

THE NEITHER AUTHORITATIVE NOR CONCISE GUIDE

TO RIDING Bikes in SOUTHEAST ASIA

BY
MELANIE
SWANSON



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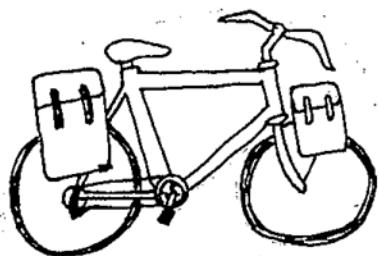
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LONG LIVE KING RAMA IX

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ALL INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THIS BOOK IS PROBABLY
MORE OR LESS ACCURATE, BUT THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES.
SOME OF IT MAY BE ENTIRELY WRONG.

REMEMBER! DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, PUT
TOILET PAPER IN THE TOILETS IN SE ASIA.

PLEASE! DIRECT ANY QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CORRECTIONS,
ADULATION, DEFAMATION, LOVE LETTERS, HAİKUS, ADVICE,
OPINIONS, JOKES, RIDDLES, OR FUNNY STORIES TO:
MSWANSON26@gmail.com.



expected, considering the publicity Vietnam has

these days, and the big bike rallies that have

Al-though recently,

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Sambo Commune, Chet Bo, Kratie Province Kingdom of

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តម្លៃ មនុស្សធំ មនុស្សតូច

Adult Child

Home: Thanh Quit, Dien Thano Dien Ban, Quang Nam

Tel: +84.0511

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលប្រយុទ្ធនឹងសាសន៍លើសកម្ម CHOEUNG EK GENOCIDAL CENTER



CHOEUNG EK Genocidal Center, in collaboration with Sun Fund, sponsors the poor and talented students. Your admission fee, a kind charity will ultimately contribute to the development, conservation of the center, and sponsorship for

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NSX 2011 / 2011 - HSD : 6 ថ្ងៃ
T.P chính : Đường, mạch nha, dừa
ĐCSX : Khởi 4 - T. T. Tam Quan
Hoài Nhơn - Bình Định
Điện Thoại : 056. 3865182
Giấy CNYT số : 36/2009 - ATTP
Bảo quản nơi thoáng mát

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MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS

សារមន្ទីរជាតិ
NATIONAL MUSEUM

Admission fee: \$u

Mr. Phong
Nguyen Ba Phong

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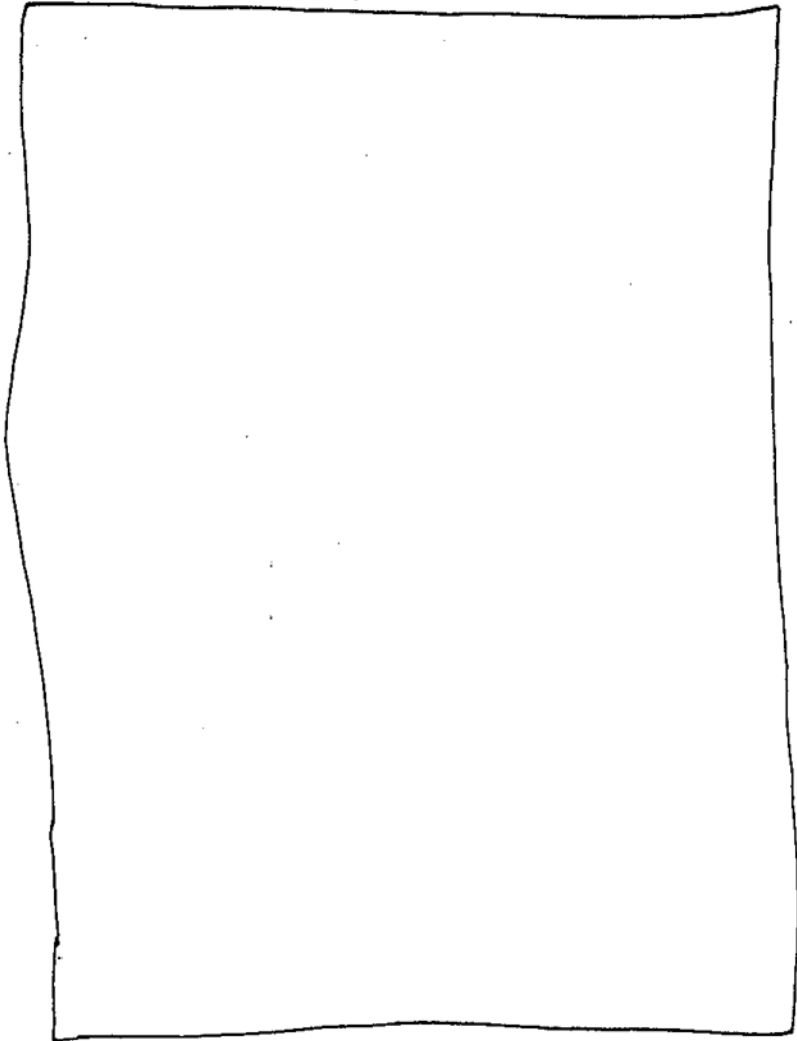


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DISCLAIMER:

This book is not very well organized. It's also not very thorough. The sections about each country differ and do not follow a similar format. It will probably be confusing + unclear to you. I only wrote about stuff that I learned while I was traveling through, and I picked up different bits and pieces in each country.

Please forgive me!



Of course I forgive you!

THE PLAN

AFTER YOU READ THIS, I SUSPECT THAT YOU WILL BE SO INSPIRED THAT YOU AND YOUR BIKE WILL FLEE IMMEDIATELY TO SE ASIA. WHILE THERE, YOU WILL EXPERIENCE AND LEARN THINGS WHICH I DID NOT GO TO. YOU WILL GO PLACES I DID NOT GO. SO! YOU WILL WRITE TO ME AT mswanson26@gmail.com AND TELL ME AND I WILL ADD YOUR GEMS OF WISDOM TO THIS BOOK, AND IN NO TIME AT ALL WE WILL HAVE AN EXHAUSTIVELY RESEARCHED GUIDE TO BIKING IN SE ASIA.

THIS "BOOK" IS DEDICATED, FIRST
AND FOREMOST, TO EACH & EVERY BABY
ANIMAL THAT I PASSED WHILE BICYCLING.
THANK YOU, ANIMALS, FOR BEING SO CUTE.

SECONDARILY, THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO MY STALWART BICYCLING COMPANION,
JESSE JULIAN STEIN. THANKS FOR PUTTING
UP WITH ME AND, IN SPITE OF HOW OFTEN I
THREATENED IT, I WILL NEVER GOUGE YOUR
EYEBALLS OUT.

TERTIARILY (IS THAT A WORD?) THIS BOOK IS
DEDICATED TO EVERY SINGLE PERSON I HAVE
EVER RIDDEN BIKES WITH. YOU KNOW WHO
YOU ARE.

AND FINALLY:
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
ALAN BATES



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING*

to bicycle in Southeast Asia

#1: You should expect bicycling in SE Asia to be quite safe, and very rarely scary. "Safe!?" You may be thinking incredulously. "Not scary!? You're nuts!" Perhaps you've traveled in SE Asia, or in one of the many parts of the world where traffic laws are more like suggestions and lanes are vague concepts. Maybe you can't fathom how bicycling safely fits into that equation, and I don't blame you. BUT HERE'S THE THING: In SE Asia, the rights of all road users are equal. This is not the U.S. of A., where Car is King. The black smoke belching trucks, the buses overflowing with humanity and luggage, the farmers and school children pedaling single speeds, the endless stream of motor bikes, the languid water buffalo and frenetic goats, the wizened, wiry old ladies pushing wooden carts laden with wares, the ancient farm machinery, the pony carts and you, dear cycling reader: You are all equal. People in SE Asia wrote the BOOK on sharing the road. IT SEEMS IMPLAUSIBLE, I KNOW, BUT SOMEHOW passing vehicles manage to give you enough space, & they

*THIS IS AN INSIDE JOKE WITH MYSELF BASED ON THE FACT THAT THAT CLASSIC TEXT ON PREGNANCY - WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING - WAS ONE OF THE BOOKS I SAW MOST COMMONLY AT BOOK EXCHANGES ALL OVER SE ASIA. ANOTHER COMMON ONE, AND SLIGHTLY MORE PREDICTABLE: THE ALCHEMIST, BY EVERYONE'S FAVORITE BRAZILIAN, PABLO COELHO.

OFTEN slow down, and while the constant honking is annoying, it is not aggressive. Traffic on SE Asian Roads is like a TAPESTRY so INTRICATELY WOVEN THAT TO the untrained eye it appears CHAOTIC, but upon close inspection (and through participation), a subtle pattern emerges, and it's one which makes space for everyone. ALL THAT BEING SAID, there are a-holes out there, and you must ride defensively. You must learn to train your attention on all 360° of potential collision, and you must never, ever assume that the lane you are in is ^{only} for traffic heading your direction.

#2 ○ EXPECT BICYCLING IN SE ASIA TO BE LOUD, SMELLY, AND POLLUTED. EXPECT BURNING PILES OF GARBAGE, EXPECT ROTTING BAGS OF TRASH, EXPECT THICK CLOUDS OF POISONOUS EXHAUST. Your LIFE span will be SHORTENED. IF YOU ARE SMART, YOU WILL BUY ONE OF THE UBIQUITOUS FACE MASKS (I THINK MORE THAN HALF OF THE LOCALS USE THEM) AND YOU WILL WEAR IT, IN SPITE OF HOW SILLY IT LOOKS. IF YOU BICYCLE IN VIETNAM, YOU MIGHT WANT EARPLUGS.

