

Thai Journal – Volume 25: Southern Tour

You Can Go Home Again



With the successful walk across Thailand under our belts, we headed off for Nakorn Sri Thammarat province in southern Thailand and Cindy's home town of Khanom. If you look at the map you will see it about 2/3 of the way down. Khanom is marked with an asterisk. Though Nakorn Sri Thammarat is located in southern Thailand, it is still well north of the three troubled provinces of Narwathiwat, Pattani, and Yala, all of which are immediately south of the province of Songkhla, border Malaysia and have majority Muslim populations. We can revisit the historical, political and cultural factors at that place another time.

I had only been to Khanom twice before, the first time being in 1973 shortly after we married when we returned to Thailand. It took us more than three hours to go the 30 miles or so from Surat Thani to Khanom. It was a back-breaking, bone-crushing, teeth-chattering, dust-eating, Volvo-driving, latte-drinking, sushi-eating --- Oooops, got a little carried away --- journey by what at the time passed for a road.

You can imagine my surprise when we found a very modern, divided, four lane, blacktop roadway. It was a real joy and within 40 minutes we were in Khanom. Cindy's brother has some land there and has been building a resort. I would best describe it as rustic. The cabins have thatched roofs and the supports are made from the beetle nut tree. It doesn't take much of a stretch to call them log cabins. They're located just up from the beach amid swaying coconut trees. Speaking of swaying coconut trees, I learned a valuable lesson early when Cindy's brother cautioned me about parking the car when I had. He pointed out that it was directly under a coconut tree and there was a real chance one of those coconuts could come crashing down on the car. After that I chose my parking spot more carefully.



The name of the resort is Tong-ye and he has two pieces of land. One piece, the smaller of the two has eight cabins and the larger piece just down the road has ten. Inside things are basic with a comfortable bed and a mosquito net. There's no A/C, and no hot water (brrrrr), though there is a shower and nice bathroom. What do you want for \$12/night? There's a small restaurant just up from the

beach. The beach itself is very nice and there are some good views of the coastline and some of the islands off the coast.



Tong-ye is located south of town and outside the residential area, placing it somewhat off the grid. There is electricity, but the cell phone service drops off just short of the resort because of the mountains. To get either TV or Internet service requires a satellite connection. The place had neither when we were there, but Cindy tells me that her brother has since added satellite TV service. I got in my 10 K steps by walking from the Tong-ye to a cluster of resorts nearer to town. In fact, one day as I was walking along the road, I gazed off into the jungle and saw what looked like something out of the TV show "Lost". There was a tower right there in the jungle. I finally concluded and later confirmed that it was one of the tsunami warning towers. I was aware that they had constructed them on the western side of the peninsula, where the tsunami struck two years ago (more on that a bit later), but wasn't aware that they were in place on the eastern shore as well.

What's That? I can't Hear You– I've Got A Banana in My Ear

When were still in Prachuab getting ready for the Walk Across Thailand, I woke up one morning and I could tell that there was something wrong with my ear. It was obvious that it was a waxy build up, but the usual method of using a tissue and a forefinger to clear it did not work. After shaking my head and pounding on my ear a couple of times, it freed up.

Now you might think that having one ear clogged up wouldn't be all that bad, that 50% hearing is still fine. That is not the case. Try putting your finger or some kind of ear plug in one ear for a couple of hours and see how impaired you feel. In my case it clogged up again and I couldn't free it. I am well aware that one should not put pointed objects, even Q-Tips into the ear as this tends to push an accumulation deeper into the ear and possibly even puncture the eardrum itself. After several days we went to see a doctor who referred me to a regional hospital about 30 miles away. There the doctor used a wand and suction to go into the ear canal and remove a couple of tons of a black almost tar like substance. He did the same on the other ear also, which was quickly reaching the same condition. It was a great relief to have full hearing restored and it cost me all of \$7.50.