



Green Leaf Hotels

The certification process is always a controversial one in Thailand, where the control of standards may have to be improved. But with the help of the TAT, the Green Leaf Program for hotels has, throughout the country, managed to increase emphasis on better eco-management, especially for resorts built in remote and pristine areas. Soon to come, an annual listing of the greenest hotels will help to promote ecologically-friendly competition between business owners.

www.greenleafthai.org



Homestay

The "homestay" sign is often seen in the countryside. Certified by the Tourism Ministry, it is also a sought-after trademark for Thai tourists willing to taste a bit of rural life. Its simple principle consists of offering visitors a room in village houses, and a morning breakfast. Daytime activities are a possible option, with farmers offering tourists the opportunity to join them in rice harvesting or river fishing; clearly a way to discover a different Thailand.



Agrotourism The Ministry of Agriculture maintains a complete and updated list of agrotourism destinations, where visitors can enjoy the pleasure of nature and the taste of local food and sweets. The very fertile North of Thailand provides many of these agrotourism venues, but we believe they are also a very privileged door to the Northeastern region, or Isaarn, where agriculture remains the principal source of income.
eng.moac.go.th



Travel Green Thailand

This pioneer publication, the first ecotourism guide of its kind, has paved the way for a growing international and local interest in nature preservation by tourism operators. Made with the support of the Royal Thai Embassy in Belgium, and welcomed by the European Union, Travel Green Thailand has now been copied by a number of green publications and guidebooks.





Smart Education

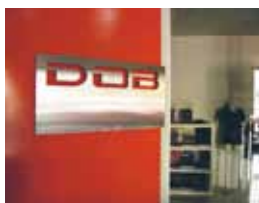
Thailand is climbing the Asian knowledge ladder. Too often labelled as having a poor education system, with huge academic inequalities between its main cities and the rural countryside, the Kingdom is increasing efforts to address this challenge. Widespread use of information technology is seen as an educative asset by many, and the Ministry of Education has made the distribution of tablets a priority. But plenty remains to be done.

Tablets vs books

An education struggle is taking place in Thailand, with opposing sides accusing each other of putting the country's youth at risk. On the one hand is the Thai government's decision to supply all schools with "one tablet per child", with the aim of bringing knowledge and computer use to all the Kingdom's villages and localities. On the other hand stands the traditional media and leading academics, who see this "tablet initiative" as a distraction, diverting attention from the deep malaise about Thai education, whose quality - they say - has deteriorated over the past few decades. Travel Different Thailand does not pretend to choose between those two camps, as their respective arguments are equally valid. What is important, nevertheless, is to take into account the increasing amount of public attention devoted to the educational system. The education budget has doubled over the last 10 years. School buildings are being renovated. Campuses are being made over and expanded. Knowledge has become fashionable, supported by Thai parents' anguish for their offsprings' future. The important question is education quality, and how it prepares the young Thai generation for an increasingly competitive work environment. The fact that Thai students and families are now realising the importance of English proficiency, is a promising step. The time has come when the education system, with the help of information technology, will undergo a much-needed "smart revolution".



Public libraries, especially for arts and designs, are opening in Thailand's main cities, giving researchers, academics and students access to international books and literature. A campaign to make Bangkok the "world book capital" has even taken off recently.



Design schools, like DOB in Bangkok, which recently opened in a 1970's building, opposite Hualamphong railway station, are proliferating in a country fond of forms and arts. Many of them also host art galleries and cafés.



Ecological awareness has considerably increased in Thai primary schools and high schools after the 2004 tsunami. Foreign embassies have supported drawing contests and field visits for young Thai students, in memorial sites. The American Embassy features an annual "Paint on our Walls" festival open to, and quite popular amongst, all children in Bangkok.



Thai faculties, nowadays following the example of Bangkok's Assumption University, conduct all-English courses. Chulalongkorn University's Sasin Business School delivers a widely-praised MBA, and students from the region are pouring into Thailand's main campuses.



Smart Minds

They are the movers and shakers of modern Thailand. Some of them, honoured by the prestigious Magsaysay award, are recognized as leading Asian thinkers. Others, active in the Land of Smiles but still unknown beyond its borders, are at the root of changes taking place in the country.

We could add more to our lists: from arts to urbanism, from charity work to the elite circles of finance, from universities to law offices, numerous smart minds make up the spine of Thailand's modernisation, while pointing out the need for the country not to abandon its traditions and attractive lifestyle.

Thai journalists have distinguished themselves by defending press freedom, and calling for more debates in a society otherwise known for its obedience to powerful people and institutions. Founded in 2008, the Thai PBS TV channel has won international recognition and credibility for its coverage of Thailand's recent crisis and its cultural and educative programs. Another initiative to note is the regular publication by the English-language daily, The Nation, of a Green Report which recently warned conglomerates and politicians alike that "the public no longer believes we need to invest billions of dollars in mega power plants that plunder the Kingdom's coffers and impoverished taxpayers while enriching vested interests".

www2.thaipbs.or.th
www.nationmultimedia.com

Princess Maha Chakri

Sirindhorn has proven to be an inspirational leader for civil society organisations, and public service advocates throughout the country. In Bangkok, the decade-old Phu Fa Shop in Siam Discovery shopping center is, under her patronage, an innovative and popular handicraft store. She has also invested a considerable amount of energy into education exchanges with China and fellow ASEAN countries.



The Royal Projects since 1969, contributed greatly to alleviating poverty in the Thai countryside, while emphasising local handicrafts and traditions, environmentally-sound agriculture and ethical ways of production. Set up in the 1990's, a Royal Foundation oversees those various ventures, among them, 38 rural development centers, directly supporting nearly half a million families. Awarded the respected Magsaysay Prize in 1988, the Royal Project Foundation has given birth to a nationwide movement of charities and development initiatives aimed at supporting the impoverished rural areas of the country.
www.royalprojectthailand.com

Meechai Viravaidya has gained notoriety and respect in Thailand by promoting birth control and the use of condoms to prevent AIDS through his Population and Development Association (PDA). After serving in government and being a Senator, he has deployed tremendous efforts to set up a Village Development Partnership Program.
www.mechaifoundation.org

The National Innovation Agency was established in 2003 to promote research in the fields of science and technology. Its bio-business and eco-industry programs have already achieved results, like the approval of an herbal products development plan spanning until 2020. Food safety and the linking of medical tourism and research are also among its priorities. Dr. Nares Damrongchai, CEO of Thailand's Center of Excellence for Life Sciences and a pillar of the NIA, is a regular partner of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies.
www.nia.or.th



Thai recipients of the Ramon Magsaysay Award

Government Service

1965	Puey Ungpakorn
1966	Fon Saengsingkaew
1981	Prawes Wasi
1992	Chamlong Srimuang
1997	Anand Panyarachun
2005	Jon Ungphakorn

Public Service

1961	Nilawan Pintong
1967	Sithiporn Kridakara
1978	Prateep Hata
1983	Fua Hariphitak
1984	Thongbai Thongpao
1991	Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
1994	Mechai Viravaidya
1998	Sophon Suphapong

Community Leadership

1973	Krasae Chanawongse
1987	Aree Vallyasevi
2004	Prayong Ronnarong

Journalism, Literature, and the Creative Communication Arts

1971	Prayoon Chanyavongs
------	---------------------

Peace and International Understanding

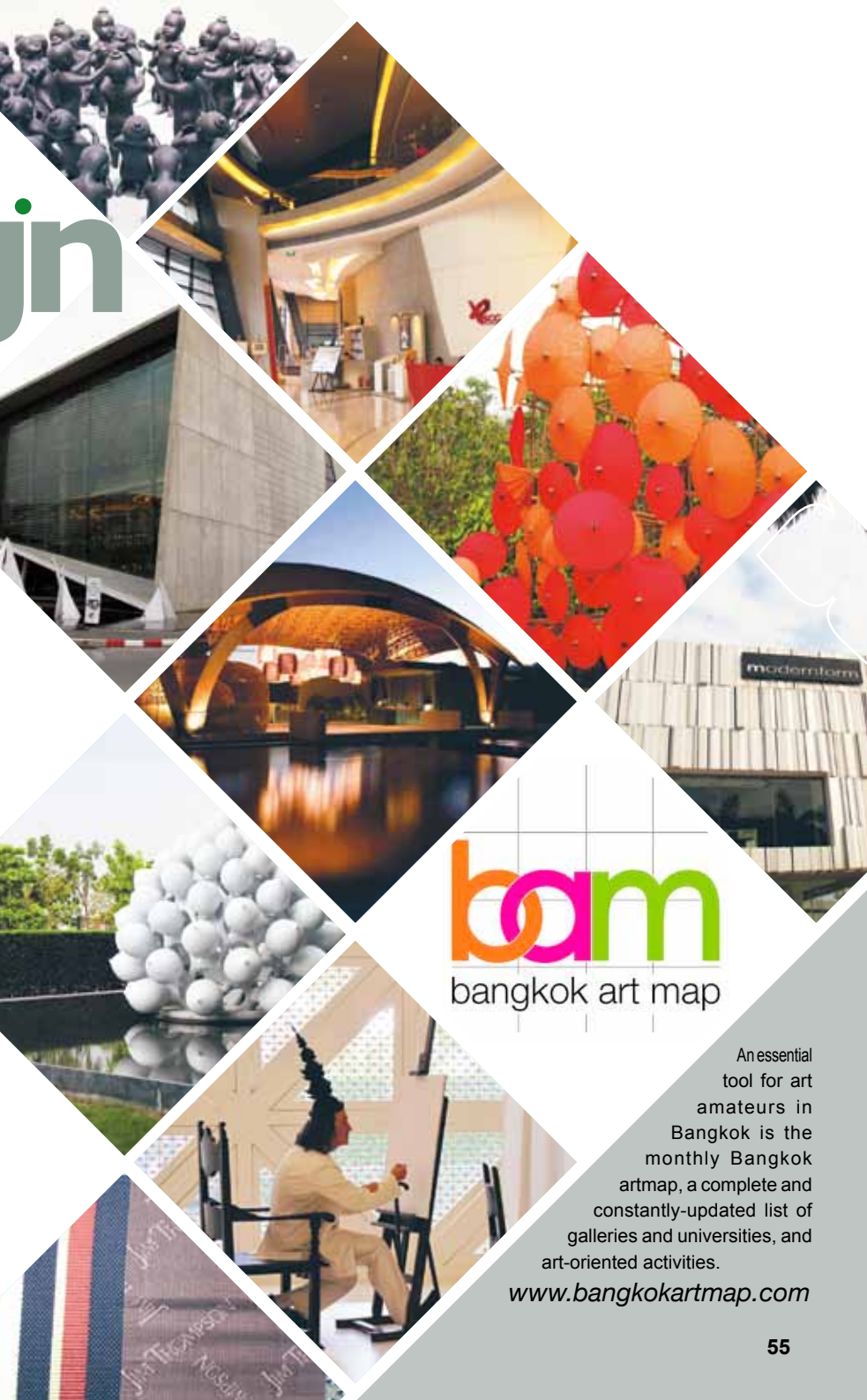
1988	The Royal Project
1989	Asian Institute of Technology

"Honoring greatness of spirit and transformative leadership in Asia."

Different Roadmap to ... Art & Design

Name	Province
TCDC www.tcdc.or.th	Bangkok
Jim Thompson Art Center www.thejimthompsonartcenter.org	Bangkok
Lanna Architecture Centre	Chiang Mai
Crystal Design Center www.crystaldesigncenter.com	Bangkok
River City Antiques Center www.rivercity.co.th	Bangkok
Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre www.bacc.or.th	Bangkok
Isaarn Art and Culture Centre	Maha Sarakham
Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) www.mocabangkok.com	Bangkok

in



bam
bangkok art map

An essential tool for art amateurs in Bangkok is the monthly Bangkok artmap, a complete and constantly-updated list of galleries and universities, and art-oriented activities.

www.bangkokartmap.com

“ Reading provides me
with creative ideas,
living inspiration and
broadens my perspective. ”

Kan Trakulhoon,
President & CEO Siam Cement Group



The SCG Experience library, Crystal Design Center, Bangkok



Sunset over Thai temple roofs



Different THAILAND

It is the dawn of a new era in Thailand: the era of ecotourism. Thais are beginning to realise



that the influx of tourists to their beautiful country must be supported by sustainable tourism and the innovations and regulations that come along with it. From government agencies to beachfront hotels, responsible behaviors are rewarded. Plenty remains to be done, but smart, transformational plans are well underway, and many are already being implemented. All over the Kingdom, it's possible to find a plethora of examples of people and groups putting the right foot forward to keep the country green. ■





Regional guide

Get a taste of our top picks of Thailand's most eco-friendly, green destinations, from the northeast corner of the Kingdom, all the way down to the archipelago of islands on either side of its southern coasts. Discover with us new trends and new initiatives to make Thailand's tourism success more sustainable, and more inclined towards a balanced lifestyle. Each regional chapter concludes with suggestions for smart hotels and spas to visit in that area.



North Thailand is our smart heritage destination, not to mention a thrilling region for nature lovers. The production area of many of Thailand's superior handicrafts, it also hosts some of the country's best locations for hiking, biking and camping. Thailand's second-largest city, Chiang Mai, is at its heart as Thailand's beloved cultural destination.

Central Thailand is a highlight amongst Thailand's historical sights, from its ancient capitals, to the famous River Kwai, to a little-known royal cave, to a century-old alternative medicine hospital. This is where natural beauty accents deep roots and centuries of river-centered traditions and trade routes.

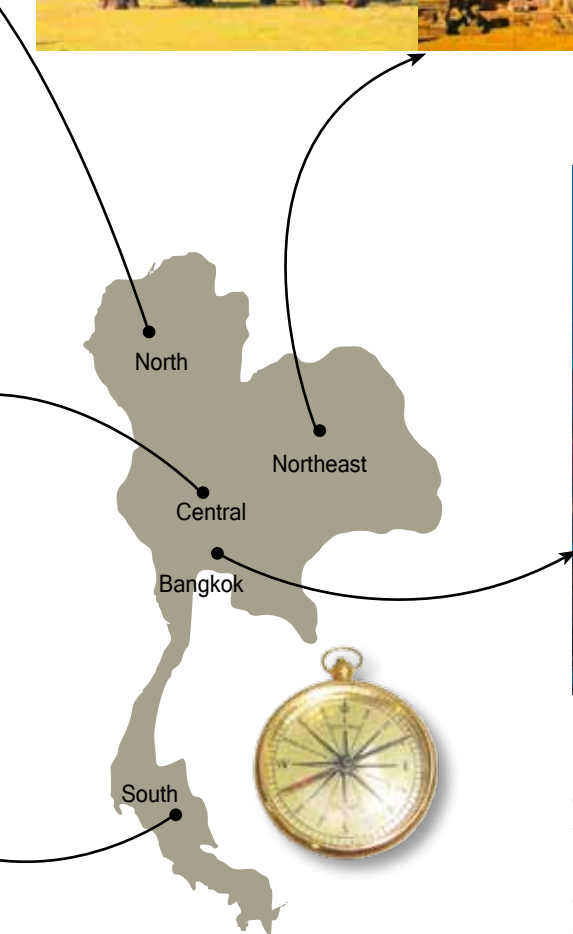


South Thailand's tropical shores are one of the country's most alluring features, and nowhere more so than on the pristine beaches of the South. Experience the azure waters and powdery sands on one of the south's many tropical islands, and see the results of marine conservation and rainforest protection efforts in the region.





Northeast Experience “Amazing Isaan”, Thailand’s campaign to promote its northeastern farming and agricultural region. For nature lovers and visitors eager to discover Thai rural life, this part of the Kingdom has plenty to offer: the charm of authenticity and sincere hearts and minds.



Bangkok While Bangkok is known for its hedonism, the city is full of culture and creative spaces, if you know where to look. Home to many of Thailand’s brightest minds, Bangkok encourages personal growth and development through green spaces, creative art and design centers, ancient temples, vibrant markets, and innovative museums.



NORTH

Different



A place adored by nature and culture-lovers, northern Thailand is experiencing an authentic revival, with Thais and international tourists alike supporting and seeking a Thailand that goes back to its roots. A region of luscious, vibrant forests, pristine waterfalls, thrilling hiking trails, and towering mountains, inhabited by hilltribes and Thai families with a strong sense of culture and heritage and friendly smiles, northern Thailand is about as anti-urban as it gets. Experience the dynamic region on the back of an elephant, from the top of a mountain, or from over the rim of your raft as you splash down a whitewater river.

HIKING IN THE WILD

PAI

The ever-stunning Pai is a must-see for lovers of natural beauty. This picturesque town has become a tourist hotspot in recent years, among both Thais and travelers from all over the world, with Pai being featured in magazines and travel publications of all kinds, not to mention playing a pivotal role in a rather popular Thai film. Once you go there, you will understand that it's not all hype. It's a place that you must see to believe - from the fresh, cool water thrashing down one of Pai's many waterfalls, to the wonderfully mountainous landscape, and the friendly, smiling locals.

HOW TO GET THERE

From Chiang Mai, buses and mini-vans leave frequently throughout the day for Pai, which is a 3-hour drive away. Alternatively, fly there with Kan Airlines from Chiang Mai.

www.kanairlines.com



While some may regret that the tourist frenzy may cause Pai to lose its “authenticity”, others have looked upon its popularity as an opportunity to create an environmentally-friendly destination. The city council is concentrating on sustainability measures like recycling programs, reducing the use of plastic bags, encouraging the use of bicycles over motorbikes, and the like.

Hiking is one activity that is particularly fashionable in Pai, and there’s little wonder why. One of the more favoured hikes, Mae Yen Waterfall, is conveniently-located about 7 km from Pai’s town centre. It involves walking through a pleasant wooded valley and crossing the Mae Yen stream. Another popular hike is along the scenic canyon. Try to be there at sunset, when the canyon is lit up by the golden setting sun.

If you’d rather not attempt hiking in Pai on your own, there are numerous companies that organise group trekking, led by a guide. Alternatively, if you want to do a more personalised trip, it’s also possible to hire a guide to accompany you and your group for a few days. ■



MAE FAH LUANG

CHIANG RAI

HOW TO GET THERE

Get to Chiang Rai by bus from Bangkok (11-12 hours) or Chiang Mai (3 hours). Alternatively, fly in to the international airport 10 km away from the city centre.