#3 ○ EXPECT THAT TRAVELING BY BICYCLE IS THE #1 ULTIMATE BEST WAY TO TRAVEL. A BICYCLE GRANTS YOU INDEPENDENCE AND THE FREEDOM TO VENTURE DOWN ANY ROAD. IT ALLOWS YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LANDSCAPE, RATHER THAN PASS THROUGH IT SHEATHED WITHIN A STEEL TUBE. IT'S SLOW ENOUGH TO SEE & SMELL EVERYTHING, BUT FAST ENOUGH TO MAKE MILES. I COULD GO ON, BUT I'VE RUN OUT OF SPACE!





A FEW MORE
THINGS ~~to~~
EXPECT
WHILE RIDING
in SE
ASIA

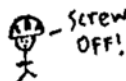
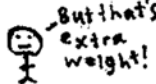
- EXPECT TO SEE LOADS OF SAFFRON-ROBED MONKS, BABY ANIMALS, DIRTY CHILDREN AND PILES OF BURNING GARBAGE
- EXPECT TO BE TREATED TO AN UNCEASING CHORUS OF GREETINGS WHEREVER YOU RIDE
- EXPECT TO SEE MORE BICYCLE POWERED CONTRACTIONS THAN A DIY BIKE FREAK COULD DREAM UP IN A LIFETIME
- EXPECT SMILES, THUMBS UP, HIGH FIVES & ROUNDS OF APPLAUSE, DEPENDING UPON HOW MANY BEERS & FRUIT SHAKES YOU DRINK
- EXPECT TO BE STARED AT, LAUGHED AT, & PUZZLED OVER
- EXPECT HEAT
- EXPECT TO BE SERVED UNIDENTIFIABLE MEAT
- EXPECT UNNERVING BATHROOM EXPERIENCES
- EXPECT THE HUNDREDS OF STRAY DOGS ROAMING THE STREETS TO HAVE NO INTEREST IN CHASING YOU
- EXPECT TO LOSE SLEEP DUE TO THOSE SAME DAMN DOGS BARKING
- EXPECT RICE, ENDLESS RICE
- EXPECT TO FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH YOUR RICH WESTERN SELF GAL-LIVANTING ABOUT IN POOR, POOR ASIA
- EXPECT HILARIOUSLY TRANSLATED MENUS AND SIGNS
- EXPECT TO NEVER CEASE TO BE SURPRISED!



WHAT SORT OF BIKE SHOULD I BRING?

FOR THE MOST PART, I BELIEVE THAT THIS IS BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR GOD. HOWEVER, I DO HAVE A FEW THINGS TO SAY:

- ★ 26" wheels are a BILLION TIMES MORE COMMON THAN 700c, NO TUBES OR (GOD FORBID) REPLACEMENT WHEELS ARE MUCH EASIER TO FIND.
- ★ FAT TIRES! I MEAN LIKE, 1.5-2.0. I HAD 26x1.75'S AND MY TRAVELING COMPANION HAD 700x25'S. WHILE HE WAS ABLE TO GET AROUND ALL RIGHT, MY QUALITY OF LIFE WAS BETTER. SKINNY TIRES ARE DO-ABLE, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE GOT, BUT THEY ARE LIMITING AND MIGHT MAKE YOU GRUMPY, AND NO ONE LIKES A GRUMPLESTILTSKIEN!
- ★ SCHRADER VALVES RULE, PRESTA VALVES DROOL! THEY ARE MORE COMMON, AND LESS PRONE TO SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION.
- ★ IF I FOUND A MILLION DOLLARS IN UNMARKED BILLS ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, FIRST I WOULD BUY MY MOM A CASTLE. THEN, I WOULD BUY MYSELF A ROHLOFF HUB AND KISS MY BENT DERAILLEUR NIGHTMARES GOODBYE.
- ★ ONE MORE THING ABOUT TIRES: GET PUNCTURE PROOF ONES! DON'T SKIMP!
- ★ GET AN F-ING KICKSTAND!





WHATSOEVER SHOULD I PACK?

I HAVE FULL FAITH AND CONFIDENCE THAT YOU, DEAR SAVVY CYCLIST, CAN FIGURE OUT HOW MANY PAIRS OF PANTIES TO PACK. THE FACT IS, EVERY CYCLIST VALUES DIFFERENT THINGS: SOME WILL SACRIFICE THE BOTTOM HALF OF THEIR TOOTHBRUSH TO SAVE ON GRAMS, WHILE OTHERS CRAVE CREATURE COMFORTS, NO MATTER THE WEIGHT. SOME VALUE INDESTRUCTIBLE, TOP O' THE LINE GEAR, OTHERS PRUGALITY + McGIVERING. SO DO WHAT YOU WILL. I WILL MENTION ONLY A FEW ITEMS THAT I TOTED IN MY PANNIERS THAT, NOT TO TOOT MY OWN HORN OR ANYTHING, I THOUGHT WERE PURE, UNADULTERATED GENIUS.

- 1) WAXED DENTAL FLOSS W/SEVERAL SEWING NEEDLES STASHED INSIDE THE PLASTIC CASE. SEWING KIT AND DENTAL HYGIENE IN ONE! REALLY, YOU SHOULD FLOSS.
- 2) A MAGIC WATER WAND - THAT IS TO SAY, A UV LIGHT WATER PURIFIER. THIS UNFATHOMABLE DEVICE ALLOWS YOU TO STEER CLEAR OF THE WATER BUYING SCENE, THUSLY AVOIDING COMPLICITY IN THE TEXAS-SIZED ISLAND OF PLASTIC BOTTLES FLOATING IN THE OCEAN. NOT THAT IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!
- 3) MY SPECIAL SECRET RECIPE RIDING SHIRTS. IN THREE EASY STEPS, THE DREAM CAN BE YOURS!

1) GET YOURSELF A LONGSLEEVE, BUTTON DOWN SHIRT. I PREFER SNAPS B/C BUTTONS ARE TOO MUCH WORK.



- BUT WHAT ABOUT TOOLS, SPARE PARTS, AND CAMPING GEAR?

2) CUT OFF THE SLEEVES!



- TURN THE PAGE, MY FRIEND!

3) NOW USE THE SLEEVE MATERIAL TO SEW A POCKET ONTO THE BACK. ET VOILA!



YOU NOW HAVE A RECEPTACLE IN WHICH TO STORE YOUR CAMERA, CANDY, + ROADSIDE FINDS!

TOOLS, SPARE PARTS

...AND A BRIEF NOTE ABOUT CAMPING ↴

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A CORRECT ANSWER TO THAT TIMELESS QUESTION: "WHAT TOOLS SHOULD I PACK?" IT MAINLY DEPENDS UPON HOW PARANOID YOU ARE. MAKE SURE YOUR BIKE IS IN SHIPSHAPE CONDITION BEFORE LEAVING HOME AND TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT WHILE TRAVELING, & HOPEFULLY THE NEED FOR A FRAME UN-BENDER OR CONE WRENCHES WON'T ARISE.

HERE IS A LIST OF TOOLS & SPARE PARTS I BROUGHT FOR A 3 MONTH TRIP:

- MULTI-TOOL (allen keys, hex wrenches, spoke wrenches)
- TOPEAK MOUNTAIN MORPH PUMP - UNDENIABLY THE BEST FRAME PUMP EVER MADE.
- MINI CHAIN BREAKER
- CASSETTE CRACKER (litty bitty tool which enables you to remove your cassette w/o chain whip and huge wrench! Genius!)
- PEDAL WRENCH (FOR BOXING IT UP) → GOOD FOR SMASHING OPEN COCONUTS in a pinch.
- MEDIUM SIZE ADJUSTABLE WRENCH.
- 2 TIRE LEVERS (PEDRO'S)
- 3 PATCH KITS
- 2 SPARE TUBES
- BUNCH A 5 AND 6 MM BOLTS FOR FENDERS AND RACKS, ALSO NYLOCK NUTS.
- SPARE BRAKE & DERAILLEUR CABLES (ONE EACH)
- 3 SPARE SPOKES
- SPARE CHAIN & SOME EXTRA LINKS
- 2 BOTTLES OF PROLINK LUBRICANT.
- 2 PAIRS OF BRAKE PADS

BRIEF NOTE

WE DID NOT CAMP FOR VARIOUS REASONS. FOR ONE THING, WE DIDN'T WANT TO UNWITTINGLY ANNIHILATE CULTURAL NORMS, AND CAMPING IS NOT EXACTLY POPULAR AMONG SE ASIANS. ALSO, FINDING GUESTHOUSES IS SURPRISINGLY EASY, EVEN IN VERY SMALL TOWNS. CONSIDERING THAT A ROOM (SPLIT BETWEEN 2 PEOPLE) COST 3-10 DOLLARS A NIGHT, AND THAT NOT CAMPING MEANT NO CAMPING GEAR TO DRAG AROUND, WE WERE WILLING TO LET GO OF THE INDEPENDENCE THAT CAMPING OFFERS.

SO I CAN'T TELL YOU MUCH ABOUT CAMPING. WE RAN INTO A FEW CYCLISTS WHO WERE CAMPING (THE MINORITY BY FAR) AND THEY SEEMED TO BE HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL. THEY SURE WEREN'T SPENDING MUCH MONEY.



