

Thai Journal: Vol 24 – Walk Across Thailand

You're Going to do What?

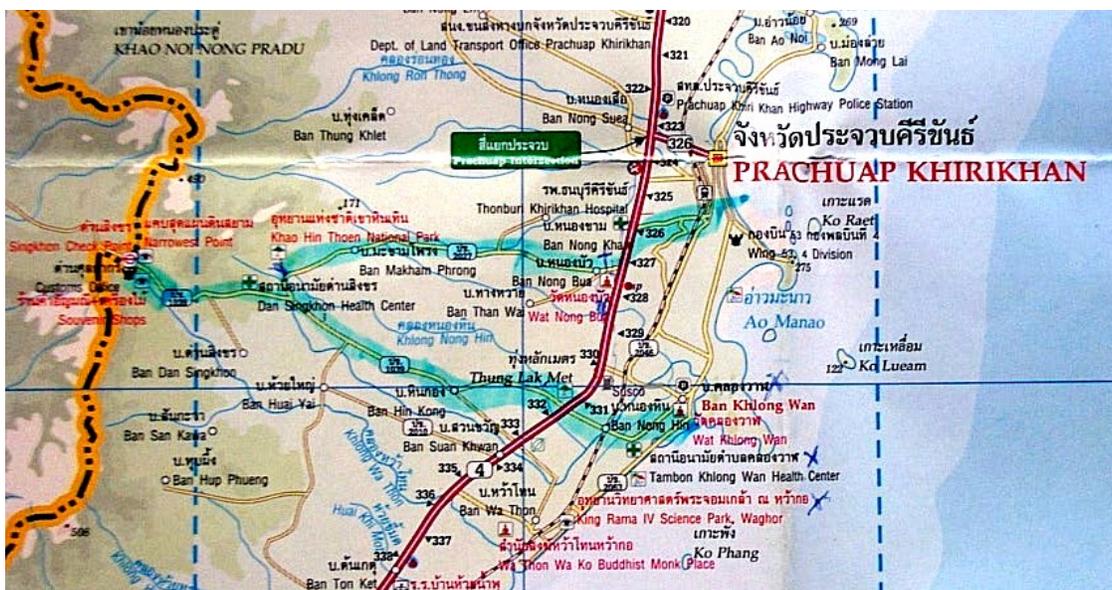
For those of you with short memories or may have slept recently, I'm going to give you a slightly edited version from Thai Journal: Vol 11, of how this whole thing came to pass. Then I'll pick it up from there.

The project I am embarking on is a Walk Across Thailand. Yes, from east to west, or perhaps west to east. Call it Forest Gump comes to Thailand. I first heard a Tourist Authority of Thailand promo, which began with the question: What is the narrowest point in Thailand? The answer said it was in Prachuab Khiri Khan province. It went on to say it was short enough to walk. So I said, "I can do that".

But before you get all bent out of shape and think I have taken leave of my senses, you should realize that my intention is to walk across Thailand at it's narrowest point, which comes to just over 7.7 miles. Right now I'm doing 6 miles before breakfast. The area in question is in the southern most of the central provinces, Prachuab Khiri Khan (in red on the map of Thailand). It's in an area that was perhaps the first of the popular beach resorts in Thailand, Hua Hin. It's on the eastern side of the peninsula, on the western coast of the gulf of Thailand.



The starting point will be just south of Prachuab Khiri Khan, about 125 miles south of Bangkok and would end at the Myanmar (Burmese) border. Don't get the idea that I am going to hack my way through 7.7 miles of jungle. I may be crazy, but I'm not stupid. I understand there is a road or roads, which run the entire distance, so this should not be too torturous.



On the map the route runs just south of Prachuab Khiri Khan westward (the blue outlines) and ends where it meets that north, south (yellow and black line on the left of the page) at the border town of

Dan Singkhon. There are two possible routes and I'm looking for the shortest. Staying out of the way of traffic may be the biggest obstacle. The best time to do this would be during the cool season, November – February as I expect it would take maybe better than 3 hours depending on my pace and conditions. I think it would be more dramatic to end at the gulf rather than at a rather nondescript Myanmar border crossing, don't you? When the time comes, I will certainly have my camera along to record the event for your viewing pleasure, or horror as the case may be. Who else do you know who would do this for you? Anyone care to join me?

I plan to do this every year, perhaps on my birthday, December 13th. Maybe next year I can convince a few other hearty souls to join me. Who knows where this could end? There are some other interesting possibilities as well and we have to see what develops.

Preparing to Succeed



For more than a year since I first concocted the idea of doing this, the idea just rattled around inside my head. It just seemed like a crazy idea at the time, but it slowly began to take on a life of its own. There was always the idea of getting a T-shirt made with the words “Walk Across Thailand” and a little map of the area in Prachuab where it would take place. Unfortunately the idea of the T-shirt was stillborn when I found out none of the shops would do it unless I ordered at least two dozen. What was I going to do with maybe 22 T-shirts (Cindy would certainly get one)? I wasn't going to give them away to people who didn't “walk the walk”. The failure to get a T-shirt bothered me right up until the night before. It was only then that I took a magic marker and created one myself. It was a little crude to be sure, but not bad given it was done at the last minute. That's Myanmar (Burma) there on the left, the Gulf of Thailand on the right and the dots indicate the route.

As December rolled around and with the T-shirt out of the picture, I had to ask myself if this was really going to happen. So I upped the anti and ordered a trophy, at considerable expense (they would sell me just one), and then I was committed. I had planned to mostly walk, but occasionally jog during the course, but less than a week before we were to leave an old hernia injury began to act up. If I had been looking for an excuse that might have done it, but it really provided additional incentive, competing hurt, to carry on in adversity. I decided instead to restrict myself to walking.

Also, at the last minute, our friends from Bangkok, whom I have mentioned here numerous times joined us. Lek, her daughter No-ong and her friend Bob were all on board. I certainly couldn't bail on this thing now.

We arrived at Prachuap on the 12th day before the appointed one. I wanted to check out the route again, because it had been more than a year since I first scouted it and I didn't want to have to walk additional miles/kilometers because I had chosen the wrong route. As we drove it, it just seemed to be longer than I had remembered. I was beginning to have some doubts about the level of difficulty. Two-thirds of the route is west of a major, four lane, north-south highway. My last recollection was that when I got to the highway I had to go a considerable distance north, perhaps a mile or two before crossing over and finding a road which lead to the beach. Well, as we looked across the highway this time, we saw there was a road right there. If that, indeed, lead to the beach, that would be a godsend. We asked someone at a store along the road if it did lead to the beach and were heartened to be told it did. The “head games” were over; It was just a matter of doing it.