Chiang Rai has become renowned Thailand-wide for its naturopathy - a skill that has been passed down for generations. Indeed, at Mae Fah Luang University, the Alternative Medicine Center promotes the education of naturopaths, incorporating Chinese medicine into the course. The focus here is on prevention and, if it's too late for such, finding a natural cure that doesn't incorporate western medication. This is Thai-style healing, and it's surprisingly effective. Mae Fah Luang is also the name of a Royal Project based in Chiang Rai that converted an old heroin-import and weapons trafficking route into a beautiful temperate garden, grown and nurtured by local villagers. ■



DHAMMA ABBA CENTRE PHITSANULOK

The beautiful sound of silence

Meditation retreats at the Dhamma Abba Vipassana Centre, are of the very serious kind. Following Indian master S.N. Goenka's teachings, newly-arrived groups of followers enlist for the yearly 20-day meditation retreat, reserved for veterans and returning guests. The average length of Vipassana retreats is ten days, and they can be performed in Dhamma Abba Centres worldwide. There are seven of them in Thailand alone, in Prachinburi, Khon Kaen, Kanchanaburi, Lampun, Nakorn Si Thammarat and Bangkok, in addition to this one in Phitsanuloke forests, alongside Highway 12, crossing the country West to East.



HOW TO GET THERE

The Dhamma Abba Meditation Centre is located off West-East Highway 12, linking Phitsanuloke and Khon Kaen Cities. Once you reach Kaeng Sopha district, pay attention to the road on your left-hand side, after leaving the town centre. From there, the meditation centre is 3 km away.

<http://courses.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schabba>

The number of foreigners admitted to these meditation courses is limited. Up to 15 of them per season are accepted, to preserve an appropriate level of diversity. Men meditate alongside women, but live and sleep in separate quarters. There are 70 female rooms and only 30 male rooms. Experienced students are asked to follow the eight precepts of S.N. Goenka, while newcomers are requested to follow only five. Thai Buddhist monks do sometimes come, though they cannot join the meditation group if the teacher is a female.

The meditation experience is something that requires preparation. Dhamma Abba volunteers, who greeted us warmly, recommend that foreign visitors practice in their respective countries first, before heading to Thailand. Also important are the efforts shown by the Centre to promote a greener environment and greener attitudes: solar energy is used to provide electricity, and a waste recycling project is being undertaken.■

In the forests of Phitsanuloke, the Meditation Centre is the perfect retreat from the noises and harassment of city life.

BAN NA TON CHAN

SUKHOTHAI

The lower North's community gem

There she is, smiling, attending to our needs and questions behind the counter of Ban Na Ton Chan's community shop: Khun Sa Ngiam is one of Thailand's most ardent promoters of community tourism, using the experience of her lower North village, 80 km north of Sukhothai, as an example of good deeds and job creation in a sustainable manner.

It is around noon in this farming locality, where 12 families are participating in a nationally-recognized and successful homestay program. The OTOP logo, to signal handmade crafts and woven fabrics, adorns most of their houses. Ban Na Ton Chan's community tourism has been in place for nearly a decade and its seniority is nowadays widely-acclaimed. As soon as our meeting ended, a car comes to pick up Khun Sa Ngiam and two of her colleagues to drive them to Khon Kaen, the northeastern region's capital city to sell their products and give lectures at a provincial fair. Days before our arrival, all women villagers were told to deliver their latest productions of scarves, shirts and sarongs (the traditional women's wrap skirt). In Ban Na Ton Chan, 183 women have a kiln in their homes, where they work part-time, while their husbands and sons

HOW TO GET THERE

Ban Na Ton Chan village is located in Bantiuk sub-district, Sri Sat Chanalai district, Sukhothai province. They will also arrange transportation at an affordable cost.



are at work, mostly farming. Preserving Thai *Vitichivit* - the word for the traditional way of life - is one of the Khun Sa Ngiam's favourite ways of describing her wish and main goal, after receiving several regional awards, including one from PATA, the Pacific Asia Travel Association.

Ban Na Ton Chan's success as a community tourism destination relies largely on its proximity to cultural popular destinations like Sri Satchanalai and Sukhothai Historical Park. In the heart of this authentic part of Thailand, where some high-productivity farmers harvest rice four times a year despite the risks for the ecosystem, the village has been receiving experts from Thailand and abroad. Among regular visitors and buyers are the local hotels operators, like Khun Tan Hermann, an ex-Air France employee whose superb Lotus Village Resort adjacent to the Sukhothai night market includes a gallery of antiques and local crafts. Bangkok's Kasetsart University professors are also used to visiting with students, in the hope of giving the technology-addicted young generation a glimpse of what rural Thailand has to offer and what they can do to avoid the perils of rural exodus and the cultural extinction of villages.

Ban Na Ton Chan is not a "different" Thailand. On the contrary, it tries to preserve the best of the Kingdom's traditional features. And it is this preservation that makes all the difference for visitors to the rural community.■

Seen on this top picture in Ban Na Ton Chan's shop, Khun Sa Ngiam now leads one of Thailand's most successful communities and cooperatives.



Smart Chiang Mai

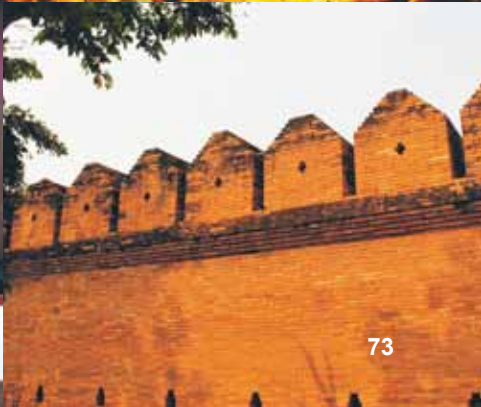
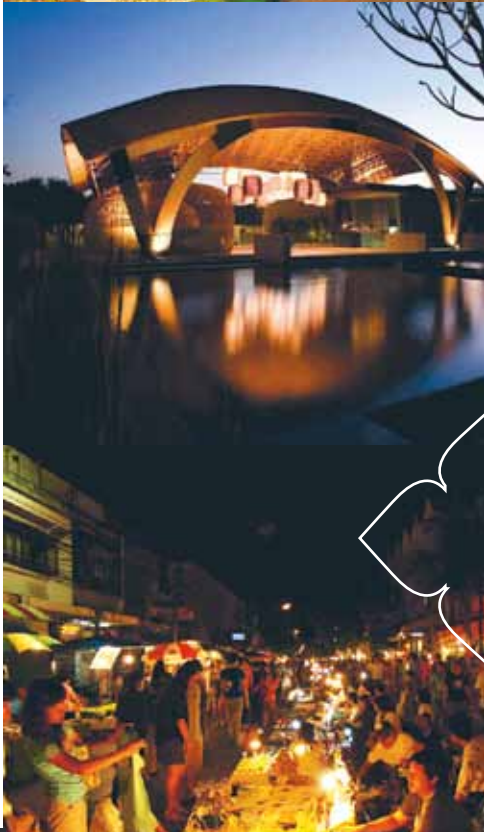
Thailand's northern metropolis is no longer a common provincial town. Taking advantage of its cool climate, its Lanna heritage, its renowned university and the recent opening taking place in neighbouring Myanmar and Laos, Chiang Mai may become Thailand's cultural capital and north Indochina's creative hub in the years to come. Proof of this vitality: its faculty of architecture has been teaming up with the government of the Netherlands in an ambitious "Urban Green" program, whose goal is to preserve the city's environment and to protect its historical houses.

Don't miss an icon of old Chiang Mai:
www.137pillarshouse.com



Those who have a bit of time to kill in Chiang Mai ought to visit the old Hueantonchoke house, which now hosts its Urban Development Foundation (www.udif.or.th). Built at the beginning of the last century for the director of the city's education planning, this half-traditional, half-colonial wooden villa harbors an interesting series of traditional Thai house scale models, still used as reference by the architects in charge of the city's preservation whenever renovation work takes place.

But stopping at this slowly-decaying villa (public funds are obviously not available in a big amount) is only the first step on your way to explore Chiang Mai's urban heritage. The city, not yet touched by the frenetic wave of construction that has submerged Bangkok, still offers visitors a good variety of wooden houses, some of them transformed into restaurants, cafés, or trendy boutique hotels. A programme is underway to preserve these historical buildings and several organisations have made clear they want them to remain, despite the rising land prices and the temptation to erect highrise buildings, still banned, for the time being, within Chiang Mai's walls. ■





Smart Spas and Hotels

There is no shortage of eco-conscious tourists and tourism operators in the North of Thailand, where the idea of unspoilt nature is both a dream and a reality. Here are our top picks for smart hotels and spas in Northern Thailand.



Tamarind Village

Another secret sanctuary in the heart of historic Chiang Mai, surrounded by ancient temples and quaint shopping streets. It takes its name from the magnificent 200-year-old tamarind tree that shelters the hotel and its garden courtyards in a shady embrace.

www.tamarindvillage.com



Phu Chaisai Mountain Resort and Spa

This environmentally-friendly and self-sufficient resort focuses on every aspect of green lifestyle. While the hotel has been constructed using all local and highly sustainable materials, the surrounding land consists of a tea plantation, and gardens featuring herbs and fruits for use by the restaurant. Local villagers and hilltribe

members populate the resort's staff, who add that extra element of Northern charm to the resort's allure. www.phu-chaisai.com



Lotus Village

One of our favorite places in this lower part of Thailand's Northern region. Its teakwood bungalows are nestled among plenty of greenery, and you'll be sung to sleep by Thai frogs in the adjacent ponds. The owner, a former French journalist, and his beloved Thai wife, formerly with Air France, have proven themselves masters of deco and Thainess. We congratulate them, and highly-recommend this resort.

www.lotus-village.com



Langiya Lodge This hillside hideaway in Chiang Rai represents an excellent example of community tourism. The resort has employed local Hmong and Lahu villagers, who not only built the hotel and produced the handicraft fabrics that adorn its living areas, but also provide much of the hotel's services. Langiya makes use of all natural materials on its property, especially bamboo.

www.i-escape.com/lanjia-lodge/overview



Rachamankha Hotel

A place comprising 25 comfortable rooms, this is an ideal retreat where visitors may enjoy the calm of old Chiang Mai. The atmosphere is very relaxing and extremely tranquil, with Thai Yai and Lanna-style decorations. Service is unbeatable.

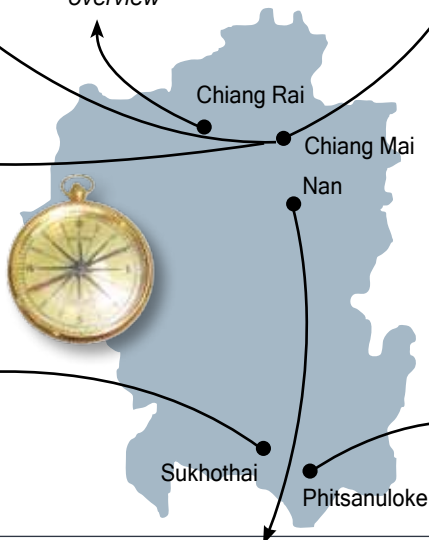
www.rachamankha.com



Wanathara Health Resort

Nestled along a crystal clear stream, low in a beautiful valley of Phitsanuloke, this hotel features a flower garden, a huge green yard, a peacock preservation area, and a health park. But the true reason to come here is for their holistic treatments. They offer a body scrub with a secret recipe using fresh fruits and herbal ingredients. Thai massage, in all its forms, is also available.

www.wanathara.com



Pukha Nanfa

Come experience the peaceful and green Nan, a rural province tucked away in the far northern corner of Thailand. This legendary hotel opened its doors some 80 years ago. With 14 rooms, and three stories, this all-wood hotel has been fully-renovated and is located right in the heart of the town of Nan. Its character is classical Lanna, yet now with all the modern amenities to make your stay a restful and gratifying one. www.pukhananfahotel.co.th

SOUTH

Different



With beach lovers the world over flocking to the south of Thailand for its infamous sun, sand, and surf, sustainable tourism is increasingly coming into focus. Marine conservation activities have become a big priority, with local fishermen working alongside NGOs to achieve this end. Plans are being put in motion to reinforce and protect tropical rainforests and coastal areas, with the help of municipalities, villagers, and tourist volunteers. ■







GREEN ISLAND SAMUI

Koh Samui, in recent years, has seen a huge ecological renaissance blossom, curiously, alongside rampant and growing tourism.

In an effort to combat the environmental havoc that such an influx of tourists can wreak upon such a delicate ecosystem as an island supported mainly by coconut trees, TAT, in collaboration with Samui's governing bodies, launched the "Green Island Project". This project plans to plant one million new coconut trees - 200,000 of which have already been planted; rubber trees are also being planted in order to help retain rainwater. Another program has seen locals trained and enshrined to survey, monitor, and report on the environment. And judging by the clearer waters and air, and abundance of greenery thriving on the island, Samui's environmental approaches seem to be working. ■

HOW TO GET THERE

From Bangkok, fly directly to Koh Samui with Bangkok Airways. Cheaper train and bus to Surat Thani are also available, though the journey is far longer.

www.bangkokair.com

SUAN MOKKH SURAT THANI

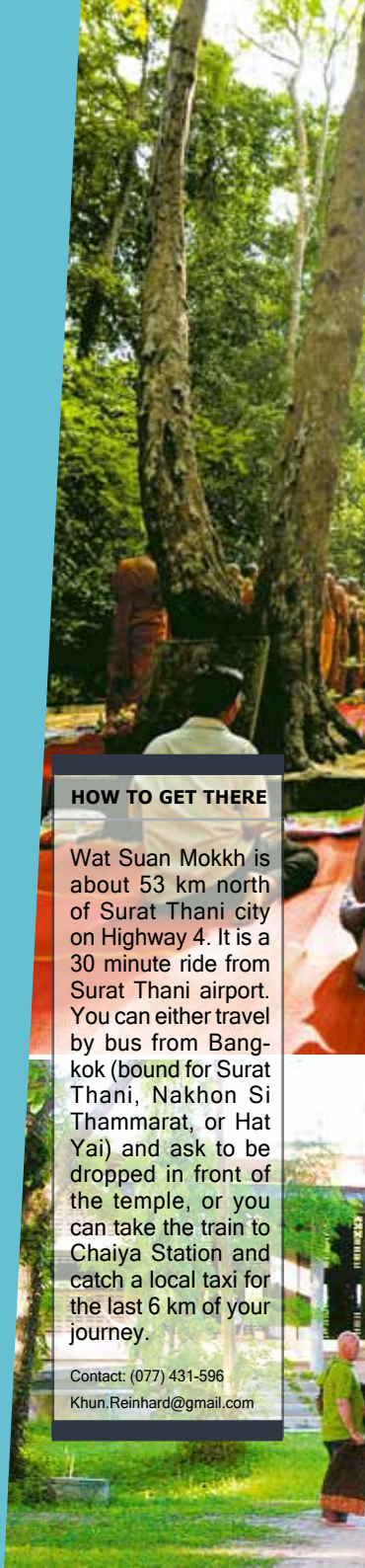
Founded in 1932 by the late, revered monk, Ajarn Buddhadasa Bikkhu, this Buddhist temple is a place of serene tranquility. It is unlike others in Thailand, since Ajarn Buddhadasa was widely-known for teaching a Buddhism free of superstition, and seen as a rediscovery of the original essence of Buddhism, thus appealing even to secularists and skeptics. The temple itself was designed to reflect the detachment from self and mindfulness as a way of peaceful living that the monk taught throughout his life. For those keen on deepening their spirituality, 10-day silence retreats are available at the International Dhamma Hermitage (www.suanmokkh-idh.org) 1.5 km from the temple, starting on the first day of each month (registration takes place in person, the day before). ■

HOW TO GET THERE

Wat Suan Mokkh is about 53 km north of Surat Thani city on Highway 4. It is a 30 minute ride from Surat Thani airport. You can either travel by bus from Bangkok (bound for Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, or Hat Yai) and ask to be dropped in front of the temple, or you can take the train to Chaiya Station and catch a local taxi for the last 6 km of your journey.

Contact: (077) 431-596

Khun.Reinhard@gmail.com





จงรู้จัก ตัวเอง" คำใหม่
 ว่าค้นพบ แก้วได้ ในตัวทำ
 หานนอกตัว ทำไม่ ให้ป่วย
 ดอกบัวบาน อยู่ในเรา อย่าเข
 ในดอกบัว มีมณี ที่เือกอุ
 เพื่อมนุษย์ ค้นหา มากได้
 "การตรัสรู้ หรือรู้ สิ่งใด
 ล้วนมาจาก ความรู้ ตัวสัวอง



SWIMMING WITH DUGONGS

KOH LIBONG, TRANG

Known as sea cows, and often mistaken for mermaids, the dugongs are an infamous sight on Koh Libong. The gentle marine mammal feeds on sea grass, of which Koh Libong has in abundance. Unfortunately, the dugongs are becoming fewer and fewer in number. Their flesh is considered a delicacy by local fishermen, and local villagers believe their teeth bring good luck, while a 'tear' will bring true love. Their bones and blood can fetch as much as 10,000 Baht (about \$300 USD) for use in traditional medicine

The last headcount of the dugongs in Thailand saw only 129 left, and Koh Libong is the only place in Thailand where they can be found. Resorts offer dugong spotting boat trips, though with so few dugongs, the sea creatures are dif-



HOW TO GET THERE

Take a van to Hat Yao Pier from Tha Klang Road in Trang Town, leaving from 7 am to 5 pm. Inform the ticket seller of your destination. The boats at the pier run until about 4 pm.



difficult to find. Scientists say that it's Koh Libong's ecological wealth that attracts the dugongs.

In an effort to save the dugongs, aid organisations have sent conservationists to live with the fishermen and explain the benefits of sustainable fishing. Slowly, the destructive fishing practices the local fishermen undertook to compete with the commercial fishing trawlers that appeared two decades before, are beginning to be reversed. Most local fishermen release accidentally-captured dugong back into the ocean, while push-nets are banned, and commercial fishing trawlers must stay 3 km off shore.

Home to a vibrant Muslim community, Koh Libong is a popular ecotourism destination, with homestays and eco-tourism activities frequently organized by local resorts. The local community is, however, supported not by tourism, but by fishing, and the revenue generated by their rubber trees, which are plenty in number. ■





HOT SPRINGS

RANONG

HOW TO GET THERE

From Ranong town, take a taxi or motor-bike 2 km east to Rakasawarin Park.