• CABLE LOCK - MAYBE 1/2" DIAMETER. I DON'T THINK YOU NEED A U-LOCK, PERSONALLY. NOT TOO MANY PEOPLE IN SE ASIA CAN AFFORD BOLT CUTTERS, LET ALONE WHATEVER IS REQUIRED TO POP A U-LOCK.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHILE YOU RIDE



SOAPBOX

LOOK, FRIEND, DO YOURSELF AND LEAVE YOUR iTHINGY AT HOME. EVERYONE ELSE IS CLIMBING A FAVOR AND FEEL LESS DRAMATIC WITHOUT BURNA BLASTING IN YOUR EARDRUMS, THE MENTAL FORTITUDE YOU WILL GAIN BY RELYING ONLY ON YOUR LITTLE BRAIN FOR ENTERTAINMENT IS PRICELESS. LISTENING TO MUSIC BLOCKS OUT THE SOUNDSCAPE THROUGH WHICH YOU PASS, WHICH IS AS ESSENTIAL TO A BIKE RIDE AS THE CHORUS OF "HELLO!" "WHAT'S YOUR NAME!" "I LOVE YOU FOREVER!" AS YOU PASS THROUGH TOWNS AND VILLAGES-



HERE ARE SOME IDEAS:

- PLAN YOUR WEDDING
- ALREADY MARRIED? PLAN YOUR FUNERAL!
- WHAT WOULD YOU Really DO IF YOU WON 50 MILLION DOLLARS?
- THINK UP AS MANY EUPHEMISMS, CLICHES, & FIGURES OF SPEECH AS YOU CAN.
- TRY TO REMEMBER AS MANY BIRTHDAYS IN CONSECUTIVE ORDER GOING BACKWARDS AS POSSIBLE. DO OTHER AUSPICIOUS DATES AS WELL.
- THINK ABOUT 'FIRSTS': FIRST KISS, FIRST DATE, FIRST DRINK, ETC.
- MAKE UP HAIKU'S!! 5-7-5...
- CONTEMPLATE: IF YOU COULD SPEAK ALL LANGUAGES IN THE WORLD BUT HAD TO GIVE UP AN ARM TO DO SO, WOULD YOU GO FOR IT?
- WRITE SONGS THAT AREN'T CHEESY.
- SYNCHRONIZED DANCING
- HALLOWEEN COSTUMES
- + PARTY THEMES
- + WRITE LETTERS + POSTCARDS IN YOUR HEAD.
- CONTEMPLATE THE ENORMITY OF DEATH
- TELL YOURSELF YOUR LIFE STORY

A FEW NOTES ON FOOD

AND OTHER VAGUELY HEALTH RELATED TOPICS

FOOD! IT'S THE STUFF OF DREAMS AND, SOMETIMES, THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES. ON ANY BIKE TRIP, EATING BECOMES AS ESSENTIAL TO THE EXPERIENCE AS BIKING - IT IS AFTER ALL YOUR FUEL. BIKING IN SE ASIA IS NO EXCEPTION AND IN FACT THE DAILY SEARCH FOR FOOD WILL BE YOUR MOST RELIABLE BRIDGE INTO THE LOCAL CULTURE. YOU WILL LIKELY LIVE IN FEAR OF MUCH OF THE FOOD UNTIL YOU LEARN TO DISREGARD ALL COMMON SENSE, WESTERN STANDARDS OF HYGIENE, AND WARNINGS ISSUED BY TRAVEL DOCTORS EVERYWHERE.

BEDBUGS: THE SCOURGE OF MANKIND

I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT YOU WILL AVOID BEDBUGS IN SE ASIA. LOOK FOR SMALL, BROWNISH STAINS DOTTING YOUR SHEETS - BLOOD STAINS! GROSS! ON YOURSELF, BE WARY OF 3-5MM ROUND, RED, FLAT SPOTS ON YOUR ARMS, LEGS & FACE. IT IS A MYTH THAT THE CREATURES ARE TOO SMALL TO SEE - THEY ARE ABOUT THE SIZE OF AN APPLE SEED. WHILE FEASTING, THEY MAY STAY FOR AS LONG AS 10 MINUTES SUCKING YOUR BLOOD! BEDBUGS ARE A BUMMER, BUT THEY ARE NOT A DISEASE VECTOR AND THEIR BITES AREN'T TOO ITCHY. HAVE FUN!

YOU SEE, BICYCLING WILL BRING YOU TO

DUSTY TOWNS AND ROADSIDE STOPS WITH NO MORE OPTIONS THAN A TACITURN LADY SERVING VARIOUS SLUDGES OUT OF POTS WHICH HAVE



MY STOMACH HURTS!

IT'S IN YOUR HEAD!

NO, REALLY, IT HURTS!

JUST KEEP BIKING!



BEEN SITTING IN THE SUN FOR GOD KNOWS HOW LONG. YOU WILL BE STARVING, IT WILL BE THE ONLY SHOW IN TOWN YOU'LL EAT IT. YOU WILL EAT SANDWICHES PREPARED BY WOMEN WHOSE HANDS MOMENTS AGO TOUCHED MONEY 2ND RAW MEAT. YOU WILL DRINK FROM GLASSES THAT MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN WASHED. EVENTUALLY YOU WILL CRACK AND BEGIN EATING THE QUIVERINGLY FRESH PLATES OF RAW GREENS THAT ACCOMPANY YOUR BOWLS OF PHO. YOU WILL LIKELY SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES AT TIMES, BUT GIVEN THAT THE BEST AND CHEAPEST FOOD IS OFTEN THE RISKIEST, AND GIVEN ALSO THAT YOU'LL HAVE NO CHOICE IN MANY SITUATIONS, IT'S WORTH IT.

RABIES!
 ARE YOU AS SCARED OF DYING OF RABIES AS I AM? THE FACT IS, AFTER SYMPTOMS SHOW IT IS 100% FATAL, AND RABIES SHOTS ARE PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE. IT IS A BAD WAY TO GO. IN SE ASIA, YOU'LL WANT TO AVOID ANGRY MONKEYS, WHICH SHOULDN'T BE HARD, AND PSYCHOTIC DOGS. THIS SHOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM B/C DOGS IN SE ASIA SIMPLY CANNOT BE BOTHERED TO CHASE YOU. SO YOU'LL PROBABLY BE FINE W/O A VACCINE, BUT DON'T GO BLAMING ME IF YOU DIE OF RABIES!



just could be more like a tree

BT THE WAY! WHERE I BIKE IT WAS NO PROBLEM TO FIND FOOD AND DRINK ALONG THE ROAD. WE CEASED TO CARRY ANY SNACKS W/US B/C FOOD APPEARED SO REGULARLY.





Recommended Reading...:~

PLEASE NOTE THAT IF A BOOK IS LISTED HERE THEN I LIKELY USED IT AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION IN THIS BOOK, SO YOU CAN THINK OF THIS AS MY REFERENCES SECTION AS WELL!

LAOS:

- * ONE FOOT IN LAOS - DERVLA MURPHY
- * THE SPIRIT CATCHES YOU + YOU FALL DOWN

VIETNAM:

- THE THINGS THEY CARRIED - TIM O'BRIEN
- * CATFISH + MANDALA

CAMBODIA:

- * WHEN THE WAR WAS OVER - ELIZABETH BECKER
- GECKO TAILS

FIRST THEY KILLED MY FATHER

* = VERY GOOD, INFORMATIVE AND/OR AFFECTING.

P.S. I READ NO BOOKS ABOUT THAILAND!

ON GUIDEBOOKS:

There is no reason on God's green earth for you to buy guide books BEFORE ARRIVING IN SE ASIA. WHY? B/C YOU CAN GET SUPER cheap PHOTOCOPIES OF THE LATEST VERSIONS OF THE LONELY PLANET (and others) in ANY SEMI-MAJOR SE ASIAN CITY. Yes, it is illegal, but all's fair in love and copyright violation. I say!



THAILAND

LAND OF A THOUSAND CREEPY WHITE MEN
SAWADEE!

I KNOW PRACTICALLY NOTHING ABOUT RIDING BIKES IN THAILAND, BUT I DO KNOW THIS: IT IS A GREAT PLACE TO START A TRIP. BEING A GOOD, COOPERATIVE CAPITALIST COUNTRY, THAILAND HAS LOADS OF STUFF. THIS MEANS YOU'LL QUITE EASILY FIND ANY LAST MINUTE BITS + PIECES YOU'VE FORGOTTEN - EVEN IF IT'S A CHRIS KING HEADSET!

A PRICELESS TIP: FLY INTO THE SMALL NORTHERN CITY OF CHIANG MAI, RATHER THAN THAT FESTERING CITY OF ONANISTS AND SODOMITES DOWN SOUTH (BANGKOK). IT COST ME NO EXTRA MONEY AND MADE LIFE MUCH EASIER.

OUR ROUTE IN THAILAND:

FROM OUR STARTING POINT IN CHIANG MAI, WE BIKED NE TO CHIANG RAI, + FROM THERE TO THE TOWN OF CHIANG KONG, AT WHICH POINT WE CROSSED INTO LAOS. THERE WERE PLENTY OF GUESTHOUSES ALONG THE WAY.

FACT FILE:

POPULATION: 63 million

Gov't: constitutional
monarchy
(Thais ♥ their king!)

Religion: Extremely
Buddhist

Capital: Bangkok

Claim to fame: Phad Thai/
thriving sex industry

currency: Baht

OTHER THAN A BRIEF CROSSING INTO NONG KAI FROM VIENTIANE TO RENEW OUR LAO VISAS, WE DIDN'T BREATHE THE RAREFIED AIR OF THAILAND AGAIN UNTIL THE END OF OUR TRIP. WE CROSSED FROM POI PET IN CAMBODIA TO ARANYA-PRATHET, AND IT WAS THEN THAT WE REALIZED THAT THAILAND HAS, W/O A DOUBT, THE BEST FOOD IN SE ASIA. 13

THAI PEOPLE HAVE FOOD FIGURED OUT,
THIS IS MADE CLEAR BY THE LEGIONS OF
CHUBBY PEOPLE EVERYWHERE (OR MAYBE
THIS PHENOMENON IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT
THAILAND HAS MORE WEALTH THAN ITS NEIGHBORS).

ANYWAYS!

FROM ARANYAPRATHET WE RODE TO PRACHINBURI,
200 KM NE OF BANGKOK, + CAUGHT A TRAIN
INTO THE MONSTER CITY.

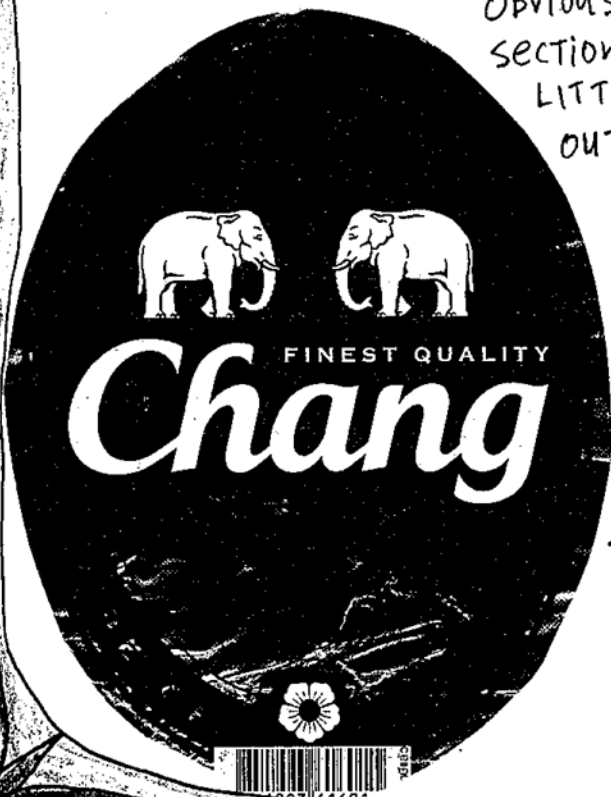
OBVIOUSLY, THIS
SECTION NEEDS A
LITTLE FLOSHING
OUT...

SUFFICE
TO
SAY:

I



THAILAND



LAOS

PEOPLE'S (A.K.A
DEMOCRATIC COMMIES!)
REPUBLIC

AH, SWEET LAOS. IF I COULD MARRY A COUNTRY IT WOULD SURELY BE YOU, LAOS. AND IF I COULD ADOPT A GREETING AS MY OWN, IT WOULD BE YOURS: SABAIDEe!!!



LAOS IS A FANTASTIC PLACE TO RIDE BIKES. THERE IS ONLY ONE PAVED NORTH-SOUTH HIGHWAY, HIGHWAY 13. FROM LUANG PRABANG IN THE NORTH TO THE REMARKABLY SEDATE CAPITAL OF VIENTIANE ROUGHLY 800 KM SOUTH, IT IS THE SE ASIAN EQUIVALENT OF THE PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - THAT IS TO SAY, IT TEEMS WITH CYCLISTS. AND FOR GOOD REASON! THE FIRST 400 KM OUT OF L.P. ARE A HILL-CLIMBING MASOCHIST'S DREAM. THE SCENERY IS BRAIN-ACHINGLY STUNNING AT EVERY BEND IN THE ROAD, OF WHICH THERE ARE MANY. ETHEREAL LIMESTONE FORMATIONS JUT SKYWARD PRECIPITOUSLY, DEFYING GRAVITY AND ALL CONCEPTIONS ABOUT WHAT MOUNTAINS ARE SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE.

TO MY ABJECT DISMAY, I DID NOT BIKE THIS SECTION DUE TO MAJOR KNEE PROBLEMS. THIS LED TO AN EMOTIONAL MELTDOWN WHICH MY TRAVELING COMPANION WEATHERED BRAVELY + TO AN OATH TO RETURN SOMEDAY. WE TOOK A BUS 400 KM SOUTH AND BIKED FROM THERE.

MIDWAY BETWEEN LP + VIENTIANE LIES VANG VIENG: THE WORST PLACE I'VE EVER BEEN. IF YOU HAVE A PENCHANT FOR TOWNS WHICH EXIST SOLELY TO INDULGE THE CRAVEN DESIRES OF TOURISTS, BY ALL MEANS GO. OTHERWISE, STEER CLEAR IF POSSIBLE.

WANNA KNOW
SOMETHING FUNNY?
BETWEEN 1964 + 1973,
THE U.S. DROPPED A BOMB
ON LAOS ON AVERAGE EVERY
8 MINUTES ROUND THE CLOCK
AND THEY WEREN'T EVEN AT
WAR! NOW THERE ARE 1,000'S
OF UNEXPLODED CLUSTER
BOMBS RIDDLING THE
COUNTRYSIDE, WAITING TO
MAIM + KILL UNSUSPECTING
PEASANTS. ISN'T
THAT FUNNY?

LAOS FACT FILE

POPULATION: 7 MILLION

GOV'T: I GUESS YOU COULD CALL IT "FREE MARKET COMMUNIST."

CAPITAL: VIENTIANE

MOST REVERED FOOD: STICKY RICE

CURRENCY: KIP

COST FOR 2 BOWL OF NOODLE SOUP: 10,000 KIP (ABOUT \$1.50)



I'M CONFUSED! YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT BIKING ON THE ONLY MAJOR N-S HWY IN THE COUNTRY! ISN'T THERE LOADS OF TRAFFIC?

GOOD QUESTION! THE ANSWER IS no! THERE AREN'T VERY MANY CARS IN LAOS BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE TOO POOR TO OWN THEM. TRAFFIC CONSISTS MOSTLY OF BUSES, MOTORBIKES, AND TRUCKS- AND OUTSIDE OF CITIES THE VOLUME IS PRETTY LOW. IT MAY BE CALLED A HIGHWAY, BUT BY U.S. STANDARDS IT'S MORE LIKE A COUNTRY ROAD.

FOOD + ACCOMODATION: ALONG HWY 13 (WHICH IS THE ONLY ROAD I BIKED ON IN LAOS) THERE IS PLENTY OF FOOD + THERE ARE FREQUENTLY GUESTHOUSES IN TINY TOWNS WHICH CLEARLY DON'T GET MANY VISITORS. FOOD GENERALLY CONSISTS OF NOODLE SOUP (PHO), STICKY RICE (KHAO NIAO) AND GRILLED CHICKEN (PING KAI). IF YOU ARE SMART, YOU WILL LEARN TO AVOID THE GRAY, FLAVORLESS, RUBBERY PORK BALLS THAT COME IN THE NOODLE SOUP. THEY'RE DISGUSTING!

MY ROUTE: THIS HERE MAP SHOWS YOU WHAT LAOS LOOKS LIKE (SORT OF). WE TOOK A TWO DAY BOAT TRIP DOWN THE MEKONG TO L.P., THEN HEADED SOUTH TO VIENTIANE WHERE WE STAYED FOR 3 WEEKS TEACHING ENGLISH TO LAO RUGBY PLAYERS. THEN WE HEADED SOUTH AGAIN AND TOOK A LEFT ONTO HWY 9 (I LIED EARLIER WHEN I SAID I'D ONLY BIKED ON HWY 13). THIS ROAD TOOK US STRAIGHT TO VIETNAM. AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE'S A LOT OF LAO I HAVEN'T SEEN!



AND
NOW LADIES
AND GENTLEMEN...

the ONLY LAO LANGUAGE LESSON YOU'LL EVER NEED!

(JUST KIDDING, BUT AT LEAST IT'S A START)

LEARNING SPOKEN LAO is NOT AS HOPELESS AS YOU MAY THINK. YES, IT'S TONAL AND THAT SUCKS, BUT the GOOD NEWS IS: IT HAS NO CONJUGATIONS, NO ARTICLES, NO PLURALS, AND ALMOST NO TENSES!

SOME USEFUL VERBS:

- HAVE: MII
- WANT: YAAK
- GO: BPAI
- RIDE: KEE
- LIKE: MAK
- LOVE: HAK
- EAT/DRINK: GIN
- DAI: CAN
- DJAI: PAY
- KHAO JAI: UNDERSTAND
- HET: BE
- PAK: LIVE
- Hien: STUDY

A FEW NOUNS:

- LOT-TIP: BICYCLE
- LOT-ME: BUS
- LOT: VEHICLE (CAR)
- BAN-PAH: GUESTHOUSE
- KAI: CHICKEN
- MUU: PORK
- KHAI: EGG
- PHAD KAD: FRIED RICE
- KAO NIAO: STICKY RICE
- PING KAI: CHICKEN ON A STICK
- KHON: PERSON
- HAN AHAAN: RESTAURANT
- HONG NAM: BATHROOM
- NAM: WATER

MORE NOUNS:

- PAH: FISH
- MAK PAO: COCONUT
- TAM MAK HOUNG: PAPAYA SALAD
- HOUNG Hien: SCHOOL

ADJECTIVES, ETC. (emphasis on the "etc.")

- SEHP: DELICIOUS
- KAI: NEAR } THIS IS PROBLEMATIC
- KAI: FAR } PROBLEMATIC
- YUU-PAN: OVER THERE
- YUU-ni: OVER HERE

- ANii: THIS ONE
- A nan: THAT ONE
- YUU-SAI: WHERE
- NYAK: DIFFICULT
- MYAN: WHAT
- JAK-LAK: HOW FAR

- KOI: I
- JAO: YOU
- KHONG KOI: MINE
- KHONG JAO: YOURS
- MUU-unn: TOMORROW
- MUU-nii: TODAY
- O'clock: MOUNG
- TAM-KAM: QUESTION
- KHAWP DJAI: THANK YOU
- (there is no word for please)

SOME OTHER STUFF:

BAW!: TO FORM A YES/NO QUESTION, PUT BAW AT THE END. FOR EXAMPLE:

KHAO JAI BAW MEANS, "DO YOU UNDERSTAND?"