Contact: www.tourismthailand.org or dial 1672

In the heart of Ranong, precariously placed amidst emerald green mountains, are three separate pools of healthful minerals contained in springwater, called the Rakasawarin Hot Springs. Here, you can find a temple dedicated to the spirit of the hot spring, offering hot and cold mineral showers in return for a small donation. At the edge of the forest lies another healthful wonder - a refreshingly cool mineral pool amidst vibrant flowers and lush greenery, shaded by the forest canopy. Even more pristine pools hidden in the nearby rainforests await discovery by curious bathers. It's a truly magical healing experience.

Do like the Thais do and bring your friends and family to enjoy the natural beauty and healing with you. With hiking and biking trails, and spas offering all kinds of curative treatments, nature lovers will find no shortage of activities to enjoy. ■





Smart Spas and Hotels

One of the most popular resort destinations in all of Thailand, if not Southeast Asia, the South of Thailand is a victim of its own success: rampant tourism without regulation is unsustainable. Luckily, many hotels have stepped up to the plate, and taken the initiative to start their own environmental programs. Here are the ones who are doing it best.



Anyanvee Tubkaek Beach Resort

This four-star hotel is owned and managed completely by women. The ample beach property consists of 15,000 sq m, but houses only nine rooms. Their eco-friendly policies include the use of homemade natural cleaning products, recycling waste water and leftover food for natural compost. They strive to purchase local food and products for the hotel. This design hotel pulls its inspiration from Morocco, India, and of course, Thai tradition.

www.anyaveetubkaekbeachresort.com



The Sarojin Khao Lak

The Sarojin was one of the first resorts to respond to the 2004 Tsunami. They set up a community fund that continues to support many aid projects in the region and around Thailand. They were also the recipients of a Thailand Green Excellence award in 2012, among many other prestigious honours they've received.



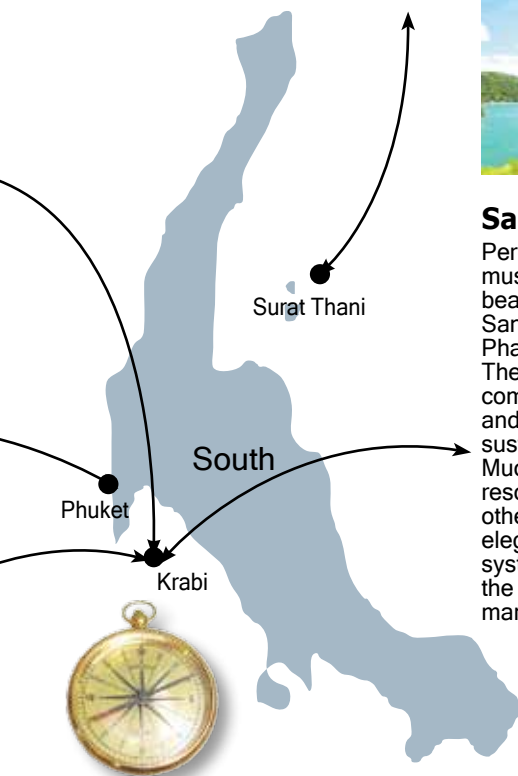
Six Senses The team at this stunning resort on Koh Yao Noi, in Krabi province, place sustainability high on their agenda. Connected to a mangrove trail that the hotel goes to great lengths to protect, Six Senses encourages its guests to explore the nearby nature trails. The hotel strives to reduce its footprint in terms of air pollution, energy use, as well as water, waste, and chemical management. Electric buggies transport guests to and fro, while passive cooling of the bungalows is preferred to energy-heavy air conditioning.

www.sixsenses.com/sixsensesyaonoi





Jamahkiri Resort & Spa Koh Tao On the pristine diving island of Koh Tao, Jamahkiri aims to reduce its impact on the local environment, already stressed by heavy tourism. The team organises regular road and beach clean-ups, and has even placed their own garbage bins for public use. They are also big on recycling, and use “Bio-Tech” septic tanks. Solar panels heat water in each pavilion, as well as in the spa and kitchen. And of course, they offer private PADI courses. www.jamahkiri.com



Santhiya Resort & Spa

Perched on a cliff overlooking what must be one of the most stunning beach views in all of Thailand, Santhiya Resort & Spa on Koh Pha-ngan is a very special place. The resort has managed to combine an atmosphere of luxury and exclusivity with ecologically-sustainable construction and systems. Much of the wood used to construct the resort was recycled from old boats and other such materials, giving it a raw-yet-elegant feel. Furthermore, a water-treatment system recycles waste water for re-use on the surrounding lush gardens, and the management has even set up an innovative “Garbage Bank”, which operates by rewarding employees who recycle and re-use their garbage.



NORTHEAST

Different



An agricultural region that has deep traditional roots, Isaarn is a land where visitors will discover a rural Thailand not often featured in the glossy travel magazines. But the lack of a focus on tourism should not exclude Isaarn from the travel maps of those in looking to rediscover the country and indeed, themselves. Do just that by spending a few days at a meditation retreat, or taking a cruise down the Mekong. ■







KHAO YAI ART SPACE NAKHON RATCHASIMA

Here is the perfect Bangkok getaway: conceived and run by Acharn Tavorn Ko-udomvit, a well-known Thai curator and artist, this museum nestled in the hills of Khao Yai National Park offers accommodation in six small pavilions dispersed around a pond. Those passing will, at least, stop for a visit at its permanent exhibition featuring Thai painters and sculptors, while enjoying a pleasant walk in the well-kept garden nearby. Guests in search of a night haven, looking for calm and serenity, can rent themselves one of the Art Spaces, decorated with the finest contemporary Thai paintings.

An experience for your sight and soul, the Khao Yai Art Lodge may be a bit pricey, as cheaper accommodation nearby is plentiful. But you ought not miss it, while taking a day tour in Pakchong district, before entering the neighbouring mountainous district of Wang Nam Khiao, where national park authorities and resort operators are lodged in a legal fight for forest encroachment. ■

HOW TO GET THERE

The museum is on more than 20 raís of land in Tambon Moosee, Pakchong district, Nakhon Ratchasima. It is hidden away on a small hill before the national park, not too far from the Mittaphap Expressway linking Bangkok to Korat.

www.khaoyaiartmuseum.com



SUAN PA HIMAWAN LOEI

The Suan Pa Himawan Retreat Center is an oasis in Loei province, offering Dhammakaya meditation courses in various languages, including Thai and English, at both beginner and intermediate levels. Though often criticised for its grandeur, requiring huge budgets for temples built using modern architecture, the sect's meditation courses are revered across the world, mainly due to the simplicity, originality, and according to many, effectiveness, of the techniques taught.

Those inexperienced with Buddhism often cite the relaxed atmosphere of the temple as a quality that attracted them to the sect. Only registered guests may visit, and thus, without a constant stream of





HOW TO GET THERE

Since only registered guests are allowed on the Suan Pa Himawan premises, participants meet at the Middle Way Bangkok office. To get there, head to Bangkok's Mo Chit BTS Station, and from there, take Phahonyothin Rd approximately 30 km to Khlong Luang Rd, or tell a cab driver to go to "Wat Phra Dhammakaya".

tourists and visitors, along with its remote location, the temple is a place of serenity and quietude where practitioners can concentrate on studying Dhammakaya.

The retreat centre offers a 7-day spiritual rehab course, which attracts all kinds of races, nationalities, and age groups. It includes a full day of meditation, stretching, and lectures on Dhammakaya, and silence is not required by its participants, as it is in many other Buddhist retreats. To reserve a spot, visit www.meditationthai.org.

Well-ventilated compact cottages house those on overnight retreats. Traditional healthy, nutritious Thai food is served buffet-style for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. ■



WALAI RUKHAVEJ

MAHA SARAKHAM

HOW TO GET THERE

Maha Sarakham is 470 km Northeast of Bangkok, connected by bus. To reach Walai Rukhavej, take Highway No. 2040 and drive about 56 km.

Contact: Walai Rukhavej
Botanical Research Institute,
Tel: (+66) 4375 4340.

Step back in time into old Isaarn: Walai Rukhavej, in Maha Sarakham province, is a peaceful retreat with a well-preserved culture reflective of Northeastern Thailand. Traditional Isaarn guesthouses, once patronized by H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, are located amidst a green oasis of flowers and tropical plants. Add to the mix the local museum on Isaarn lifestyle, filled with items like vintage oxcarts and photographs of farming life, and this place is guaranteed to conjure feelings of nostalgia for a simpler time. Those who stay in the local guesthouses need not travel far to find a botanical research institute focused on conserving biological resources and improving the local community's quality of life. Also closeby are a Buddhism museum and a large temple, making Walai Rukhavej the ideal place for green tourists who wish to broaden their spiritual and historical horizons. ■



MEKONG CRUISES

KHONG CHIAM, UBON RATCHATHANI

The mighty mekong river is at the heart of Indochina's economic integration and the Isaan provinces bordering it have recently become prominent regional hubs, with Ubon Ratchathani, Mukdahan and Udon Thani leading the pack.

Khong Chiam, where visitors can enjoy the earliest sunrise in Thailand, is no longer the quiet river village known for the beauty of its colors and the mystery enshrined along the river banks. It is now a thriving, but still authentic tourism destination, from where you can board a cruise bringing you to neighbouring Laos, with the added pleasure of watching Mekong dolphins by the side of your barge. Most cruise ships, like the one depicted in this photo, are traditional boats refitted to accommodate the



HOW TO GET THERE

There are daily flights and trains from Bangkok to Ubon Ratchathani. From here, get on a local bus to Warin Chamrap, and get off at Khong Chiam along the way.

needs of passengers for a full day trip and even more. Some do have bedrooms on-board and offer a week-long cruise, with stops in Thailand and Laos. Those cruises mirror the expanding Mekong's cruise business downstream, between Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam and Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The best part of experiencing a Mekong cruise is that it offers you a timeless adventure, reminiscent of those had by European explorers who spent years, with great suffering, to map the river and to explore possible trade waterways at the end of the 19th-century. Until now, the Mekong river, flowing quietly between Thailand and Laos over a thousand kilometers, remains a formidable barrier between southern Laos and northern Cambodia, with the Khone Papeng waterfall separating the two countries. Embark here not only to experience the beauty of nature, but also to explore the heart of Indochina. ■

Mekong river cruises aboard luxury ships are becoming a frequent sight on this tranquil landscape



Smart Retreats

Though the tourism industry is still taking off in Isaan, there do exist a few smart and eco-friendly guesthouses and retreats. We invite you to explore them and through them, experience the splendid nature of Northeast Thailand.



Supanniga Home

This luxurious boutique hotel, located in Khon Kaen, offers contemporary-style cottages amongst gardens and fruit tree groves. The property is simple, calm and tranquil, with luxurious touches. Their "Experience Isaan Lifestyle Package" caters towards couples who wish to immerse themselves amongst the local customs and natural surroundings.

www.supannigahome.com



Sima Thani Hotel

Located in Korat, known as the gateway to Isaan, the five-star Sima Thani hotel is the recipient of many tourism awards, including the Thailand Tourism Award for Best Tourism Accommodation in the Northeast, and the Green Leaf Hotel Certification for its strong commitment to environmental protection and a smoke-free environment.

www.simathani.com



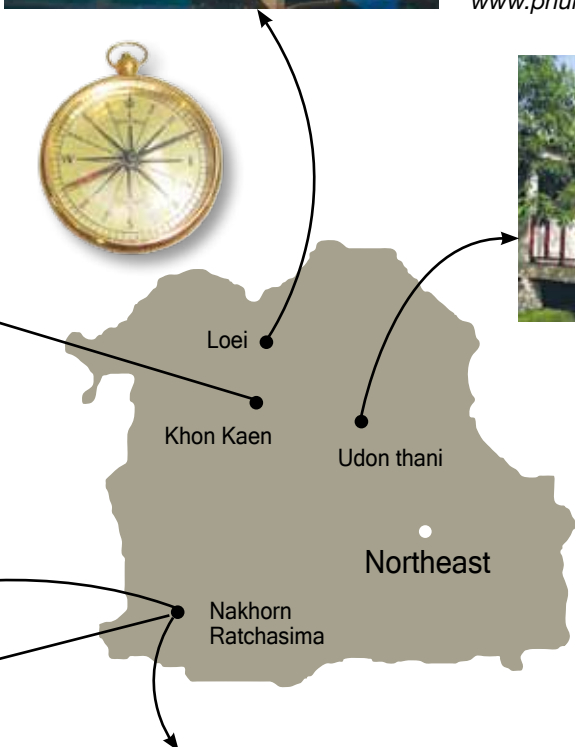
Dusit Princess Hotel The Dusit Princess hotel in Nakhon Ratchasima provides its guests with a smoke-free environment that is both casual and elegant at the same time. In addition, the hotel's conservative use of energy has not gone unrecognised: in 2009, the Dusit Princess was awarded with the ESCO project award for energy conservation.

<http://dusitprincesskorat.dusit.com/>



Phunacome Resort, Dansai Hill This is a newly-opened boutique resort in the northern Isaan region offering the chance to explore the local Isaan culture. It is a charmingly-furnished resort built in a contemporary Style consistent with a luxurious northeastern Thai home, fitted with all modern conveniences. It is located in the midst of sparkling 360-degree natural mountain ranges, whose summits are often covered in a mystical fog.

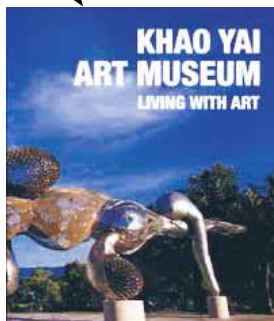
www.phunacomeresort.com



Gecko Villa

Nested amongst rice paddy fields on the Isaan plateau, Gecko Villa welcomes visitors with 20 hectares of tranquil gardens, orchards, woodlands, pastures. The owners grow their own seasonal organic produce, using rice husks as fertiliser. They also re-plant trees, harvest rainwater, promote recycling, and employ local villagers.

www.geckovilla.com



Khao Yai Art Museum.

Khao Yai Art Museum. Born from the fertile mind of Acharn Tavorn Ko-udomvit, a well-known Thai artist, this half-museum, half-lodge offers modern design bungalows overlooking a pond, nestled in Khao Yai Hills. An ideal retreat for writers or a perfect place to organise creative seminars.

www.khaoyaiartmuseum.com



CENTRAL *Different*



Housing Thailand's two ancient capitals, Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, while also boasting, in parts, a somewhat cooler climate than the rest of the country, Central Thailand has long been thought of amongst Thais as a great place to escape from the urban jungle of Bangkok. Yet, the 2011 floods brought to light the crucial challenge of properly maintaining the central plains, canals, and waterway labyrinths.



ABHAIBHUBEJHR HOSPITAL PRACHINBURI

This isn't your typical hospital. With a strong focus on traditional medicine, the hospital, which is also known by its longer name, Chaophraya Abhaibhubejhr Hospital, is both a museum and a place of healing. Built by a courtier during the reign of Rama V and VI by the same name as the hospital, to receive royal visits, the building was later donated for public use. Nowadays, it's known as the Museum of Traditional Thai Medicine, and displays antique equipment and ingredients once used in traditional Thai medicine.

Next to the museum is a clinic, where it's possible to receive healing treatments from graduates of the College of Thai Traditional Medicine, though it's necessary to receive a medical check-up





HOW TO GET THERE

The hospital is 2.5 km east from Prachinburi city centre and is located on Highway 3069, by the river.

Contact: (+66) 3721 1088
ext 3166.
www.abhaibhubejhr.org

from the resident doctor in advance. Traditional massage, herbal massage and sauna, reflexology, and acupuncture, are among the services offered here. The traditional Thai medicine department of this hospital is renowned Thailand-wide for being one of the best.

Extremely high quality and highly sought-after herbal cosmetic and medicinal products can be purchased from the Abhaibhubejhr shop, so that patients may continue their rejuvenation routines from the comfort of their homes.

English is not widely spoken, written, or understood here, so best to go with a Thai friend or guide who can help translate for both the museum and the clinic parts of the experience. ■



BAN HUAI RAENG TRAT

Not many visitors to picturesque Trat realise that just around the corner lies a surreal village of even more natural beauty, where it's possible to find a homestay and live with a local family in a house by the water. Visitors will find themselves surrounded by orchards full of fragrant mango-steen, rambutan, and durian trees.

Expect to arrive around noon and be greeted with lunch, followed by a ride along the canal, lined by nipa palms at its banks. These nipa palms, along with the tourism generated by the homestays, help support the small local community. Hats, soaps, lotions, and more, are manufactured using bamboo tools, nipa palm products, and mangosteen peel - they make excellent souvenirs for visitors.

HOW TO GET THERE

The community centre is located inside Khlong Khut Temple on Sub-highway 4001 (branching out from 3157), about 10 km northeast from the city centre. There are only a couple of local taxis going that direction daily. The best way is to arrange your own transportation.

Contact: Khun Noi (Secretary of Ban Huai Raeng Homestay Community)
Mobile: (+66) 8 9247 9648

One of the more magical experiences of the homestay comes at nighttime, when an evening cruise takes visitors to a spectacle of fireflies dancing in the night sky. Organise it on a night that coincides with a full moon, and you'll truly feel like you've been transported into a mystical dimension.

This is a place to visit if you want to experience the beauty and peacefulness of a simpler time. English is not spoken, accommodation is modest, and mosquitos are rampant, but with a Thai friend or guide, an accepting attitude, and a good can of Deet, visitors can simply enjoy the natural beauty and community spirit they'll find themselves surrounded by. ■

Here, you'll experience the serenity of local life by Thailand's waterways.



PRAYA NAKHON CAVE

PRACHUAP KIRI KAN

HOW TO GET THERE

The cave can be found in Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park, 63 km south of Hua Hin, along the southbound railway line from Bangkok. Buses and vans leave from Sai Tai Terminal. Driving from Bangkok, take Highway No. 4 to Pran Buri, and then, continue 37 km to the headquarters.

Contact: Call 1672
(8 am - 8 pm) or visit
www.tourismthailand.org

What could be more enticing than a mystical cave full of thriving plant life, including impressively massive trees that stand as high as 65 m, encapsulated by limestone walls covered in stalactites and stalagmites, and full of cool, temperate air, frequented by Thailand's royalty? You'd think everyone would want to visit Phraya Nakhorn cave, but as doing so requires braving a treacherous hike on a rocky trail, up the mountainside of Khao Sam Roi Yot's forest, the cave has been protected from over-tourism.