TO ANSWER YES, YOU SAY "KHAO JAI." TO ANSWER NO YOU SAY "BAW KHAO JAI." BAW IS AS CLOSE AS LAO COMES TO HAVING A WORD

FOR NO.

THE EASIEST WAY TO SAY YES IS A SORT OF GRUNT "uh." THERE ARE DIFFERENT YES'S FOR DIFFERENT CONTEXTS, BUT I NEVER FIGURED THEM OUT.

THAO DAI:
HOW MUCH?

1: neung 2: SAWng 3: SAM 4: sii 5: HA 6: HOK 7: JET 8: PET 9: KHAO

FORMING SOME SIMPLE SENTENCES:

NO AND THAI ARE VERY SIMILAR. THE #'S ARE ALMOST IDENTICAL & YOU CAN MAKE YOURSELF UNDERSTOOD...

10: SIP 11: SIP-ET 12: SIP-SAWng 13: SIP-Sii, etc... 20: SAAD 21: SAAD-SAWng, etc. etc. 30: SAM-SIP 40: SII SIP, etc, etc. 100: HAWY 200: HAWY 400: HAWY 1000: HAWY

Mii khao niao, baw

Do you have sticky rice?
Insert any noun after "Mii" and you have a question!



Mii! → Yes, I do have sticky rice!
(Baw Mii would mean 'no' but they always have sticky rice...)

→ Sticky rice is generally stored in gigantic woven baskets.

BAW SAI SIN MUU!

Don't use pork!
or just say 'sin' meaning "meat."
This is how you avoid pork balls.



Hong nam yuu sai

Where is the bathroom?
insert any location in front of yuu-sai to ask where it is.



YAAKBPAI Vientiane!

I want to go to Vientiane!
Put any place name after Yaak Bpai to communicate where you are trying to go.



SOME PHRASES:

JAO JAK PII: How old are you?

JAO SUU NYAN: what is your name?

Mii luuk baw: Do you have children?

ON OUR SECOND DAY IN LAOS, WE BOARDED A BOAT WHICH TOOK US DOWN THE MEKONG TO LUANG PRABANG. BEFORE WE LEFT THE PORT AND THE BOAT'S CAPTAIN, HE THOUGHT THEY WERE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN TOO CROWDED, HE THOUGHT THEY WERE NUTS. IN AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE THEM CALM DOWN HE SAID: "IF YOU SAY THERE IS PROBLEM, THERE IS NO PROBLEM. IF YOU SAY THERE IS NO PROBLEM, THERE IS NO PROBLEM." THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS SIMPLE STATEMENT OF THIS RUN DEEP.

Some more phrases:

Koi kee lot-tip Bpai
my bike too

Koi HAK JAO: I Love you (you never know when you'll need this one)

Mii Hong baw: Do you have a room?

anni paasaa lao mee nyan: How do you say this in LAO?

hide

BY THE WAY!!!



PUT in your EARPLUGS + GRIT, YER TEETH
FOLKS, WE'RE GOING to

Vietnam

THE COUNTRY that never shuts up

REMEMBER that segment on Sesame Street, "One of These Things is Not Like the Other?" There were, perhaps, THREE ROUND OBJECTS + one SQUARE, and your FIVE YEAR OLD BRAIN HAD to FIGURE OUT WHICH one DIDN'T QUITE FIT. WELL, WITH RESPECT to ITS NEIGHBORS - ~~CAMBODIA~~ CAMBODIA, LAOS, AND THAILAND, VIETNAM IS the SQUARE. IT'S JUST not like the OTHERS. MAYBE IT'S the LANGUAGE, OR the RELIGION, OR the CHINESE INFLUENCE (MORE ON THESE LATER). WHATEVER THE REASON, IF I HAD to DESCRIBE VIETNAM USING one WORD IT WOULD BE **NUTSO-CRAZIO**. Some of you MAY BE THINKING, "BUT THAT'S TWO WORDS!" WELL, YOU NEED to be less UPTIGHT.

People in Vietnam are MARKEDLY MORE OUT-GOING THAN THEIR NEIGHBORS. INDEED, IT IS THE ONLY PLACE I GOT MY ASS GRABBED AND GOT AN UNSOLICITED KISS on the CHEEK (BOTH TIMES BY WOMEN).

Sin chào
Means Hello in
Vietnamese!



SALESPeople in VIETNAM ARE Tenacious AS Hell, and you may AT TIMES FEEL LIKE a WALKING DOLLAR SIGN. BUT HEY! You're not GOING to VIETNAM to SHOP! You JUST want to RIDE your BIKE and BE LEFT IN PEACE! Well, you won't BE LEFT IN PEACE, BUT IF YOU AVOID TOURISTY TOWNS YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT, THOUGH VIETNAM IS the ONLY PLACE WHERE people SHOUTED "Money! Money!" AT us AS we PASSED.

* You'll see a lot of ladies that look like this. They have very strong shoulders!

I Have a THEORY!



MY THEORY IS THAT VIETNAM'S DIFFERENT VIBE STEMS FROM 2 key elements:

#1: Language

THE LAO, THAI, AND KHMER LANGUAGES SHARE COMMON ANCESTRY; THEY ALL STEM VAGUELY FROM SOUTH INDIAN SCRIPT. LAO AND THAI ARE SO SIMILAR THAT THEY ARE MUTUALLY INTELLIBLE. VIETNAMESE, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS UTTERLY DISTINCT. THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE USES ROMAN SCRIPT, WITH MANY MODIFYING ACCENT MARKS AND CURLIQUES. IT WAS DEVELOPED BY SOME ENTERPRISING MISSIONARIES DURING THE 17th CENTURY, IN ORDER TO MORE EASILY SPREAD THE WORD OF GOD. PRIOR TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SYSTEM, CHINESE CHARACTERS WERE USED. IT BECAME THE OFFICIAL SCRIPT IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY AND NOW NO ONE CAN READ THE OLD DOCUMENTS!

#2: RELIGION

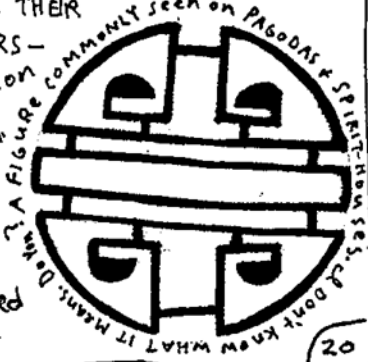
CAMBODIA, THAILAND, and LAOS ARE ALL EXTREMELY BUDDHIST. IT IS A CENTRAL ASPECT OF THEIR CULTURES. MEANWHILE, VIETNAM IS TECHNICALLY ATHEIST, WHAT WITH THAT WHOLE COMMUNISM THING. THE SECRET THAT EVERYONE KNOWS, HOWEVER, IS THAT ANCESTOR WORSHIP, CONFUCIANISM, + A BELIEF IN SPIRITS PERMEATES THE CULTURE. EVERYONE HAS AN ALTAR IN THEIR HOME, HONORING DECEASED FAMILY MEMBERS - REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEIR 'ACTUAL' RELIGION MAY BE. ENTIRE EXTENDED FAMILIES POOL THEIR RESOURCES TO BUILD "FAMILY TEMPLES."

to conclude...

seems to me that these two components could account for some of the cultural differences. Also the fact that China occupied Vietnam for 1,000 years (~ 938 AD) and left a deep impact.

VIETNAM FACT FILE:

- POPULATION: 86 MILLION
- GOV'T: FREE MARKET, ONE PARTY COMMUNISTS.
- # OF CARD CARRYING, REGISTERED COMMUNISTS: 2 MILLION
- CAPITAL: HANOI
- MOST LOVED LEADER: HO CHI MINH
- RELIGION: ER, UM... ATHEIST?
- FAVORITE FOOD: PHO



RIDING BICYCLES IN VIETNAM.

RIDING BICYCLES IN VIETNAM IS LOUD. SO LOUD. HONKING IS AS INTEGRAL TO DRIVING AS STEERING AND BRAKING - PERHAPS MORE SO. TRAFFIC IS THICKER THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY WE BIKED IN.

IT CONSISTS ALMOST ENTIRELY OF MOTOR BIKES, BUSES, BICYCLES, BI-PEDS AND QUADRI-PEDS. DESPITE THE HIGH VOLUME AND GENERAL ANARCHY ON THE ROADS, I NEVER FELT UNSAFE WHILE RIDING.

OUR ROUTE: UPON ENTERING VIETNAM FROM LAOS, WE MADE A BEELINE FOR THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, WHICH PROVIDED US WITH ALL THE JOY THAT OCEANS USUALLY PROVIDE. WE THEN HEADED SOUTH ON HWY 1A, WHICH WAS A COMPLETE ZOO.

Well friend, one of the most disturbing sights I ever saw was on the road EAST in LAOS TOWARD Vietnam. As we were biking we were passed on 3 occasions BY EASTBOUND TRUCKS piled 15 FT HIGH AND 25 FT LONG WITH CAGES. EACH SMALL cage contained AT LEAST 3 MISERABLE MANGY DOGS - EITHER DEAD OR NEAR DEAD. You DO THE MATH!