Its claim to fame is the visitation of Thailand's revered Kings, including the beloved King Chulalongkorn, for whom a royal pavilion was built - and still stands - inside the cave's walls, and, more recently, H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

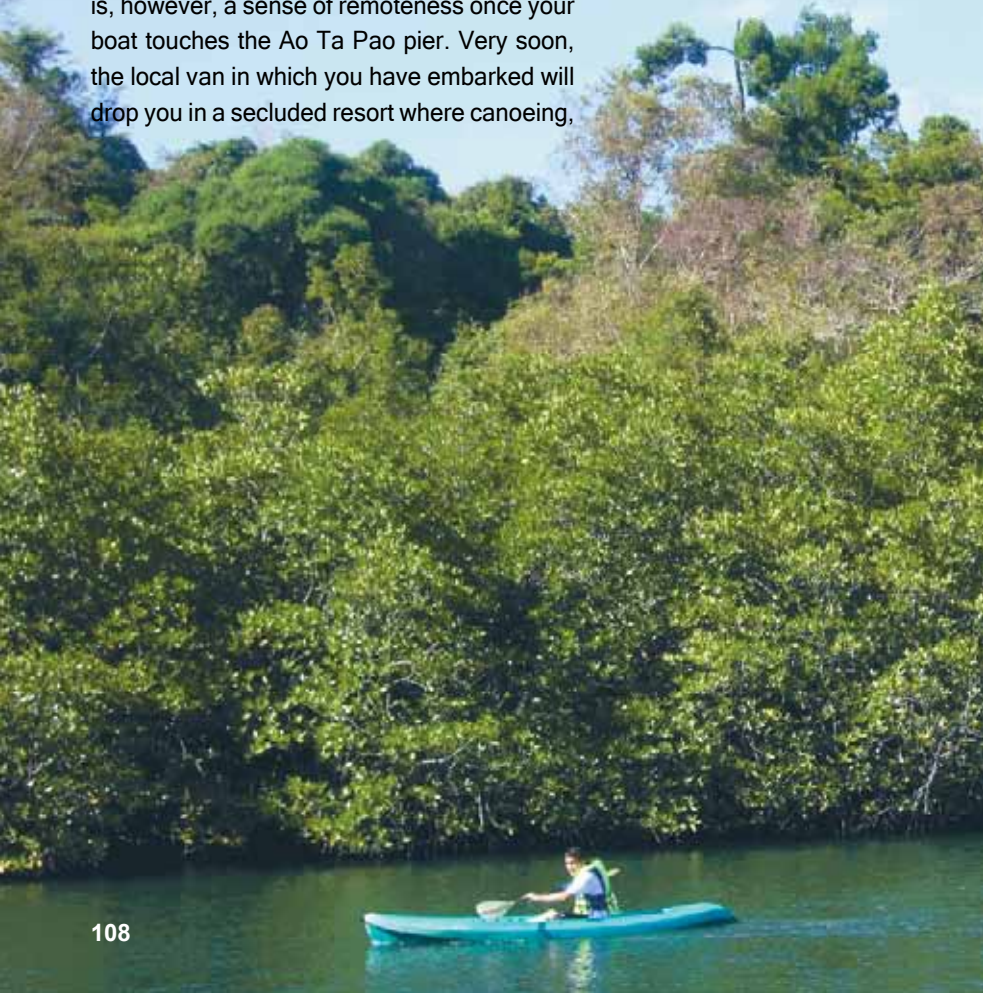
Though the opening at the top, the result of a collapsed sinkhole, means that this cave is not, technically-speaking, really a cave, it allows in striking streams of sunlight that add tremendously to the cave's esoteric atmosphere. ■



SEA KAYAKING

KOH KOOD, TRAT

Koh Kut, or Koh Kood, is the closed Robinson Crusoe-like island you may find along Thailand's Eastern coast. Sadly, its beautiful beaches facing either Cambodia or the Gulf of Siam are no longer pristine. Despite its ban on visitors' cars, Koh Kood welcomes more tourists every year, especially due to its proximity to Koh Chang, where numerous resorts have sprung up. There is, however, a sense of remoteness once your boat touches the Ao Ta Pao pier. Very soon, the local van in which you have embarked will drop you in a secluded resort where canoeing,



HOW TO GET THERE

Transfer via express boat from Trat Market - near the big clock - and Laem Sok pier for around 350 Baht, about 2 hours. Beware: The sea can be rough and there may be only one liaison per day in low season.

canopy hikes and diving will become your daily routine.

Smaller islands nearby have also opened up and offer visitors the rare sensation of discovering Thailand's newest destinations. Koh Mak, whose name means "the island of betel nut trees", is labelled as a sustainable tourism administration area, and ought to be visited by those who wish to end up biking among its numerous rubber and coconut plantations, or up to the top of its mountains, along Luang U-Thai road. Koh Mai Si, with its diving site of Lak Uan reef, is another wonder not to be missed. ■



Sea kayaking is a must-do in Koh Kood and in its adjacent islands.



Smart Spas and Hotels

Central Thailand tends to be an area frequented more by Thai tourists than international. Popular vacation destinations are often just a few hours' drive outside of Bangkok, and provide the natural beauty and urban escape they are seeking. Here are some favourite hotels.

Iyara Lake

Built in Northern Thai-style, Uthai Thani's Iyara Lake covers 200 acres of picturesque landscape is a preferred holiday destination of the Thai Royal Family. The resort has its own golf course and driving range, and also offers activities including bike riding and paddle boating. A swimming pool, jacuzzi, and spa are also on site. Team-building activities, including a camping zone for campfire games, as well as an army course for the more adventurous, are also available.

www.iyeralake.com



meditation, detox drinks and supplements, colon cleansing, and a steam bath. Also available are 3.5-day semi-fasts, and an overnight gall bladder cleanse.
www.thespakohchang.com



Buritara Resort, Kanchanaburi

Located on a sloping hill leading to the infamous River Kwai, Buritara Resort offers a selection of guesthouses, from the riverside, to the hilltop, to the garden, and the forest vista. Outdoor pools, spas offering Thai massage, a playground, and a camping area are also available for guests' use. The hotel's slogan, "living in pure nature" is exemplified by the natural beauty of the resorts' surroundings.



The Spa Koh Chang Resort

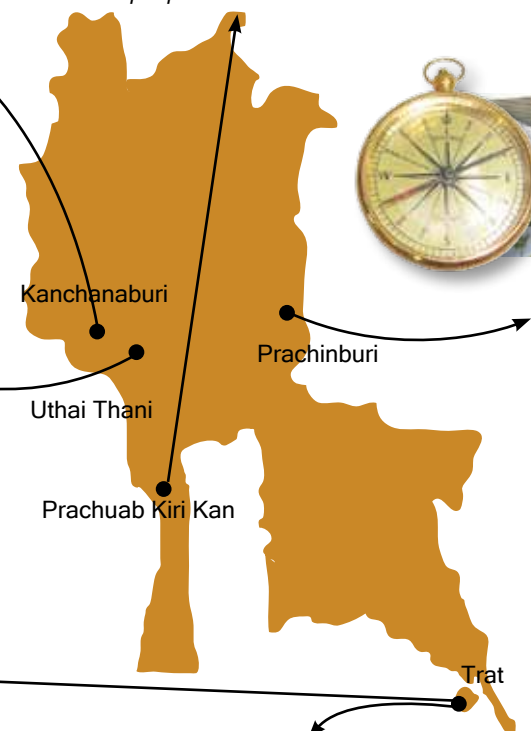
This health and wellness sanctuary, the first of its kind on the island of Koh Chang, features a cleansing program that involves fasting to detoxify the liver. The seven-day program involves



Phutaracsa Hua Hin

This five-star resort is a longstanding family operation that combines the charms of small town leisure with the seclusion of a beach escape. The interior is decorated with touches of Hua Hin tradition, as well as contemporary design. To calm the mind, the hotel offers a variety of classes, from yoga, to meditation, to tai chi. A day spa combines traditional therapies with modern techniques for the most effective results.

<http://putahracsa.com/PHHNEW/frame.html>



Dasada, Prachinburi

This boutique resort on 300 acres of space, aims to promote conservation tourism. Dasada provides an atmosphere for relaxation closer to nature, featuring flowers and an orchid gallery, as well as a mini zoo, where the guests can enjoy quiet stays amidst the beautiful flower-filled landscape.

www.dasada-happiness.com/en/resort/home.html



Bann Makok, Koh Kood:

Open eight months of the year, during the green season, Bann Makok allows the island of Koh Kood to flourish naturally. With eco-tourism in mind, the rooms are designed to blend with the surrounding nature, and all eight rooms are built from reclaimed wood, each with its own unique layout and function. The rooms are

hidden among mangrove trees, right by the canal that flows from the waterfall to the beach. www.bannmakok.com



BANGKOK

Different



While Bangkok has been making a name for itself on the world stage as one of ASEAN's leading metropolises, efforts are constantly being made towards eco-friendly innovations, alongside conservation of the city's green spaces. Modern infrastructure, creative architecture, and improved services, combined with grassroots efforts, are aimed at creating a cleaner and healthier place to visit and live in one of the world's most dynamic cities. ■





BANGKOK ART AND CULTURE CENTRE

Though not yet having fulfilled all of its promises, this Bangkok cultural landmark has all the potential to become an Asian cultural hub in the future. From literature to visual arts, from architecture to humanities, it aims at mirroring the best of Thailand's heritage and the finest Siamese modernity.

Neighbouring the Jim Thompson Art Centre, the BAAC has a bit of difficulty finding its own personality in the middle of Bangkok's busiest shopping district, as crowds of local and foreign visitors are pouring into the adjacent malls. Two major assets of this cultural hub are its multi-functional rooms, and its emphasis on live performance, hosting musicians and specific musical sessions for kids. If all goes well in the near future, BAAC shall stand at the forefront of the Asian cultural map.. ■

HOW TO GET THERE

A direct footbridge links the BTS National Stadium station to BAAC main gallery. Forget about taxis. In addition, you may be able to do some shopping at MBK or Siam Discovery nearby.

www.en.bacc.or.th



Bangkok's Giant Swing

BIKING IN RATANAKOSIN

CONTACT

Spice Roads
45 Sub Soi Pannee
Soi Pridi Banomyong 26
Sukhumvit Soi 71
Klongtan Nua, Wattana
Bangkok 10110

(+66) 2381 7490
info@spiceroads.com

Discovering Bangkok's ancient quarter and the Grand Palace surroundings is something you should do on foot or on two wheels. Luckily, various tour operators now offer bicycle rental, and will take participants in a group of experienced urban bikers, navigating through the small lanes adjacent to Chinatown.

For those who are familiar with the city, Travel Different Thailand can only recommend a regular reading of Khun Pongplet Mekloy's columns in the Bangkok Post. A big fan of bicycling, this writer knows how to share his experiences with readers, and recommends tour operators, so you will not end up with a rusty and uncomfortable bike when you decide to pedal under the tropical heat, and the gasoline fumes of Thailand's most congested avenues.

A bicycle rental program started in 2012 in Bangkok with 100 single-seat bikes. There will ultimately be a total of 50 stations where these bikes can be rented, according to the city's metropolitan administration. As far as private companies go, our vote goes to Spice Roads, a long-time operator of two-wheel tours, which took us, not too long ago, throughout another Bangkok landmark: the Bangkrachao Island, facing Khlong Toey, where you can enjoy the greenery while facing a wall of skyscrapers erected on the other side of the Chao Phraya River. ■





Life's Journey, 200 x 300 cm Oil on canvas
Kiattisak Chanonnart
A piece exhibited at MOCA (www.mocabangkok.com)

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

BANGKOK

HOW TO GET THERE

Disembark from the BTS at Mo Chit station, or from the MRT at Jatujak station. Grab a taxi and ask him to take you to Chaeng Wattana road. MOCA stands on a parallel avenue to Viphavadee Rangsit near Wat Samien Naree.

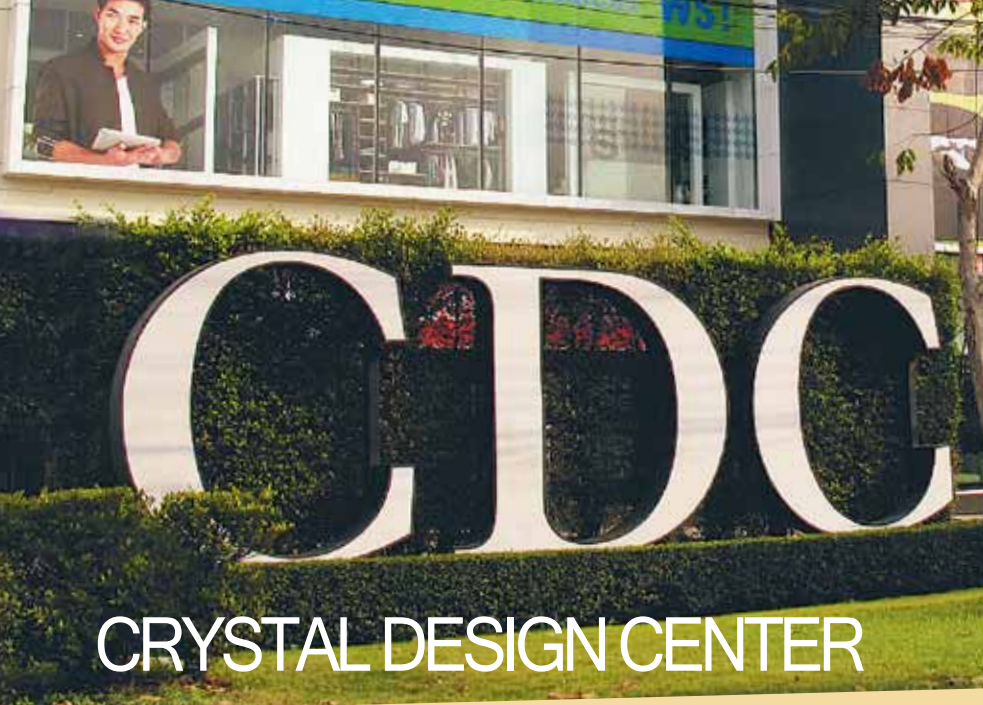
www.mocabangkok.com

It could easily become Southeast Asia's landmark for contemporary arts. Opened in 2012, and still relatively unknown to the Thai public and to the big crowd of international visitors, the Museum of Contemporary Art or MOCA, is the brainchild of Thai Entrepreneur Boonchai Bencharongkul, the Forbes-listed tycoon behind DTAC telecommunications group.

An avid modern art lover, and a strong supporter of Thai artists for decades, Khun Boonchai has made MOCA a place where international art exhibitions could soon land, in a superb five-storey modern architecture building with a cozy "café du musée" on its ground floor. With its "Thai touch", noticeable in its numerous Buddhism-inspired art pieces, it offers a unique combination of tradition and modernity, and a foray into sensuality, as many works of art depict nude or half-nude female models, something still rare in the Kingdom.

A telling coincidence in time of Thailand's rapid change: MOCA stands along Viphavadee-Rangsit road, leading to the old Don Muang airport, facing abandoned pillars of a skytrain project that never materialized. Here, you'll discover a culture-shock epitomised by Khun Boonchai in his own words: "Thai art," he says, "takes you below the superficial surface of Thai culture, revealing true Thainess in all its many complex and fascinating facets," ■





CRYSTAL DESIGN CENTER

Located in the eastern part of Bangkok, a bit far from the city's most trendy shopping avenues, this new complex containing a design center and library, an exhibition quarter and several alleys of shops and showrooms has everything it takes to become a hit in the Asian design circuit. More commercial than downtown TCDC, but also more devoted to housing and lifestyle, the Crystal Design Center is a place to learn, consult and eventually buy the materials you need for your property. Architects and consultants usually stand by to answer your queries, while the library offers a wide array of architectural, graphic design, and contemporary art publications.

CDC is indeed playing the role of modern Thailand's showroom, with premium indoor and outdoor furniture on display. It's important to keep in mind, though, the emphasis put on Asian design and environmentally-friendly





Open to professionals and onlookers, CDC brings new tastes and forms in Bangkok

technology. The Crystal Design Center also benefits from neighbouring Siam Cement Group's Experience laboratory, where the results of research to make the construction industry help reduce global warming are displayed and studied.

Moreover, in an interesting public-private partnership, CDC combines the attractiveness of a design center with trade facilities, with the aim of attracting foreign companies. Japanese and Korean furniture manufacturers are already present in good numbers, but more must be done to support European designers willing to share their experiences with their Asian counterparts. A concept likely to be exported in other ASEAN countries, CDC may soon give birth to other centres of excellence and design in neighbouring ASEAN countries, where urban landscapes are rapidly changing, due to the rise of an affluent middle class. ■

HOW TO GET THERE

CDC is accessible from the Ekkamai-Ramindra Expressway. The best way to go is by taxi. Exit at Kaset-Nawamin Road intersection. Beware of rush hour traffic

www.crystaldesigncenter.com



A River of Culture

Talking or writing about Bangkok without having an eye on the Chao Phraya river is simply an impossible task. Somerset Maugham, the acclaimed early 20th-century British writer, was observing the rice barge you can see today when he was a guest of the Oriental Hotel. Consider also Bangkok's vast system of canals, and its reputation as the "Venice of the East" until roads were built above its waterways. No wonder then, that cultural institutions and places have flourished along the riverbanks.

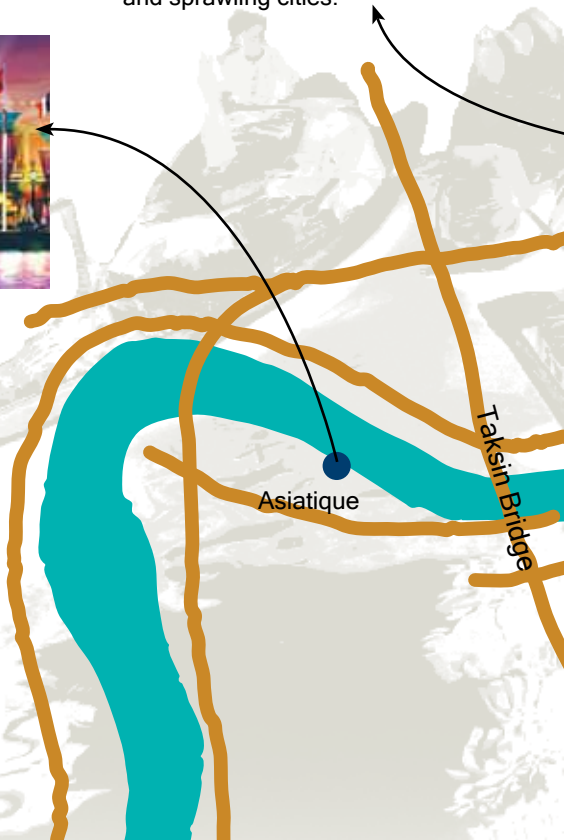


Pakklong Talad or Bangkok's flower market, is a place where Thailand's soul flows unchanged. It is here where Bangkokians come to pick the floral arrangements made of orchids and tropical plants, which will transform their houses or hotels into a colourful delight. A second-hand market takes place nearby, on a daily basis. Street food is also available for those in need of a break. This market provides an entry point for addressing challenges in the rapidly-emerging urban centres and sprawling cities.



Asiatique market and River City

This antique complex is a favourite destination for visitors fond of old objects and vintage furniture. The difference between the two complexes, though, is huge: the newly-opened Asiatique caters to vintage and handicraft lovers, while the long-established River City is the Bangkok refuge for antiquarians and collectors.





Wat Arun, or the “Temple of Dawn”, is one of Bangkok’s best-known temples, and a very popular tourist attraction. Visitors interested in Buddhism and religious rites will be taken care of by local guides, while others can cross the river and catch the sunset over the temple’s glazed ceramic tiles, while sitting at the terrace of the Deck restaurant.

UNESCO, the United Nations’ organisation, devoted to culture and education, has been a longtime fixture on Pra Arthit road, where its Thailand headquarters is based. Though a historical controversy is poisoning today’s relations between the Kingdom and neighbouring Cambodia, over the Khao Pra Viharn Temple, in Sri Sa Ket province, Thailand has always cherished UNESCO’s blessing for its national sanctuaries, as in Sukhothai and Ayutthaya.



National museums are on display around Sanam Luang, Bangkok’s main political square, facing its Grand Palace. Visiting them is a must-do in a country that takes great pride in its history and its successful resistance to European colonialism. Local museography will look poor and ill-equipped compared to museums in Europe and the United States, but new ventures, like the Museum of Siam, are trying to modernise the ways collections are exhibited.



Smart City of Angels

Thais are known as fun-loving people. "We are a nation of copy-cats," comments Thammasat University professor Oraya Sutabutr, with a huge smile. Fun, though, is not the enemy of creativity and art. On the contrary: Bangkok is proving itself a hotbed for an emerging arts scene, inspired by the local traditions, imagery and folklore. Meet a city of blossoming style and smiles.

Jim Thompson Art Center

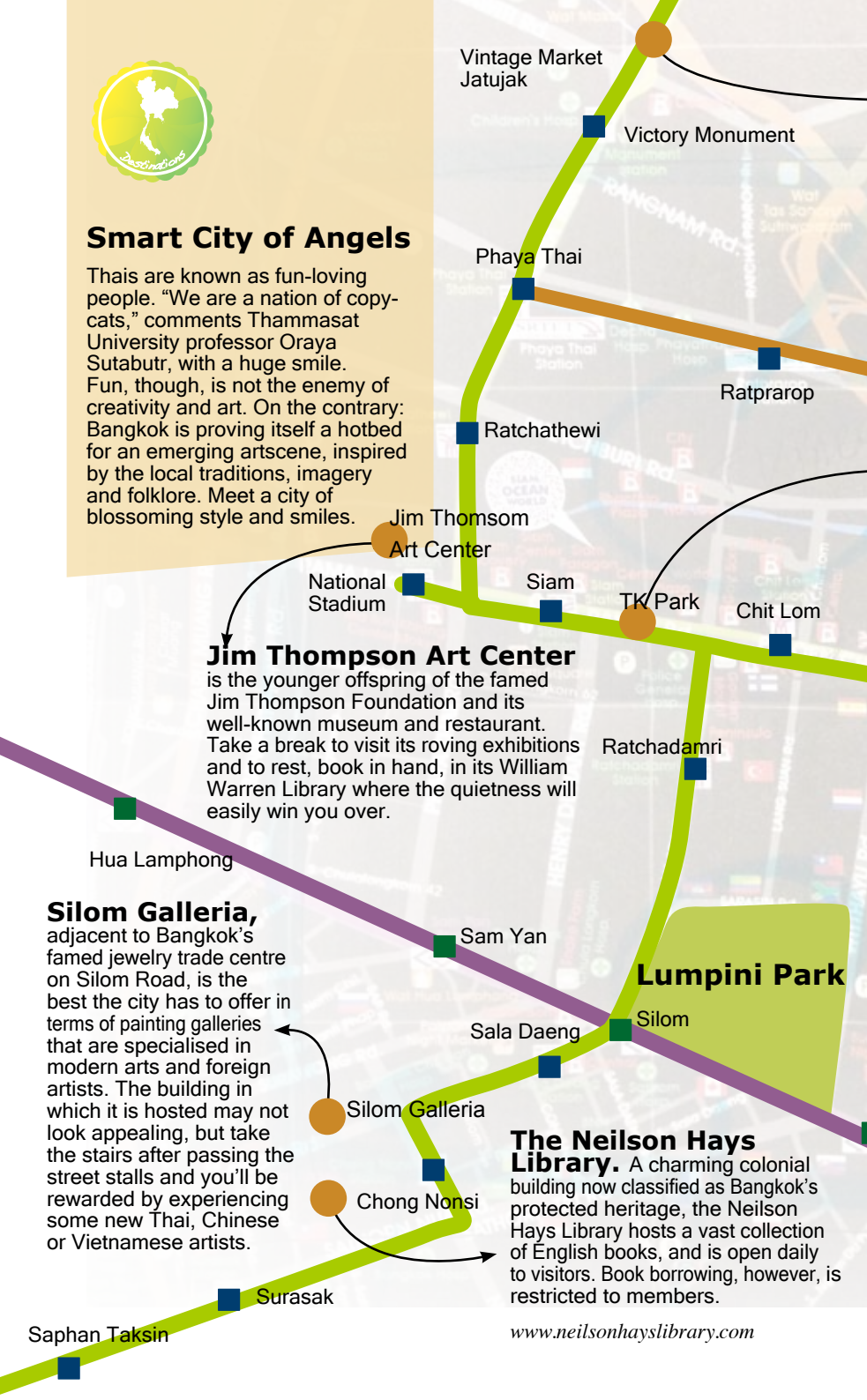
is the younger offspring of the famed Jim Thompson Foundation and its well-known museum and restaurant. Take a break to visit its roving exhibitions and to rest, book in hand, in its William Warren Library where the quietness will easily win you over.

Silom Galleria, adjacent to Bangkok's famed jewelry trade centre on Silom Road, is the best the city has to offer in terms of painting galleries that are specialised in modern arts and foreign artists. The building in which it is hosted may not look appealing, but take the stairs after passing the street stalls and you'll be rewarded by experiencing some new Thai, Chinese or Vietnamese artists.

The Neilson Hays Library.

A charming colonial building now classified as Bangkok's protected heritage, the Neilson Hays Library hosts a vast collection of English books, and is open daily to visitors. Book borrowing, however, is restricted to members.

www.neilsonhayslibrary.com





→ **Vintage Market Jatujak** or *Talad Rod Fai*, in the huge Jatujak market compound, is an agreeable spot to visit on weekends when those ex-railway warehouses come into light, full of shops and galleries. It is living proof of Bangkok's urban transformation.

Thailand Cultural Center

Phraram 9

Airport Rail Link

Makkasan

→ **TK Park** is the TCDC's alter-ego, located in the Central World complex on Ploen Chit Road. The focus here is on new technologies and their societal impact. Its library is a nice opportunity to escape the shopping pressure of the capital's luxury district. It's ideal for students and visitors in need of an intellectual break.

Phetchaburi

TCDC, or the Thailand Creative and Design Center, has led the pack of new metropolitan cultural initiatives. Its location, within the Emporium mall in Bangkok's Sukhumvit district, with easy access from the BTS, plus its exhibitions, has made it a prime destination for the City of Angels' creative crowd.

Siam Society is Thailand's main heritage institution, with a large stock of historical documents and photographs. Its exhibitions and conferences, focused on Siam and its immediate neighbours, are a perfect first step on your personal itinerary to discover this complex Asian culture and its centuries of traditions.

Siam Society

Ploen Chit

Nana Station

Asok

Sukhumvit

Phrom Phong Station

TCDC

Queen Sirikit

Klong Toei

Lumpini

MRT

BTS



Bangkok Cafés

Beyond Thailand's café revolution stands a telling change of habits and tastes. Located in department stores, but also at the feet of office buildings, hidden in quiet streets, or giving new life to deserted wooden houses, Bangkok's cafés are becoming a feature copied by other cities throughout the country. Early morning, terraces will be filled with crowds of young employees, filling their mugs, American-style. Later on, while Thai food remains their preferred choice for lunch, they will sit for a while with a steaming cup of Joe, before returning to their offices.



Bangkok's café culture is evident when you walk along the city's streets, even in areas far off its tourist hot spots. Observing numerous international café brands, including the trendy Dean & DeLuca, is therefore no surprise. But more interesting is the harvesting of Thai-style coffee shops, often full of students, artists, and freelance writers and designers. A complete list of places would be impossible to keep up-to-date, as cafés come and go in this city of life where tenants of commercial premises change rapidly. The best thing to do is to ask your Thai friends to bring you to their favourite places. We have an affinity for those simple wooden houses, converted into café-terraces, before being cast away or demolished. Re-Café, the headquarters of the Big Trees campaign in Langsuan, tops our list. ■





Smart Spas and Hotels

It may seem like a contradiction to spend time at a green hotel in Bangkok, a city famous for its smoggy pollution and clogged arteries, but times are changing. Now that innovation is taking over Bangkok, green hotels are springing up all over the city. Here are some of the best.

Bangkok Tree House

Bangkok Tree House's policy of removing 1 kg of trash from the Chao Phraya river, upon which it sits, has earned it a green reputation in the City of Angels. The hotel warns guests before coming that they do not fumigate against insects, nor do they use any chemicals in their natural pond. Their rooms, called "nests", use minimal electricity, and bicycle rental and unlimited ice cream are included in the room rate!

www.bangkoktreehouse.com

Loylalong

A small, friendly and unique hotel with six guest rooms, this unique place sits on the Chao Phraya river bank around Bangkok's China Town area. A rare chance to experience sleeping in a very Thai old-style wooden home with river water ripples beneath your bedroom floor.

www.loylalong.com



Old Bangkok Inn

With a philosophy to provide first class hospitality and service, while working to reduce their impact on the community and environment, Old Bangkok Inn is a great choice for those with an interest in both green tourism and Bangkok's history. This classically-minded hotel occupies the antique district once home to Siamese royalty. Here, Thai golden teak and heirloom furniture accompanies solar water heating and energy-efficient appliances: a nod to both the past, and the future.

www.oldbangkokinn.com





Ariyasom Villa

This original house was Built by the current owners' grandparents in 1942, at the end of Sukhumvit soi 1. With 24 rooms, Ariyasom Villa feels like a sanctuary, though the skytrain is a few hundred meters away. Opt for a boat ride on Khlong Sen Saeb nearby. Despite its shallow waters and the boat's noise, it will enable you to discover still hidden parts of the City of Angels.

www.ariyasom.com



Boonsiri Place

In the popular tourist district, near the Grand Palace, Wat Pho, and Khao San Rd., this budget-friendly hotel promotes the use of eco-friendly products, as well as corporate social responsibility projects. The hotel regularly donates to organisations, while also supporting a local Thai artist who suffers from Polio by showcasing his paintings. The hotel is constantly promoting its environmental message to its guests, encouraging everyone to get involved.

www.boonsiriplace.com



Different Roadmap to Museums & Boo

Name

Province

Thalang National Museum

Phuket

Museum of Siam

www.en.museumsiam.com

Bangkok

Siam Society

www.siam-society.org

Bangkok

Neilson Hays Library

www.neilsonhayslibrary.com

Bangkok

Librairie du Siam et des colonies

Bangkok

National Library of Thailand

www.nlt.go.th

Bangkok

Baan Chiang National Museum

Udon Thani

**First Royal Factory at Fang
Museum**

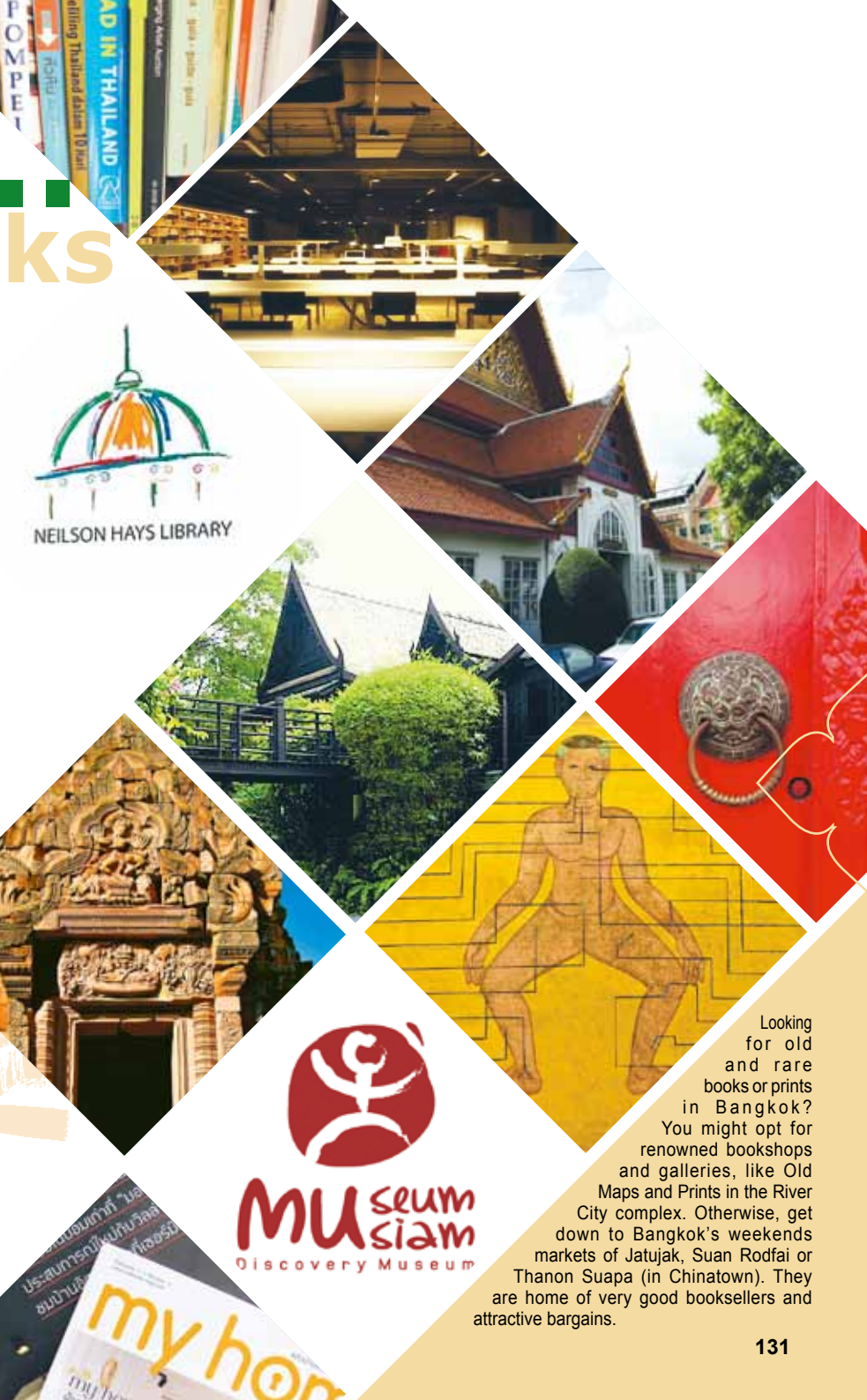
www.firstroyalfactory.org

Chiang Mai

Old Maps and Prints

www.classicmaps.com

Bangkok



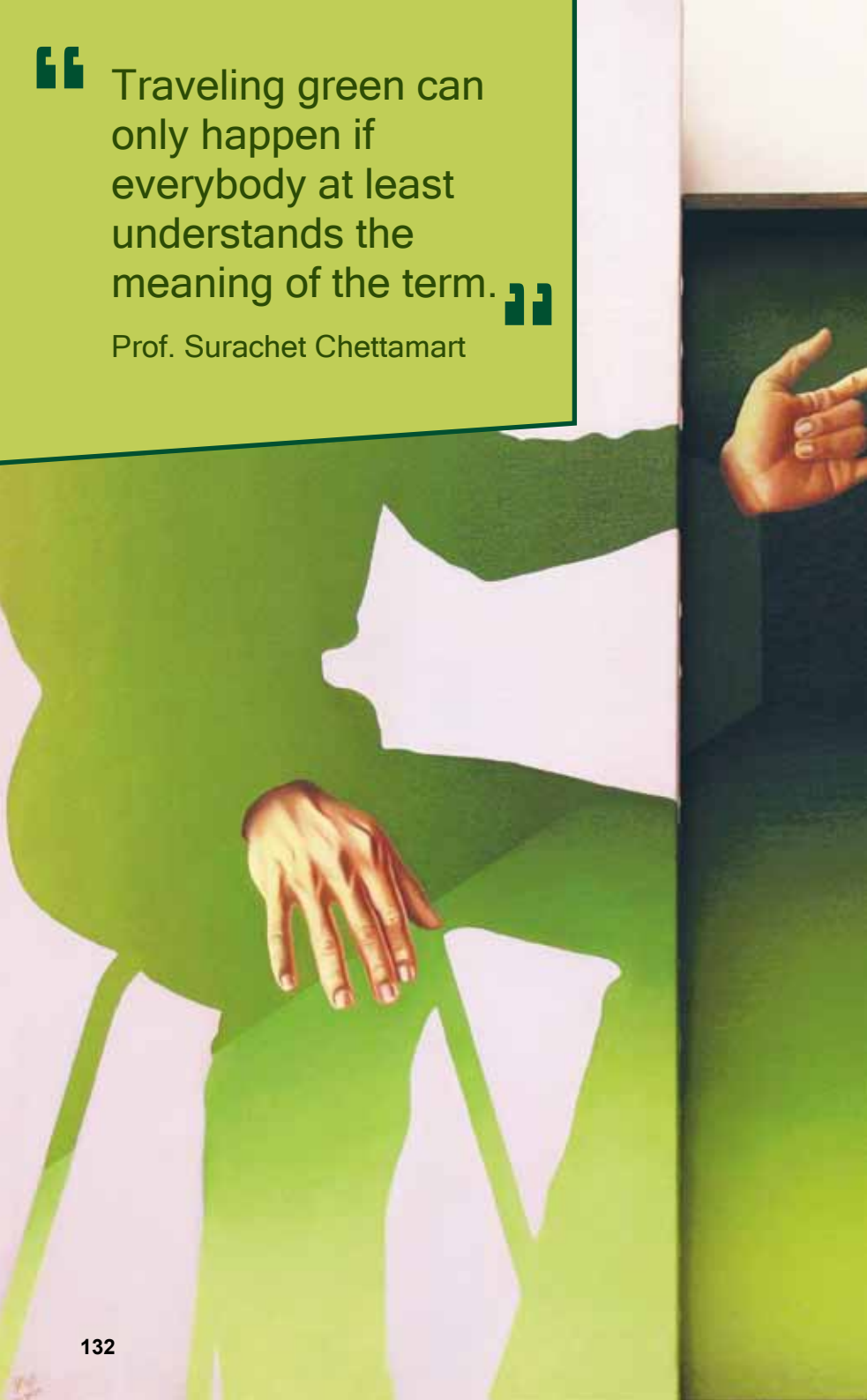
ks



Looking for old and rare books or prints in Bangkok? You might opt for renowned bookshops and galleries, like Old Maps and Prints in the River City complex. Otherwise, get down to Bangkok's weekends markets of Jatujak, Suan Rodfai or Thanon Suapa (in Chinatown). They are home of very good booksellers and attractive bargains.