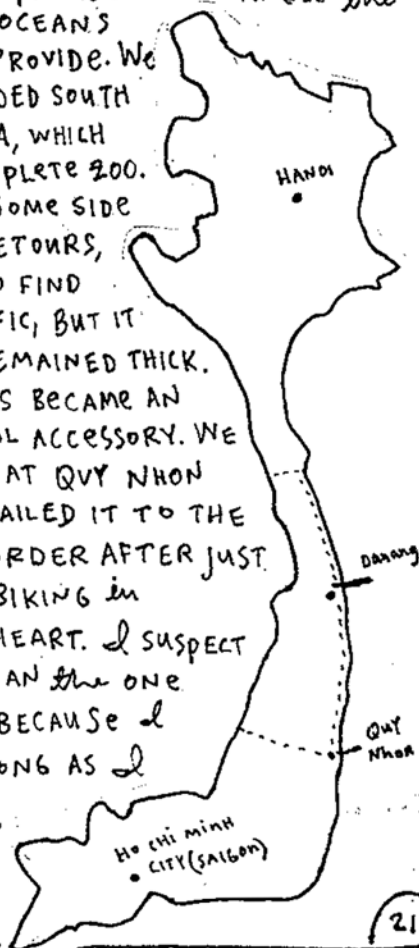
IS IT TRUE, do they eat dogs in Vietnam?

THE WORD FOR DOG MEAT IN VIETNAMESE IS 'THIT CHO.'

CAMBODIAN BORDER AFTER JUST TWO WEEKS. BIKING IN VIETNAM IS NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART. I SUSPECT THAT THERE ARE BETTER ROUTES THAN THE ONE WE CHOSE, BUT I WILL NEVER FIND OUT BECAUSE I WILL NEVER RETURN TO VIETNAM AS LONG AS I LIVE, SO HELP ME GOD.

ABOUT THE WAR -> VIETNAM IS A GREAT PLACE TO LEARN ABOUT THAT PESKY WAR. THERE ARE RELICS AND MONUMENTS EVERYWHERE.

WE TOOK SOME SIDE ROADS + DETOURS, HOPING TO FIND LESS TRAFFIC, BUT IT ALWAYS REMAINED THICK. EAR PLUGS BECAME AN ESSENTIAL ACCESSORY. WE CUT WEST AT QUY NHON AND HIGHTAILED IT TO THE



FOOD AND ACCOMODATIONS in VIETNAM

WHERE WE BIKED WE HAD NO T-ROUBLE FINDING BEDS + SUSTENANCE (EXCEPT DURING TET, SEE BOX BELOW). IT WAS SOMETIMES CHALLENGING to FIND ANYTHING BESIDES PHO (NOODLE SOUP), AND VIETNAMESE NOODLE SOUP IS A) NOT FILLING AND B) NOT DELICIOUS, BUT WE GOT BY. THE WORD "COM" (RICE) WILL GET YOU A LONG WAY, ESPECIALLY WHEN COMBINED WITH A PANTOMIMED SPOON-TO-MOUTH GESTURE.



DELICIOUS CANDY

THE CROWN JEWEL OF VIETNAMESE ROADSIDE REFRESHMENT IS NUOC MIA: FRESH SUGARCANE JUICE. YOU ARE A FOOL IF YOU DON'T IMBIBE COPIOUS QUANTITIES OF IT.

THIS SPACE LEFT BLANK.

LANGUAGE:

TET: IN FRENCH IT MAY MEAN 'HEAD', BUT IN VIETNAM IT MEANS NO F-ING LITTLE EFFORT to LEARN VIETNAMESE FOOD! Tet is VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR, AND IT IS SUCH A BIG DEAL THAT THE ENTIRE COUNTRY OF JITTERY CAPITALISTS SHUTS DOWN FOR 7-10 DAYS! THIS IS BAD NEWS FOR HUNGRY CYCLISTS WHO WANT NOTHING MORE THAN SOME RICE AND CHICKEN. ONE NIGHT DURING TET WE HAD COOKIES, BEER, AND A PAPAYA FOR DINNER. FINDING PLACES TO STAY WAS NEVER A PROBLEM, SO DON'T FRET ABOUT THAT. TET TAKES PLACE IN THE LAST 2 WEEKS OF JANUARY OR THE FIRST 2 WEEKS OF FEBRUARY. CHUC MUNG NAM MOI! (HAPPY NEW YEAR)

I'LL ADMIT THAT I MADE VERY MESE. THE HERCULEAN EFFORT THAT I MADE IN LAOS to LEARN the LANGUAGE, COMBINED WITH the FACT THAT VIETNAMESE IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT MADE FOR A LOSING PROPOSITION. 'SIN CHAO' MEANS HELLO, BUT NO ONE SEEMS to SAY IT (THEY ALL SAY HELLO) AND 'CAM ON' MEANS THANK YOU, BUT NO ONE SEEMS TO SAY THAT EITHER. WHAT'S A TRAVELER TO DO? SMILE AND GESTICULATE, I GUESS.



Oh,

CAMBODIA

LAND OF THE KRAMA... AND A MILLION
OTHER WORDS THAT START WITH "K."


Perhaps you are like me before I went to CAMBODIA,
AND ALL YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS HOT DUSTY COUNTRY ARE THE WORDS
"KHMER ROUGE" AND "POL POT." Maybe you have some vague notion
OF TURMOIL AND ATROCITIES, BUT FEW DETAILS.

WELL, FRIENDS, BEFORE I TELL YOU ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT CAMBODIA, I WILL
ATTEMPT TO SUMMARIZE VERY BROADLY THE UNFORTUNATE EVENTS FOR
WHICH CAMBODIA OWES ALL RECENT GLOBAL NOTORIETY.

CHOOSING A MORE OR LESS RANDOM STARTING POINT (B/C WE ALL KNOW
THAT EVENTS IN HISTORY ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO THOSE WHICH TOOK
PLACE PRIOR, AND SO ON AND SO FORTH) WE WILL BEGIN IN 1970. IN THIS YEAR
KING SIHANOUK WAS OVERTHROWN BY A RIGHTIST FACTION LED BY A MAN
NAMED LON NOL, WHOSE NAME IS THE SAME BACKWARDS AS IT IS FORWARDS.

LON NOL AND HIS BUDDIES WERE PISSED
AT SIHANOUK FOR REJECTING THE U.S.,
CALLING HIMSELF A SOCIALIST, AND
ACCEPTING WEAPONS FROM THE NORTH
VIETNAMESE AND THE CHINESE (WHICH
HE THEN USED AGAINST THE COMM-
UNISTS - OR "KHMER ROUGE" IN
HIS OWN COUNTRY, WHICH IS VERY
CONFUSING). MEANWHILE,

THE KHMER ROUGE, LED
BY POL POT (NÉE SALOTH
SAR) WERE ALSO ANGRY
ABOUT ALL SORTS OF



CAMBODIA! FIRST PLACE WINNER IN THE CONTEST:
WHICH SE ASIAN COUNTRY CAN FIT THE MOST PEOPLE
ONTO ONE MOTORBIKE? THEY TAKE THE GOLD
WITH SIX!!!

HAD BEEN ATTEMPTING UNSUCCESSFULLY TO FOMENT COUNTRYWIDE REVOLUTION. BOY WERE THEY ANNOYED WHEN LON NOL BEAT THEM & THE GOV'T OVERTHROWN!

THE K.R. WERE NOTHING IF NOT TERRACIOUS AND SO FROM 1970-1975 THEY WAGED WAR AGAINST LON NOL. I THINK THAT SOMEWHERE IN THERE SIHANOUK AND THE K.R. ENTERED INTO AN UNEASY ALLIANCE. THESE WERE SOME UNPLEASANT YEARS.

APRIL 17th, 1975 IS A DAY THAT LIVES IN INFAMY FOR ALL CAMBODIANS. ON THIS DAY THE KHMER ROUGE TOOK CONTROL OF THE CAPITAL, PHNOM PENH. THEY FORCED ALL 2 MILLION OF ITS INHABITANTS INTO THE COUNTRY-SIDE AND THE CITY REMAINED NEARLY DESERTED FOR THE DURATION OF THE KHMER ROUGE'S RULE.

THESE GUYS WERE INTENT UPON ATTEMPTING ~~MA~~ ~~MA~~ ^A RADICAL SOCIETAL ^{AND RELIGION!} MAKEOVER. THEY ABOLISHED ALL CURRENCY AND PRIVATE ANYTHING! AND FORCED THE ENTIRE COUNTRY INTO WORK CAMPS. BETWEEN 1975-79, 2 MILLION CAMBODIANS (1/3 OF THE POPULATION) DIED OF STARVATION, PREVENTABLE DISEASES, AND OUTRIGHT EXECUTION. SOME COMMUNIST UTOPIA THEY CREATED. ~~MA~~ ~~MA~~

ON JANUARY 7, 1979, THE VIETNAMESE SIEZED PHNOM PENH, ~~MA~~ SPELLING DISASTER FOR THE K.R. THE REGIME WAS EFFECTIVELY ENDED, THOUGH CIVIL WAR RAGED FOR ANOTHER 14 YEARS. THERE WERE ALSO, OF COURSE, FAMINES AND EPIDEMICS.

THE VIETNAMESE INSTALLED A 28 YEAR OLD FORMER KHMER ROUGE SOLDIER AS PRIME MINISTER - HUN SEN WAS HIS NAME AND HE'D BEEN FIGHTING SINCE HE WAS 16.

Angkor

MY COUNTRY MY BEER

THE KRAMA.....

THIS IS A CHECKED SCORE THAT IS AS ESSENTIAL TO CAMBODIAN LIFE AS RICE. OFTEN RED + WHITE CHECKED, BUT MANY OTHER COLORS ALSO. THE KRAMA IS AN ASTONISHINGLY

MULTI-PURPOSE ACCESSORY. IT IS A HEAD COVERING, A SKIRT, A SLING, A TOWEL, A TOW-ROPE, A GREASE RAG, A CARRYING-STRAP, A CURTAIN, A TABLECLOTH, A BLANKET, A BAG, AND GOD KNOWS WHAT ELSE!