“Traveling green can only happen if everybody at least understands the meaning of the term.”

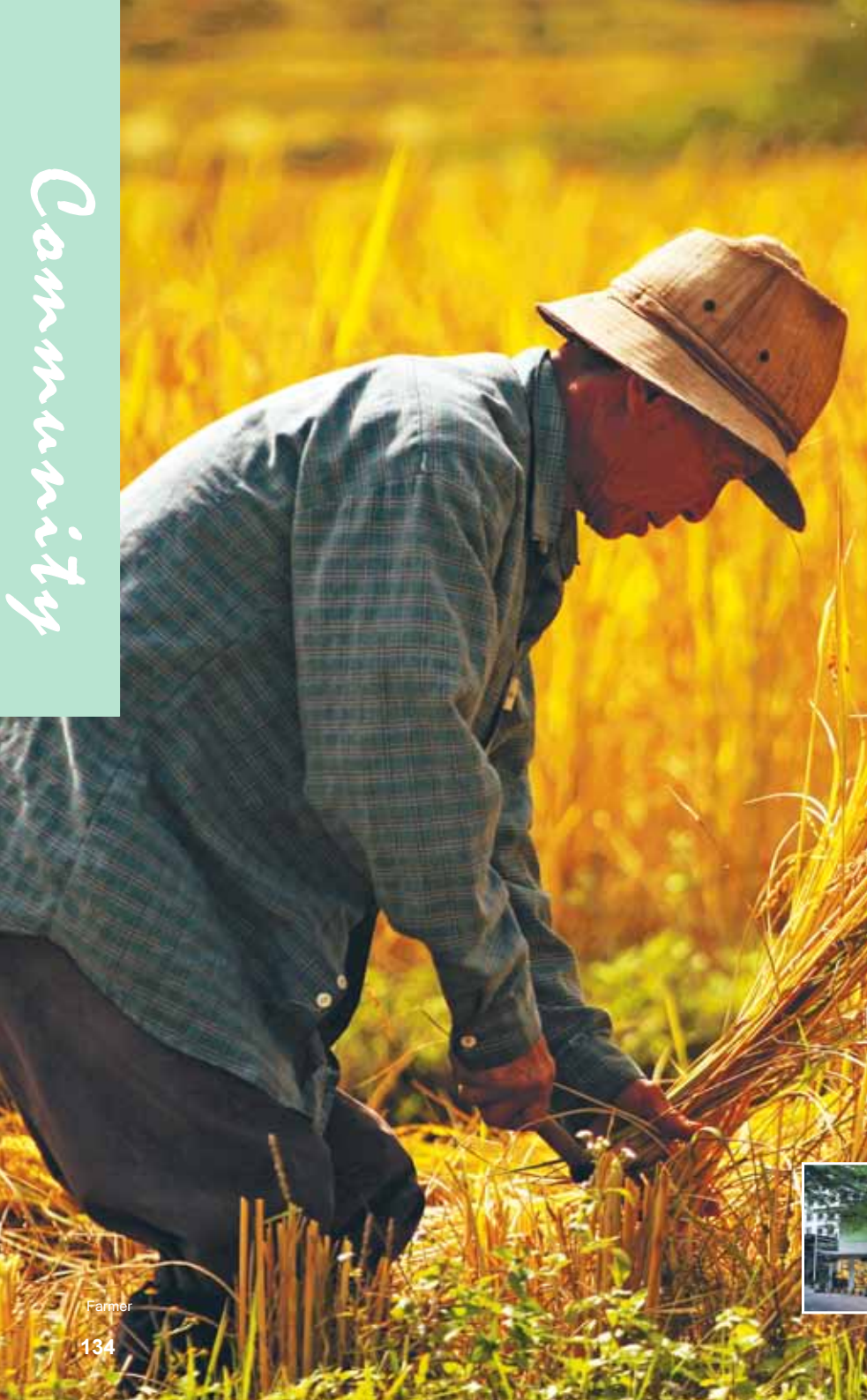
Prof. Surachet Chettamart





Myth of Unconsciousness, Oil on canvas
Kiettisak Chanontnart
A piece exhibited at MOCA (www.mocabangkok.com)

Community



Farmer



Different THAILAND

“It’s not only the economy, stupid!”: for once, the famous formula can be reversed, as Thailand’s



attraction relies, nowadays, not only on its economic boom, but on its capacity to remain a pleasant and peaceful destination for everyone. No one, though, can predict the future and it is extremely important for the country and its authorities to make sure that all communities gain from the present development and prosperity. This social challenge, highlighted by the political tensions of 2010, is now at the heart of the Thai government’s actions and efforts. But protecting the communities, while respecting their diversity, is also essential to pave the way for the future. The development of public transport, the emphasis put on recycling, the tenacity displayed by activists to save Bangkok’s big trees: all these changes are an integral part of a different Thailand’s strategy. ■



“ We are winning
Bangkok’s hearts
and minds on
a person-to-
person basis ”



Re-Cafe in Bangkok's Langsuan district is Big Trees headquarter

ORAYA SUTABUTR

Bangkok Big Trees Campaigner



A greener Bangkok is not out of reach, says this leading environmental activist for the City of Angels.

Want to meet Khun Oraya? Head towards the Langsuan area, stuck between

Ploen Chit, Thailand's leading shopping boulevard, and Lumpini Park, Bangkok's best-known green lung. Sipping a tea under a big tree, the City of Angels' leading environmental activist loves to exchange and chat in the courtyard of Re-Café, a small coffee shop set up in a once-abandoned wooden house. No wonder she feels at home there, as this garden place hangout is being looked upon by the Mater Dei's elite

primary school building; a school she attended, and whose women alumnus, today, forms her strongest base of supporters.

What is your "Big Trees" project about? Isn't your dream of a green Bangkok a kind of mission impossible?

I cannot predict whether or not it's too late to save the green areas of Bangkok. I really hope it isn't, as we are now paving the way for our children and grandchildren to live here in the future. What gives me strength is the support we are getting from all sectors of urban life since we launched this initiative several years ago. Our starting

point was a local tycoon's decision to cut down all the trees on his huge piece of land, on Sukhumvit Soi 35 in Bangkok. The popular outcry then was genuine. We built up a campaign, managed to talk to him and, though he proceeded with his controversial plans, our message went through: no more tree cutting, no new construction or big urban projects without replanting the cut trees. In short: this city's future cannot be made entirely of concrete and skyscrapers.

Still, you have said it yourself: despite your pleas to end tree cutting in the big city, the bulldozers were finally sent in...is this not too often the case in Bangkok and in Thailand?

We were in tears when we saw that our beloved Sukhumvit Soi 35 trees were gone. But this pain gave us the strength to fight on. Since then, we have been approached by business owners and corporate partners to see how construction projects can go on in a "greener" way. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has also made a number of promising moves, earmarking pieces of land to be transformed into a public park, and drawing plans for future industrial "green zones", with huge investments planned to promote the recycling of waste water. Contrary to what outsiders may think, the whole story is not completely depressing. Things and minds are changing, though plenty remains to be achieved.

Bangkok is a magnet, and Thailand's window to the outside world. It is therefore understandable that the national and local government take action to preserve what remains of green in this city. But what about the country's other metropolises? Does "Big Trees" stands a chance to become a nationwide campaign?

I would not go so far as to call ourselves a national movement. We are indeed in touch with activists from other parts of Thailand, in Chiang Mai for example. But I would not call it a Thailand-wide campaign, or a country awakening. What is pretty interesting, however, is the echoes we discovered in social media, with our tactics to make allies and to approach the authorities and the corporate sector. "Big trees" is laying a kind of green path.

In what sense?

We, Thais, are fun-loving people. It may be regrettable, but our trust in laws, prohibitions and regulations, is clearly limited. So rather than advocating for more green construction standards or norms - though they are needed - we are promoting Big Trees in the Buddhist way: we explain to Thai and foreign business leaders how they can make merits for themselves and their companies through protecting the environment. We are winning Bangkok's hearts and minds on a person-to-person basis. Recently, we managed to convince

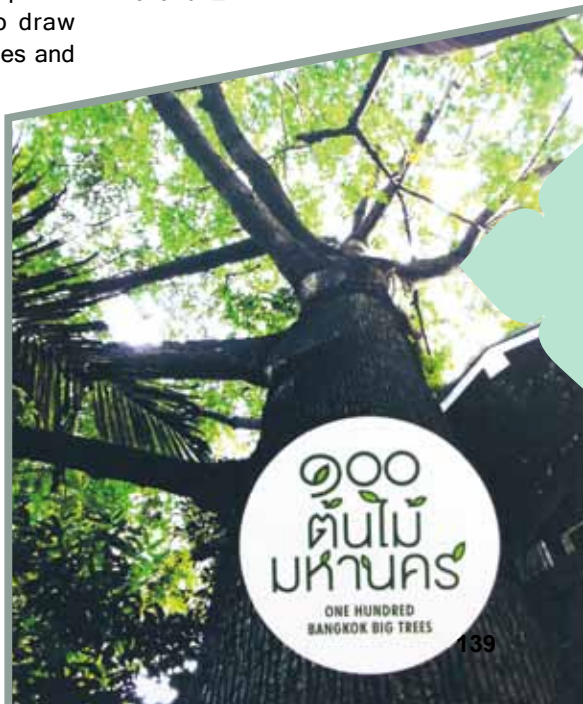
Proof of corporate support for the Bangkok Big Trees campaign: ►
their book has been partly-financed by the Siam Commercial Bank.

an abbot from a respected temple to preserve the greenery while building new religious facilities. We are also in talks with Chulalongkorn University and Chulalongkorn Hospital, so that their modernisation plan remains compatible with keeping the huge green space they own in downtown Bangkok. We organised a very successful Big Trees photo contest, producing a book with the help of the Siam Commercial Bank. We are planting trees... in Thai people's minds.

You sound like a dreamer. That echoes well, but what about the urban management mistakes which have been made and may continue to proliferate? Take the flooding problem: is it not the result of poor urban planning?

Efforts have to be made. The Thai administration, and the Thai corporate sector, cannot continue to draw plans for more industrial zones and more housing compounds without taking into account their ecological impact. The green factor has become a decisive one. But what makes me optimistic is our people's mindset and the active role being played by our emerging middle class. The large use of information technology is making it easy for qualified young Thais to work as freelancers. In Bangkok, plenty of designers and

creative minds are working, mainly from cafés, outside of the traditional 'office boxes'. They are Thailand's most likely source for change. Freelancers, though very much connected to the real economy and to the needs of the private sector, want their urban environment improved. You may tell me, and rightly so, that the flooding crisis was made worse by the numerous construction sites in water retention areas. You may add that a lot of problems remain in terms of real estate regulations and preservation of the general public's interest. That is why we are going to Bangkok's streets to defend our trees. Trees, because they are the product of nature, are easier to promote and defend than laws in Thailand. It is the easiest way for people to understand the need to preserve nature. Trees, especially the ones in urban areas, are an integral part of a different Thailand. ■





Smart Transport

The Thai government has warned the population of an increase in traffic jams in 2013-2014, due to its policy of subsidising small and eco-car purchases. But otherwise, transportation policy is on the move. Even the State Railway of Thailand is now set for big changes with the planned arrival of high-speed trains. A combined investment of over 400 billion Baht is in the pipeline for that, with four high-speed train projects earmarked for completion in 2018. All the major regions of Thailand shall be covered by 2022.

Traffic jams

are, nevertheless, set to continue to haunt Thailand's biggest cities, as the rebate system put in place by the government to help families buy their first cars is proving very popular. In 2012, a total of 1.01 million new car owners were registered, with an incentive for hybrid car buyers, though their high prices remain an obvious obstacle.



Southeast Asian countries

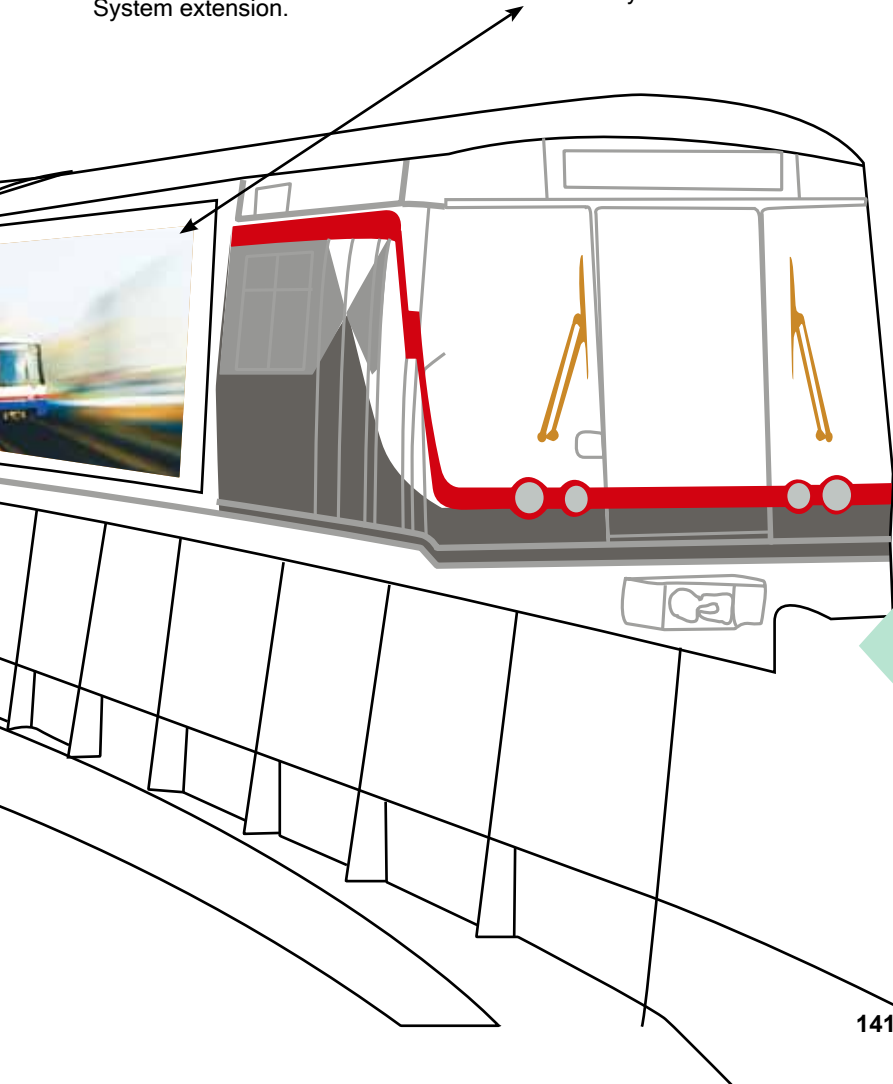
are expected to invest about 32 billion USD in transportation infrastructure during 2010-2014. Thailand, logically, follows this trend with an expanding network of state-of-the-art transportation means. In Bangkok alone, the skytrain and underground metro are being extended, reaching a large part of Thonburi, on the other side of the Chao Phraya river. A more than welcome urban decongestion is expected.

Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT),

in activity in Bangkok since 2010, may expand soon to two other Thai cities: Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen. The only line operating in the capital connects to the BTS at Chong Nonsi station, along the Narathiwat road. Originally, five BRT routes were planned to open by 2013 in Bangkok. Their cancellation therefore has triggered doubts about the Thai government's willingness to pursue this Bus Rapid Transit System extension.

High-speed trains

will be a strong feature of tomorrow in Thailand. Four railway lines will be accommodating high-speed trains, linking Bangkok to Chiang Mai, Nakhon Ratchasima, Hua Hin and Pattaya. Construction on the northern route, due to connect later to the Chinese train network, is scheduled to begin by the middle or second half of 2013, to be completed by 2015. It will then take 3.5 hours for passengers to commute between Bangkok and Chiang Mai, rather than at least eight hours nowadays.





Smart Recycling

An eco-conscious Thailand is on the way. Unknown in the country until a few years ago, green certification is now common, proven by the success of dedicated companies like Germany-based TUV SUD PSB, an international testing body specialising in renewable energy, energy efficiency and rail systems. The key to improvement in this sector is the recycling of waste water, industrial waste and garbage. This is an area rich in opportunities for European firms accustomed to the strict EU regulations and standards.

The European Union

is helping Thailand to beef up measures to fight global warming and climate change, looking at all issues at stake, including recycling. The EU delegation in Bangkok - where key global negotiations took place in April 2011 - is bringing in experts and assistance. It even initiated a Bangkok Green Week in 2009 and 2010.

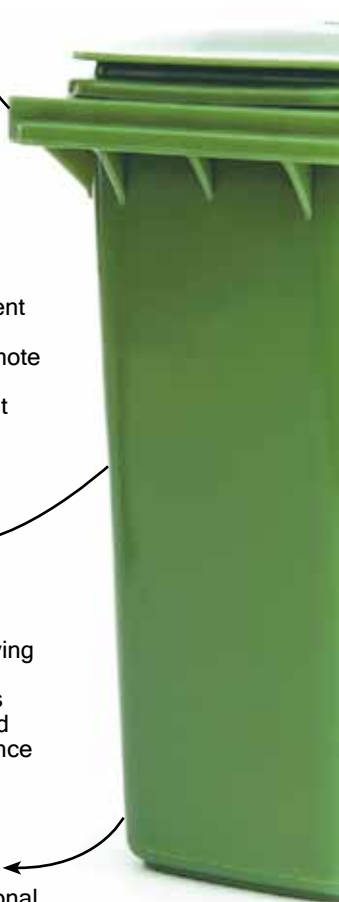
<http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/thailand>



Certification is an instrument on which more and more Thai companies are relying to promote good practices. The energy sector has been a pioneer, but other thriving sectors, like demolition and construction, do need to take recycling into account.



Hotels are conscious of playing their part as a role model, in a country where tourism remains a prime source of revenue and jobs. In Bangkok, the experience of the Bangkok Tree House Hotel, which contributes to a recycling fund and provides its employees with adequate 'green training', has received praise from the local and national authorities.



New ideas

are coming up to make recycling more trendy. Creative transformation of waste through art and design is picking up. The Bangkok Post recently ran a story on Thai designer Anupol Yooyuen, director of a furniture company which repackages and transforms discarded items.



Innovation in biotechnologies has been attracting investors and attention from the media. The National Innovation Agency organised the InnoBioPlast Trade Exhibition last January in Bangkok, courting international companies. Among the subjects touched upon were the commercialisation of sustainable packaging films and biodegradable plastics in the Kingdom.

Garbage collection, especially in Thai cities, is a sector where plenty of investment has been poured in. Foreign companies have won bids to build incinerators and promote garbage collection separation. The difficulty, nevertheless, lies with the mentalities and the lack of popular awareness.



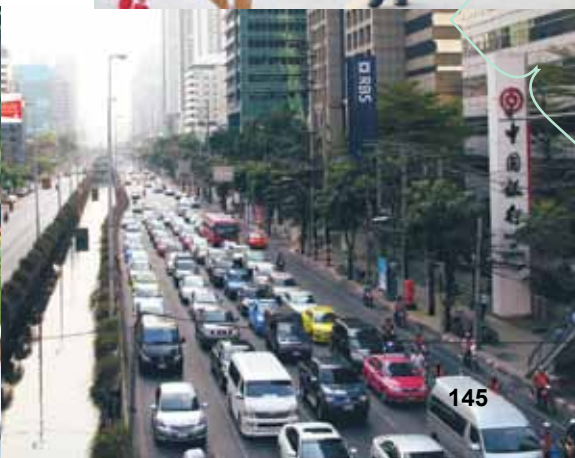


Smart Cities

Asia's leading cities are set to become the powerhouses of this century's global economy. A hub for companies positioning themselves in Southeast Asia, and a magnet for tourists and business travellers, Bangkok is already one of ASEAN's leading metropolises. For Thailand's capital city, the challenge now is therefore to respond to this demographic attraction, combined with a massive inflow of capital and wealth with an increased quality of services and a modernisation of its infrastructure. The same is true for the Kingdom's other urban centres, notably Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Pattaya, Phuket and Nakhon Ratchasima.



Those who have lived and worked in Bangkok can easily confirm it: Thailand's capital can proudly be featured as one of the world's most dynamic cities. But other Thai cities are now closing in, providing the Kingdom with a list of impressive metropolises where travellers, foreign residents and businesses can easily anchor themselves. The remarkable transformation of Chiang Mai, bound to become the cultural capital of the Golden Triangle and a key northern intersection of ASEAN's connectivity highways, is telling. Pattaya, whose tarnished reputation is slowly being surpassed by the rise of high-class residential condominiums, is another example of such a revival, in tune with the goal of making the Kingdom Asia's leading leisure and pleasure destination. The development of low-cost airlines, linking Bangkok to numerous secondary cities in Thailand, and the planned expansion/modernisation of railways, are extremely effective weapons of modernisation. The idea of brainless and boring Thai cities has become obsolete. ■







Sam Phan Bok, Ubon Ratchathani Province

Different Roadmap to ... Innovation

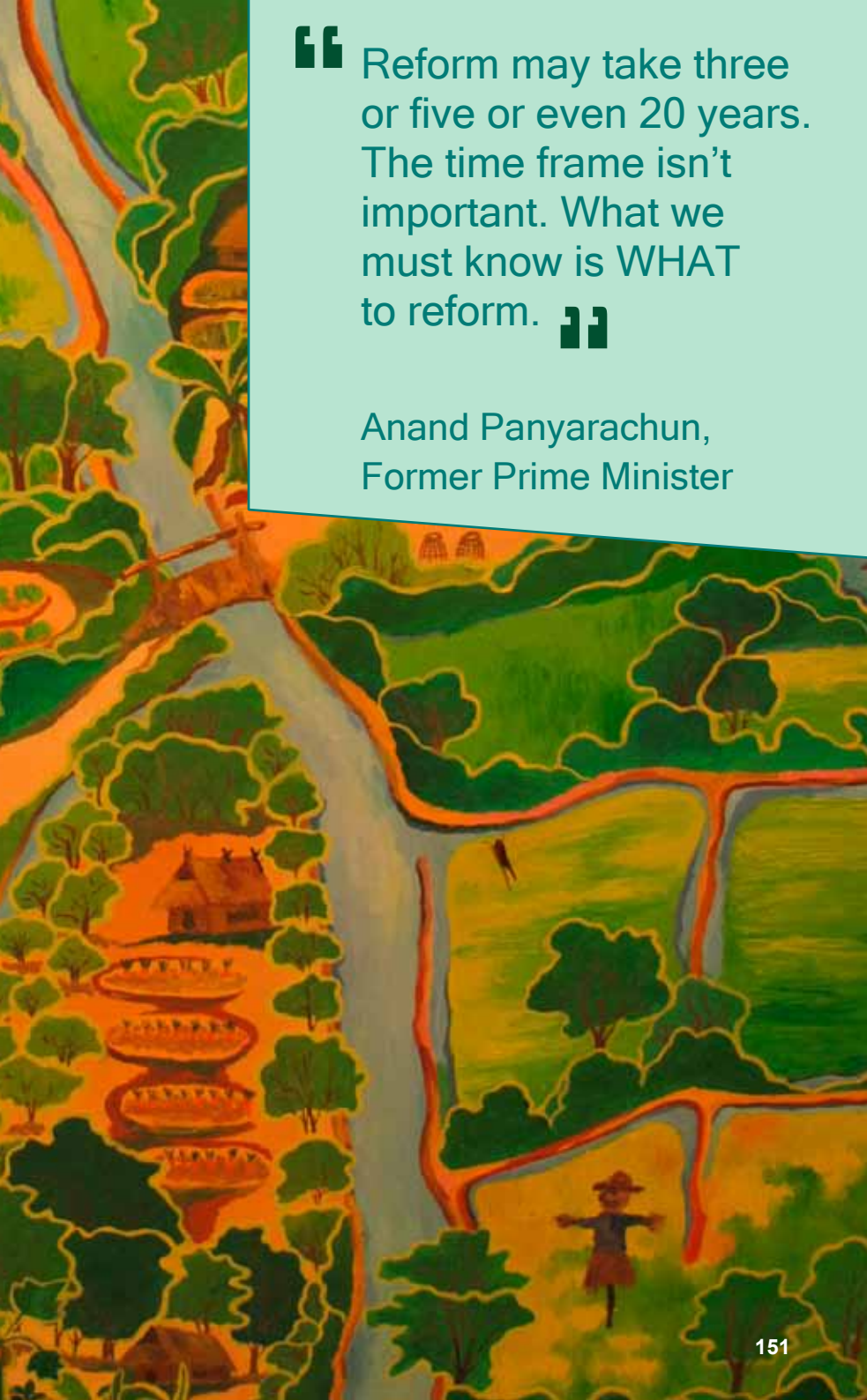
Name	Province
Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) www.tdri.or.th	Bangkok
National Innovation Agency www.nia.or.th/en	Bangkok
Faculty of Traditional Thai Medicine, Prince of Songkla University www.psu.ac.th	Songkla
Thai Traditional Medicine Research Institute www.dtam.moph.go.th	Bangkok
Chula Global Network, Chulalongkorn University www.chula.ac.th/chulaglobal	Bangkok
Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) www.ipsr.mahidol.ac.th	Nakhon Pathom
Highland Research and Development Institute www.hrdi.or.th	Chiang Mai
Population Development Association www.pda.or.th	Bangkok
SCG Experience on Creative Living www.scgexperience.co.th	Bangkok



Silk is Thailand's trademark, popularised worldwide by brands like Jim Thompson. To make sure the country continues to produce the finest brocades, the University of Mahasarakham, in the heart of the Northeast, has launched a Silk Innovation Center which has already patented four silk protein products.

More info: www.inter.msu.ac.th





“ Reform may take three or five or even 20 years. The time frame isn’t important. What we must know is WHAT to reform. ”

Anand Panyarachun,
Former Prime Minister



In the most fertile parts of Thailand, three rice harvests per year are common.



Different THAILAND

Thailand's abundant flora and natural sanctuaries have been at risk for



years. But an open rebellion is taking place against land encroachment and unscrupulous real estate developers. Supported by civil society organisations and grassroots movements, the Thai government has taken the lead to protect its environment. The latest warning has come from H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej himself. In the midst of the floods, which submerged the country from August to November 2011, Thailand's revered monarch's comments on the crucial importance of proper maintenance of the central plains, canals, and waterway labyrinths, were repeatedly broadcast on TV. In response, a national committee on water resources and flood policies was created, chaired by Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra herself. ■



For a longtime, residents of the historical city of Ayutthaya will remember those days of anguish and fear. Water coming down from the northern and western parts of the country had suddenly submerged their properties, forcing many families onto the roofs of their houses, where they could only call and pray for help.

Thailand's flood crisis, in 2011 was a moment of truth in all respects. The newly-elected government, presided by Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, as well as the Bangkok metropolitan administration presided over by rival democrat party politician Sukhumbhand Paribatra found themselves with their backs against a wall of constraints and realities: saving the financial heart of the capital city meant then allowing industrial parks to be flooded, and tens of thousands of workers being deprived of their jobs. It became clear that something needed to be done urgently in terms of water disaster preparedness. Nature had rebelled, rivers had gone mad, and lowland Thailand was on its knees.

Have the lessons been understood? Yes. Our Travel Different Thailand team, surveying the central plains, has gathered evidence from the provincial and national authorities that there are already plans underway to beef up waterway maintenance and to pay more attention to the future impact of dams and infrastructure building.

Thai orchids produce beautiful flowers with amazing range of shapes, sizes and vibrant colors. The country harbours more than 1,000 species, and, thanks to its year-round tropical weather, is a perfect breeding place. ▶

After the 2011 floods, sustainability is an obligation

Thai Forests: A history

None other than Thai-Canadian writer Ann Danaiya Usher could have compiled the information available in her book, *Thai Forestry: A critical history* (Silkworm Books). Throughout the 1990's, then based in Bangkok, this courageous and independently-minded journalists visited Thailand's national parks and interviewed leading forestry experts. Her conclusion: much time has been wasted, causing vast damage to nature, because of administrative embezzlement and cases of corruption. Published in Chiang Mai, available at bookshops in Thailand, regularly quoted as reference by officials, this in-depth research is constantly contributing to the ongoing ecological awakening in the country.





◀ Preserving the tropical ecosystem is a worldwide effort, led by the United Nations Reduction of Emission from Deforestation (REDD) initiative. As a part of it, Thailand has created its own national committee to implement those new global directives.

Bamboo Bicycles

Thailand's creativity is at its best with Chiang Rai-based American expat Phil Webb, whose firm exports bamboo bikes to 10 or so countries. The Bangkok Post recently visited his workshop in the upper north, staffed by nine workers. Four models of bamboo bike frames are produced, preferably to cyclo-cross. Believe it or not, green Thailand is now riding on two wheels.

www.bamboobikemaker.com

Such a mission is not an easy one. Local administrations have too often found themselves amidst intense pressures, and law enforcers find it difficult to make their voices heard and their standards prevail. But progress is being made, as has been the case for forestry protection in the country since the beloved green activist Seub Nakhasathien committed suicide on September 1, 1990. The recent case of a high profile legal fight saw the National Park Agency oppose illegally-built resorts and hotels, in Khao Yai Park, Bangkokians' weekend green retreat, after years of partial negligence.

Travel Different Thailand intends to support those changes taking place in the country and to publicise them among European and international visitors. Once again, our experiences touring the green paths of the Kingdom have proven, in the recent past, that the road to environmental preservation remains bumpy and long. Thus, patience and tenacity are required.

A good sign of changing mentalities is the proliferation of green initiatives, programs, plans, operations and even trade exhibitions. Thai companies are insisting nowadays on the importance of corporate social responsibility. Led by a group of prominent business conglomerates, including Siam Cement and PTT, this movement is here to stay. The combined effect of the 2004 tsunami and the 2011 floods has indeed led to an awakening amongst Thailand's nature lovers, defenders and advocates. ■



Smart Forests

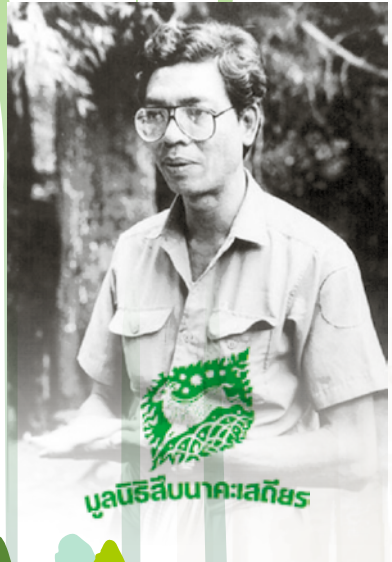
Tropical forests are crucial to our global ecosystem. This importance is outlined by the REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) program, put in place by the United Nations to contain global warming. Thailand established a national structure for REDD in 2011, for which the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation will be primarily responsible.



Logging has been banned in Thailand since 1989, though it has continued to be rampant in the shadows for far too long. Importantly, the media and grassroots movements have played a crucial role in bringing the environmental concerns and grievances of villagers to public attention.



Thailand's breathtaking wildlife continues to be a magnet for nature lovers in Southeast Asia. But preserving it is a daunting task in a country which, before World War II, was 75 percent covered by pristine forests and jungles, compared to 30 percent today. Among all prime forests in the Kingdom, a number of wildlife havens are considered first class: Huai Kha Kaeng, Thung Yai Naresuan, Kaeng Krachan and Kui Buri national parks top the list.



Reforestation is being promoted all over the country, often under the auspices of H.M. Royal Projects Foundation. The corporate sector has joined the efforts, led by respected institutions like Bangkok Bank, which presided over a massive tree replanting scheme in Uttaradit province. In 2012, plans to replant 800 million saplings throughout the country were announced.



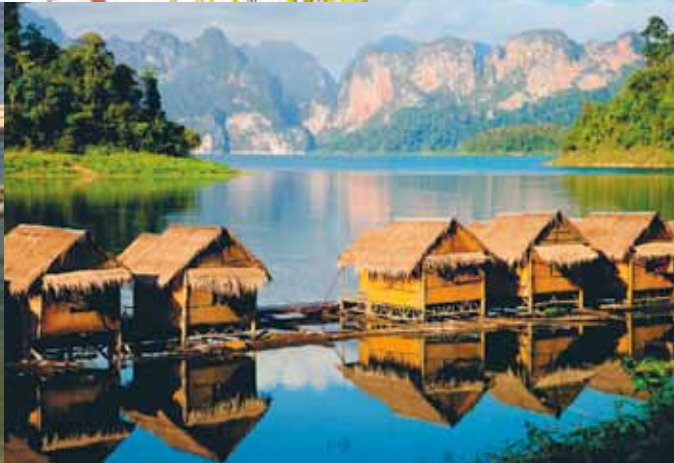
Raising Thai people's awareness is key to the future of Thailand's forests. Several centres have been established for that purpose, organising and scouting camps, so to educate local communities and school groups on wildlife conservation issues.

The Seub Nakasathien Foundation, named after the celebrated forest activist who killed himself in 1990, is one of the most active grass-roots organisations in Thailand, fighting for the preservation of national parks and wildlife. Key to its work is the struggle for indigenous life protection, enabling Thai forest inhabitants not only to remain, but also to collaborate in conservation efforts alongside government officials.



Smart Waterways

Perhaps two-fifths of the people in Asia's cities do not have access to piped water. Many of the rest suffer with an intermittent supply, a nightmare for nations coping with rapid urbanisation. For a country like Thailand, whose heart, soul, agriculture output and economic success have always been linked with its mighty rivers and canals, the challenge of a sound waterway policy must be overcome.



The devastating floods of 2011 in Thailand's central plains were more than a warning: they brought back memories of a country known for its well-kept canals, its floating markets and the great importance Siamese people have always attached to waterways.

In response, the Royal Thai government is now putting in place guidelines and policies. "We are ready to invest any amount of money to ensure this disaster doesn't happen again," said Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra in the lead-up to the launch of a three-stage plan, to be centred around the proposals made by a Strategic Formulation Committee for Water Resources Management. Among the priorities are the need for additional dams to withhold water, new reservoirs to store water, levees and embankments to prevent water from overflowing, reforestation to increase water interception, land-use zoning to restrict development, and dredging to make canals deeper, in order for them to hold more water. ■





Smart Coastlines

Thailand's coastline along the Gulf of Siam extends for 1,840 km, and along the Andaman Sea for 1,037 km. Moreover, its hundreds of offshore islands, home to numerous species of birds, mammals and fishes, constitute a unique marine life ecosystem, whose protection against erosion, tourism and industrial fishing has become essential. Great efforts are being made to defend the biodiversity and the cleanliness of these coastal paradises.