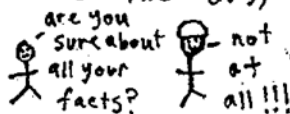
SKIPPING OVER ALL SORTS OF CRAZY STUFF LIKE THE U.S. + U.N. SUPPORT OF POL POT + THE KHMER ROUGE (TO THEM, ANYTHING WAS BETTER THAN THE VIETNAMESE HAVING CONTROL) LET'S TALK ABOUT 1993. THIS WAS THE YEAR OF

THE U.N. ORCHESTRATED ELECTIONS. IT IS VERY CONFUSING, BUT ULTIMATELY HUN SEN WON, THOUGH SIHANOUK'S SON NORODON WON THE MAJORITY. WHAT I GATHER IS THAT HUN SEN THREW A BIG BABY FIT UNTIL HE GOT HIS WAY.

IN 1998, POL POT DIED AND WAS IGNOMINIOUSLY BURNED ON A PYRE OF TIRES.

18 YEARS AFTER THE ELECTIONS, HUN SEN IS STILL P.M. AND IS EXPECTED TO WIN THE 2013 ELECTIONS. ACCORDING TO OPPOSITION PARTY MP MU SOCHUA, HE IS IN POWER DUE ONLY TO CHEATING AND CORRUPTION, BUT THE PEOPLE OF CAMBODIA CANNOT STOMACH ANOTHER CIVIL WAR, WHICH MAY BE THE ONLY WAY TO OUST HIM. AND SO CAMBODIA MOVES ALONG, EACH PERSON IMPACTED EVERYDAY BY THE VIOLENCE OF THE '60'S, 70'S, 80'S, AND EARLY '90'S.

THAT WAS EXHAUSTING!



RIDING BIKES IN CAMBODIA:

IN MY OPINION, RIDING BIKES IN CAMBODIA IS FANTASTIC. I DON'T KNOW WHY I THINK THIS B/C WHERE WE BIKED THE ROAD WAS FLAT & STRAIGHT & THE SCENERY BORING. GO FIGURE! WE ENTERED IN THE NE AND BIKED TO BANLUNG ALONG HWY . FROM THERE WE

HEADED TO KRATIE & THEN PHNOM PENH. THE TRIP FROM BANLUNG TO P.P. WAS DONE BY BUS B/C TIME WAS GETTING SHORT & THERE WERE SOME NASTY STRETCHES OF NOTHINGNESS & DIRT. IT WAS DURING ONE OF THESE BUS RIDES THAT A SMALL,

FACT • FILE

POPULATION: 14 MILLION
RELIGION: THERAVADA BUDDHIST
AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT 70% OF THE POP. LIVES OFF PER DAY: \$2.00
COST OF A MEAL AT AN AVERAGE RESTAURANT: \$2-3.00.
LANGUAGE: KHMER
HELLO: SOO SA DIE
THANK YOU: OKOON
CLAIM TO FAME: ANGKOR WAT/
Genocide

SCARED MONKEY PEEED ALL OVER ME AND MY SEAT, RE-AFFIRMING WHAT I ALREADY KNEW: TRAVELING BY BICYCLE IS THE ONLY WAY TO TRAVEL.

SIX FROM PHNOM PENH TO SIEM REAP WE BIKE ALONG HWY 6. THERE WERE PLENTY OF GUESTHOUSES AND FOOD AT APPROPRIATE INTERVALS. THE ROAD WAS PAVED AND FLAT AND AND TRAFFIC WAS NOT A PROBLEM, ALTHOUGH IT SHOULD BE NOTED.

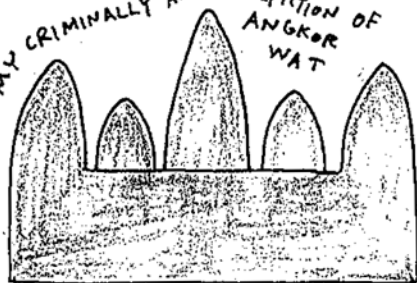
GO TO

TRAFFIC IN CAMBODIA IS FASTER & MORE CHAOTIC THAN ANY OF THE OTHER COUNTRIES I BIKE IN. BIKING IN PHNOM PENH RUSH HOUR TRAFFIC IS A THRILLINGLY TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE!

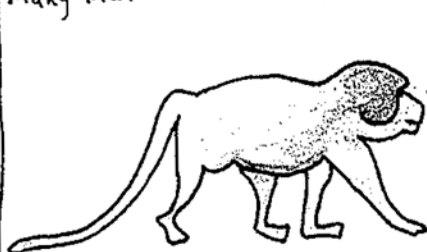
ANGKOR WAT!!!

IT'S NOT JUST ANOTHER COLLECTION OF CRUMBLING STONE BUILDINGS. SPEND SEVERAL DAYS! WE ONLY SPENT ONE DAY AND I'LL REGRET IT ETERNALLY. THE ENORMOUS, ALL-POWERFUL TREES ARE THE MOST STUNNING ASPECT OF THE PLACE. THEY INTERTWINE WITH THE RUINS, CREATING A MASTERFUL COLLABORATION BETWEEN HUMAN & NATURAL ARCHITECTURE. GO!!!

MY CRIMINALLY AWFUL DEPICTION OF ANGKOR WAT



A FEW MORE NOTES ON CAMBODIA: MORE ENGLISH IS SPOKEN HERE THAN IN ANY OF ITS NEIGHBORS. THE FOOD IS SORT OF LACKLUSTER. MANY MEN WANDER AROUND WEARING NOTHING BUT A KRAMA. THERE ARE



LOADS OF PONY
YOU BETTER WATCH OUT OR I'LL PEE CARTS!! ON YOU!!!
Siem Reap (the city nearest to Angkor Wat) is a crap hole. Anyone over the age of 30 lived through genocide. It is FLAT. It is HOT. The Beer is weak. Go TO CAMBODIA, IT IS NICE.

Selecting a Map

CHOOSE YOUR MAP WITH THE CARE YOU WOULD (HOPEFULLY) USE IN SELECTING YOUR LIFE PARTNER - OR AT LEAST YOUR BICYCLE (WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE, REALLY?). THE QUALITY OF YOUR MAP WILL DICTATE WHETHER NAVIGATION IS FUN AND EASY OR HYSTERICAL FIT INDUCING. THE QUALITY OF YOUR MAP INDUCED HYSTERICAL FITS. THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO LEARN FROM OUR MISTAKES!

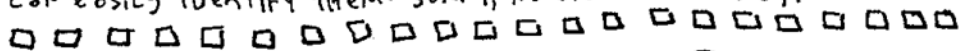
SOME CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER:

- ★ HOW CLEARLY IS TOPOGRAPHY MARKED?
- ★ ARE DISTANCES BETWEEN TOWNS LABELLED?
- ★ WHAT MATERIAL IS IT MADE OF? I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S CALLED, BUT SOME MAPS ARE MADE OF SUPER DURABLE PLASTICKY-TYVEK PAPER THAT HOLDS UP TO PUNISHING USE.
- ★ IS THE MAP CURRENT? IN SE ASIA, DIRT ROADS ARE BEING PAVED LIKE CRAZY, + PAVED ROADS ARE TURNING BACK TO DIRT, SO YOU'LL WANT THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFO.
- ★ DO THE NAMES OF TOWNS MATCH UP W/ THE NAMES THAT YOUR GUIDE BOOK USES? TRANSLITERATION DIFFERENCES CAN LEAD TO A WORLD OF ANNOYANCE.
- ★ AND OF COURSE YOU SHOULD CONSIDER SCALE!



OH! THE PEOPLE YOU'LL MEET!

WHILE BIKING IN SE ASIA, YOU'LL SURELY RUN INTO PLENTY OF OTHER TRAVELERS. AFTER 3 MONTHS OF INTENSIVE FIELD STUDY, I HAVE BROKEN ~~the~~ UNWIELDY MESS OF SE ASIAN TRAVELERS INTO SEVERAL DISTINCT CATEGORIES. I PRESENT THEM TO YOU NOW, WITH ILLUSTRATIONS OF EACH SPECIMEN, SO THAT YOU CAN EASILY IDENTIFY THEM. SORRY, NO DICHOTOMOUS KEY!



① THE TRAVELER'S TRAVELER ←

THIS TRAVELER IS FOUND MOST OFTEN AT BARS OR PERUSING ~~the~~ SOUVENIR MARKETS FOR WARDROBE ADDITIONS. HE OR SHE IS DISTINGUISHED MOST READILY BY THE CURIOUS PANTS WHICH HE OR SHE PREFERS. THESE PANTS DO NOT HAVE A PROPERLY POSITIONED CROTCH - IT IS INSTEAD LOCATED SOMEWHERE BY ~~the~~ ANKLES, GIVING ~~the~~ WEARER AN UNFORTUNATE POOPY PANTS AFFECT. WHILE THESE PANTS ARE QUITE PREVALENT AMONG TRAVELER'S TRAVELERS, THERE ARE NUMEROUS VARIATIONS ON ~~the~~ LIGHTWEIGHT COTTON, OFTEN BRIGHTLY COLORED PANTS. EXPERTS AGREE THAT THESE PANTS ARE RELATED ~~to~~ ~~the~~ MATING RITUALS OF TRAVELER'S TRAVELERS.

THE SHIRT IS INVARIABLY PRINTED WITH A LABEL FROM A REGIONAL BEER: BEERLAD, BEER CHANG (THAILAND), BEER SAGON, etc. etc. IT IS USED ~~to~~ NON-VERBALLY CONVEY TO OTHERS WHERE ~~the~~ WEARER HAS BEEN.

OTHER ACCOUTREMENTS INCLUDE: HEAD SCARF, LOADS OF DIRTY STRINGS TIED AROUND ~~the~~ WRISTS, A LONG-STRAPPED COTTON BAG, USUALLY WITH AN ELEPHANT MOTIF, A FRESH TATTOO, FAKE BIRKENSTOCKS, AND ALWAYS, ALWAYS A CIGARETTE.