Erosion, encroachment, predatory human activity, excesses of tourism...Thailand's coastal destinations are facing increasing conflicts over natural resources and climate change impacts. Consequently, the drafting of a new marine and coastal areas management strategy has been underway since 2010, with the goal of preserving those regions. Among a range of initiatives, the Environment Ministry supports the planting of mangrove forests, which would act as a green belt to protect the coasts from waves and sea currents. Thirteen provinces have also been classified as coastal erosion hazard areas. Samut Sakhon, located some 30 km southwest of Bangkok, is the worst-hit province, losing some 10 to 20 m of coast every year.

The mobilisation of islanders is also on the rise. In Koh Tao, a once-secluded island in Surat Thani province, local activists have been battling the opening of more than 150 resorts, attracting 320,000 tourists each year. A master plan has been put in place to combat over-development on the island, while neighbouring Koh Samui has also adopted a "green island" strategy. On Koh Samui, each resort's structural blueprint must now correspond to the surrounding environment, available materials and local culture. ■



Different Roadmap to Hiking & Biking

Name

Province

Doi Chiang Dao Camping

Chiang Mai

**Nan Waterside Resort
and Camping**

Nan

Spice Roads Cycle Tours
www.spiceroads.com

Bangkok

Cycling Sukhothai
www.cycling-sukhothai.com

Sukhothai

Chiang Mai Hiking Group
www.chiangmaihiking.wordpress.com

Chiang Mai

**Bamboo Island Camping
Ground**

Koh Phi Phi

**Erawan National Park
Camping Ground**

Kanchanaburi

**Doi Ang Kang Park
Bird Watching**

Chiang Mai

Thale Noi Bird Watching

Phattalung

Bank Pakong River Fishing

Chachoengsao

Kao Laem Dam Fishing

Kanchanaburi

g



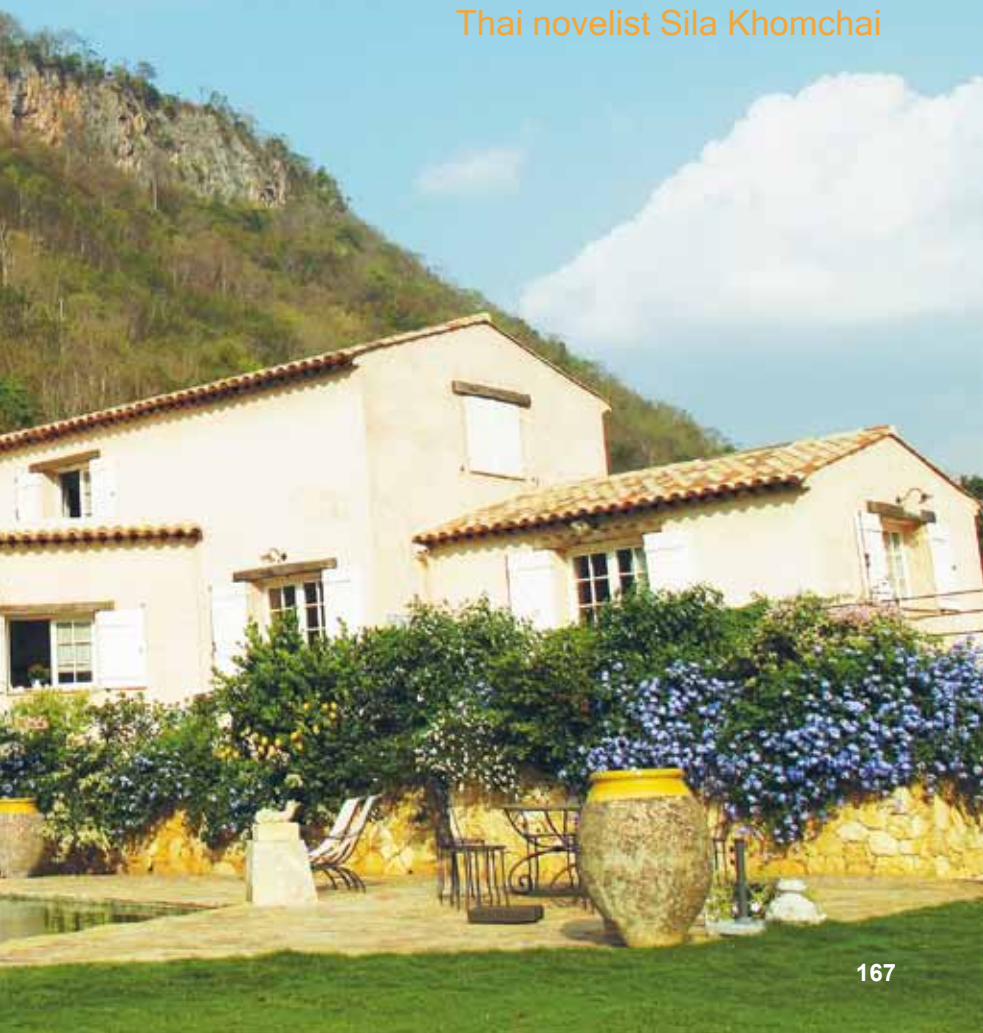
The protection of elephants worldwide is, rightly so, a cause receiving increasing support from celebrities and organisations. It has recently brought the focus on Thailand, where law prohibits the sale of African tusks in the Kingdom, but ivory from domesticated elephants can be traded legally. Actor Leonardo DiCaprio and the World Wildlife Fund have joined hands, calling for a ban on ivory trade in the country.



In Khao Yai National Park, a new residential complex imitates the Provence style of Southern France

“ We, human beings,
have destroyed nature
outside and within us
and now we find
ourselves trapped and
stifled in cities living in
pollution, in strangling
traffic...” ”

Thai novelist Sila Khomchai



PART
NERS

AD
VER
TISING

EUROPE 2020, A REMEDY TO OUR GROWTH SHORTCOMINGS

A decisive partner for Thailand and the rest of the ASEAN region, the European Union is working hard to move decisively beyond its current debt crisis and create the conditions for a more competitive economy with higher employment.

The Europe 2020 strategy is about delivering growth that is: **smart**, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation; sustainable, thanks to a decisive move towards a low-carbon economy; and inclusive, with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction. The strategy is focused on five ambitious goals shared by Thailand, in the areas of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy.

The 5 targets for the EU in 2020 are :

- 75% of all 20 to 64-year-olds to be employed
3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in research and development
- Greenhouse gas emissions 20% (or even 30%, if the conditions are right) lower than 1990; 20% of energy from renewables; 20% increase in energy efficiency
- Reducing premature school drop-out rates to below 10%, and at least 40% of 30 to 40-year-olds completing third level education
- Fighting poverty, so that at least 20 million are lifted out of social exclusion

All the EU 2020 goals and commitments are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Educational improvements help employability and reduce poverty. More R&D/innovation in the economy, combined with more efficient resources, makes us more competitive and creates jobs. Investment in cleaner technologies combats climate change while creating new business/job opportunities.

Extract from "Europe 2020 in a Nutshell"
www.ec.europa.eu



Thailand: A credible partner

Trade between the EU and Thailand is considerable, amounting to approximately €27 billion (1.15 trillion Baht) in 2010. The EU is Thailand's second-largest export market, after ASEAN. For 11 months from January to November 2012, the total trade between Thailand and the EU was €29.15 billion. Thailand's exports to the EU during this 11 months was approximately €15.38 billion.

The Delegation of the European Union to Thailand is supporting the Kingdom's 10-year plan to re-structure its energy infrastructure, with the goal of making alternative energy contribute 25 percent of the total output by 2021, though renewable energy businesses still face difficulties in obtaining the necessary financial support. Joint seminars and workshops have been organised to increase capacity and expertise among Thai stakeholders in the five main areas of Thailand's Renewable Energy sector - biogas, biomass, solar energy, waste-to-energy, and wind energy.

More info: www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/thailand

THINK ASIA, INVEST IN THAILAND



“Green for the future” is a commitment which the Thailand Board of Investment (BOI) aims to fulfill, ready to assist investors with the capacity to make the world a greener and cleaner place.

Having organised, in January 2012, the largest exhibition fair in Thailand and ASEAN, devoted to showcasing investments in sustainable development, in-line with His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, the BOI aims to demonstrate the achievements and potential of Thai industries. Moreover, it intends to stimulate Thailand's economy, boost investor confidence and enhance the country's image as a leading investment location in Asia.

As a leading agricultural producer, Thailand sees eco-friendly business as the solution to global environmental issues and a pathway to economic growth. Thailand's progressive approach to green investment offers unparalleled opportunity for forward-thinking investors with green ideas.

Whether your project concerns biomass, wind or solar energy, environmental protection, R&D of eco-friendly technologies and products of recycling, this is a unique chance to expand your business horizons and capitalise on profit growth in the burgeoning Asian market.

For more information, please contact: www.boi.go.th
Thailand Board of Investment
Your partner for sustainable investment

GREENING THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

Among the conglomerates which epitomised Thailand's economic boom, the Siam Cement Group (SCG) stands in pole position. Partly-owned (30 percent) by the Crown Property Bureau, SCG therefore has an essential role to play to disseminate good practices in the construction sector, pointed out by environment activists as one of the prime detriments to green space in the country's urban areas. The decision taken by Siam Cement, along with five other companies (Univenture, Toyota Motor Thailand, Toyota Nakornratchasima (Tai-Yen), Kasikornbank and Ananda Development) to support the Thai Green Building Institute or TGBI, through its TREES initiative, is therefore of prime importance. Established as a result of cooperation between the Association of Siamese Architects and the Engineering Institute of Thailand, both under H.M. The King's Patronage, the institute aims at promoting environmentally-friendly construction, offering consultancies from experts in this field. Its TREES initiative consists of putting in place, for the six above mentioned companies, an adequate system of rating, as a warranty for their commitment to the environment and to the international fight against global warming.

In this endeavour, the Siam Cement Group has put in place financial compensations to cover as much as possible the costs of complying with green norms and standards. It's already possible to receive tailor-made advice from the companies' construction advisers at the SCG Experience compound, within Bangkok's Crystal Design Center. The goal is for the new buildings to consume much less energy. Shopping centres and hospitals are among the primary targets for this promising TREES partnership.



With five other companies, the Siam Cement Group is a great supporter of the Thai Green Building Institute.



GREEN CHEMICALS FOR A DIFFERENT THAILAND



PTT, the country's leading petrochemical giant, is betting on alternative technologies.



“The Thai Government encourages an investment in green chemicals, and particularly bioplastics, which have high growth potential in the Southeast Asian market.”

Thailand's former Minister of Energy, H. E. Mr. Pichai Nariphaphan was clearly pleased when announcing, in October 2012, the decision from PTT Chemical to invest 150 million USD in the construction of one of the more advanced biopolymer processing plants in the world. “When in operation, this plant will represent a significant step in achieving Thailand's strategic objectives of becoming a regional hub for green technologies and solutions,” he said.

PTT is no stranger to these green-minded investments. One of the most advanced Thai conglomerates, seen by many young Thai engineers as the ideal place to work and pursue a career, PTT has brought a lot of energy and resources over the past years in its “Power for a Sustainable Future Program,” emphasising, among other priorities, the need for Thailand to become the Southeast Asian hub in biotech by 2020.

Proof of PTT's dedication to being a role model for the Thai corporate sector, the company has produced various publications on sustainable practices and has made this goal its top priority, promising in its annual report, “to strengthen the foundation for our country in all aspects - energy security, economic driving forces, human capability, inspiration for good deeds, and a careful balance of stepping onto the world stage while promoting community forums.”

THAI Social Media



Save The Earth with THAI

We fly with the appropriate speed to reduce Carbon Dioxide emission into the atmosphere.



We close the gate 10 minutes before the departure time, so that the plane can leave on time and save the energy.



We clean our aircraft to decrease air friction. So, we can reduce the fuel usage.



We choose ingredients that are environmentally-friendly.



**Any other ideas for Travel Green?
Please share with us via our Social Media.**

find **THAI** on



facebook.com/ThaiAirways



twitter.com/ThaiAirways



[instagram @ThaiAirways](https://instagram.com/ThaiAirways)



Thai Tourism Going Green

TAT's Seven Greens programme provides a conceptual framework and establishes practical guidelines for carefully balancing tourism promotion and a healthy, sustainable environment in the following seven areas.

Green Heart: to urge tourists to be socially responsible and environmentally aware

Green Logistics: to encourage more environmentally-friendly tourism-related modes of transport

Green Destinations: to promote responsibly managed tourist sites that respect the environment

Green Communities: to support community-based tourism in both urban and rural areas that promote conservation of the environment, local traditions and ways of life

Green Activities: to promote tourism activities that are well-suited to local communities.

Green Service: to urge all tourism-related service providers to win hearts and minds by demonstrating respect, care and concern for the environment

Green Plus: to encourage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) among operators. For example: refraining from causing environmental damage, promoting energy-saving initiatives and renewable energy sources or highlighting environmentally-friendly products



7 Greens Concept
Enjoy travel, *care* for environment.



THE JIM THOMPSON
ART CENTER



The Jim Thompson Art Center

6 Soi Kasemsan 2, Rama 1 Rd, Wangmai, Pathumwan, Bangkok

Tel: +662 612-6741 Fax: +662 219-2911-3744 email: artcenter@jimthompsonhouse.com

Please visit us at www.thejimthomsonartcenter.org

don't forget to  us on Facebook



Over 35 Years of Success Through Service Excellence

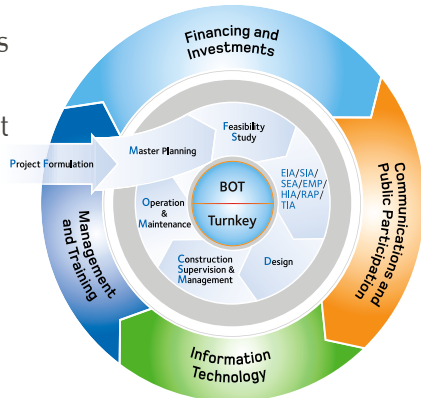
TEAM GROUP, a leading Thai conglomerate with the capability to cover a range of multidisciplinary services in the integrated consulting and related businesses both in Thailand and overseas.

VISION

To be a **REGIONAL LEADER** in the integrated consulting and related businesses

Areas of services

- Transportation and Logistics
- Water Resources
- Environmental Management
- Environmental Engineering
- Building and Infrastructure
- Energy
- Management and training
- Communication and public participation



TEAM GROUP OF COMPANIES CO., LTD.

151 Nuan Chan Road, Nuan Chan, Bueng Kum, Bangkok 10230, Thailand
 Tel: +66 2 509 9000 Fax: +66 2 509 9090 E-mail: teamgroup@team.co.th
www.teamgroup.co.th



Sakaekrang River, Uthai Thani



“

Without proper laws
and regulations,
there is no way to
control who does what.”

Worapan Ruwichean, Koh Kao island

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None of this would have been possible without the personal commitment of H.E. Amb Apichart Chinwanno and the dedication of the staff from the Royal Thai Embassy in Brussels. Our numerous conversations and meetings, including some long distance on Skype, were always a pleasure and proof of mutual confidence. I am especially grateful to Khun Chulamanee, Khun Supark and Khun Cholvit, who helped me through and accepted my remarks, proposal for changes and suggestions for editorial content. To them all, a big 'thank you'

"Travel Different Thailand" is, in the meantime, a continuation of a publishing venture supported by the Royal Thai Embassy in Brussels, which started with "Travel Green Thailand" in 2009. Kind enough to accept my suggestions and to provide their full cooperation towards its completion were H.E. Amb. Pisan Manawapat, presently Ambassador to India, and H.E. Sarun Charoensuwan, presently Director General for Europe at the Royal Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who are therefore the co-initiators of the project and deserve my gratitude.

In Bangkok, my longtime colleagues, Jenny and Mim from Amarin Printing and Publishing have been, as always, pillars of stability and serenity while I was constantly roaming with changes in mind and new information to add. Though based in the tropical lush southern island of Koh Pha-Ngan, Kaila Krayewski has again been my constant reference as far as English editing and tourism-oriented information are concerned.

I cannot end here without paying tribute to Khun Kulpramote and Khun Bangomrat from the Tourism Authority of Thailand, and from Khun Petchpring, Kulkanda, Saravanee and Katrien at Thai Airways International. My apologies to all of them for repeatedly calling and bothering them with questions or requests.

Michel Herman from Lotus Village at the Sukhothai Hotel deserves also a big 'thanks' for helping me with photos and advice.

Finally, it must be reaffirmed that all mistakes of incomplete information in this book are my sole and entire responsibility. ■

Bangkok, March 2013
Richard Werly, Coordinator and Author

BI BLIO GRAPHY

The Green Guide, Thailand

Michelin Practical Information, Province by Province.
www.viamichelin.com

Thailande: A Natural Guide (in French)

They went to all the destinations we could not cover. An excellent job. Congratulations!
(Pages du Monde Publishing).

The National Parks and Other Wild Places of Thailand,

An essential guidebook for the Green Traveller.
(New Holland Publishing).

Travel Green Thailand. (Asieinfo Publishing).**Togu and the Trees of Life**

One of UNEP's cartoon books, on the tropical forests of Southeast Asia. PDF available at:
www.unep.org/PDF/Togu_BOOK_Layout.pdf

Leeled Handbook

Published by Responsible Ecological and Social Tours, it provides an introduction to community-based tourism in Thailand.
www.rest.or.th

Voyage en Terre Durable (in French)

An excellent French book bringing the reader to meet those people whose life and subsistence depends on sustainable tourism. (Glenat Publishing)

National Geographic, May 2005 "Nomade des Mers en Birmanie" (in French)**Thai Contemporary Art, MOCA**

www.mocabangkok.com

Art Square Monthly Magazine, Bangkok

www.fineart-magazine.com

From the Yellow River to the Chao

Phraya River, Thai Red Cross Society, Bangkok 2005

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, A Life's Work

Edm Publishing, 2011

Siam, Days of Glory

Siam Renaissance Publishing, 2010

A Thai Herbal: Traditional Recipes for Health and Harmony, Silkworm Books, 2003**The Thai World**, Asia Books, 2012**Unforgettable Adventure Experiences in Thailand**, Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2011



Phu Soi Daw, Uttaradit