MALE
OR
FEMALE?



② THE FRAT BOY TRAVELER



THIS FELLOW APPEARS TO HAVE BOARDED THE WRONG FLIGHT WHILE ATTEMPTING TO GO TO CANCUN - BUT NO WORRIES! HE IS AN ADAPTABLE GENTLEMAN, & AS LONG AS HE CAN WEAR BOARD SHORTS + FLIP FLOPS AND DRINK IN PUBLIC HE DOESN'T CARE WHERE HE IS. HE GENERALLY APPEARS DISHEVELED AND IS OFTEN SEEN IN THE COMPANY OF THE TRAVELER'S TRAVELER.

HE TOO SPORTS THE BEER LABEL SHIRT AND IS ALWAYS SMOKING A CIGARETTE.

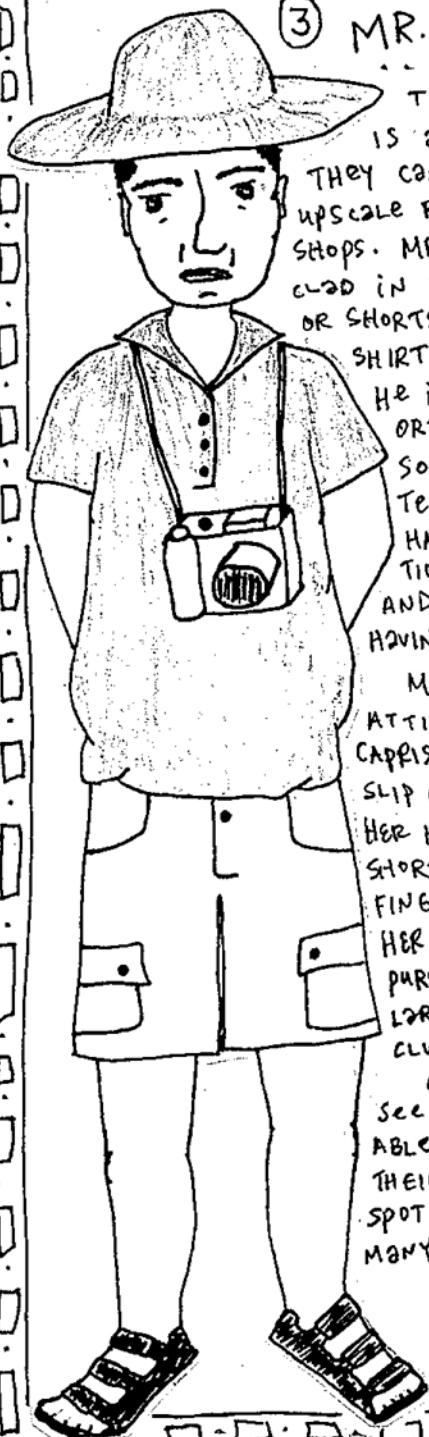
THE FEMALE COUNTERPART TO THE FRAT BOY IS USUALLY CLAD IN SOMETHING REVEALING, SKIMPY AND SCANDALOUS. SHE SOMEHOW HAD THE PRESENCE OF MIND, WHILE PREPARING TO GO TO SE ASIA, TO PACK ALL OF HER CUTEST OUTFITS.

THE TRAVELER'S TRAVELER, FRAT BOY, + HIS FEMALE COUNTERPART ARE ALL DEFINED BY THEIR CHARACTERISTIC ENORMOUS BACKPACKS. THEY LUG THEM AROUND LOOKING MISERABLE; GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT THE HELL IS INSIDE THEM.

HIS FEMALE COUNTERPART



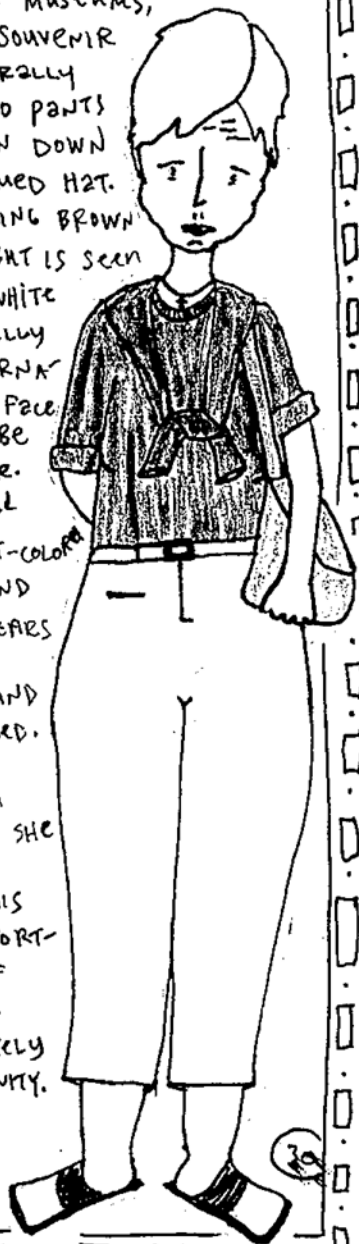
③ MR. AND MRS. GRUMPY



THE NATURAL HABITAT FOR THESE TWO IS AN AIR CONDITIONED TOUR BUS, BUT THEY CAN ALSO BE SEEN AT MUSEUMS, UPSCALE RESTAURANTS, AND SOUVENIR SHOPS. MR. GRUMPY IS GENERALLY CLAD IN LIGHTWEIGHT CARGO PANTS OR SHORTS, A POLO OR BUTTON DOWN SHIRT AND A LARGE BRIMMED HAT. HE IS MOST OFTEN WEARING BROWN ORTHOPAEDIC SANDALS, BUT IS SEEN SOMETIMES WEARING WHITE TENNIS SHOES. HE USUALLY HAS A LOOK OF CONSTERNATION OR ALARM ON HIS FACE AND DOES NOT SEEM TO BE HAVING A VERY GOOD TIME.

MRS. GRUMPY'S TYPICAL ATTIRE CONSISTS OF LIGHT-COLORED CAPS, A SWEATER SET, AND SLIP ON SANDALS. SHE WEARS HER HAIR IN A SENSIBLE SHORT BOB AND HER TOE AND FINGER NAILS ARE MANICURED. HER LIPS ARE USUALLY PURSED & SHE CARRIES A LARGE HANDBAG WHICH SHE CLUTCHES ANXIOUSLY.

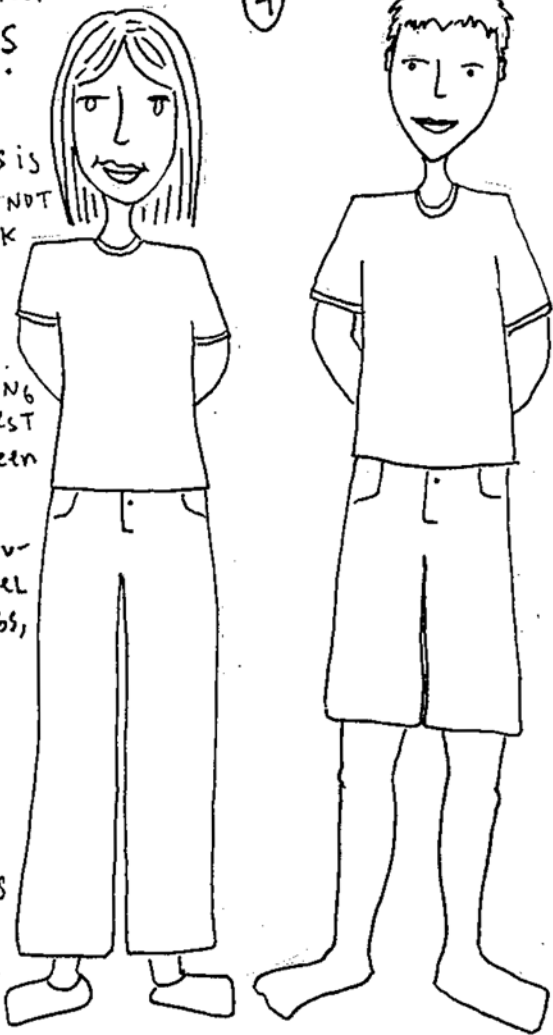
COUPLES SUCH AS THIS SEEM TO BE MOST COMFORTABLE IN LARGE HERDS OF THEIR OWN KIND; IF YOU SPOT ONE THERE ARE LIKELY MANY OTHERS IN THE VICINITY.



THE NORMAL-LOOKING PEOPLE TRAVELERS

(4)

THE MOST DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF THESE FOLKS IS THE FACT THAT THEY DO NOT LOOK DISTINCT. THEY LOOK LIKE REGULAR, CASUALLY DRESSED WESTERNERS, EXCEPT THEY ARE IN SE ASIA. THEIR CLOTHING IS PRACTICAL AND MODEST AND APPEARS ~~to~~ HAVE BEEN PURCHASED AT REI, OR THEIR COUNTRY'S EQUIVALENT. THEY OFTEN TRAVEL IN MALE-FEMALE PAIRINGS, BUT HAVE BEEN SIGHTED TRAVELING SOLO. THEY USUALLY APPEAR AS THOUGH THEY ARE ON A MISSION. MOST CYCLISTS, WHEN NOT ON THEIR BICYCLES, FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY.



YOU WILL, OF COURSE, SEE MANY OTHER TYPES OF TRAVELERS IN SE ASIA, BUT I BELIEVE THESE 4 CATEGORIES ENCOMPASS MOST OF THEM. THERE IS ONE CATEGORY WHICH I HAVE NOT INCLUDED AND THAT IS THE SINGLE WHITE MALE PRESUMED SEX TOURIST. YOU WILL KNOW HIM WHEN YOU SEE HIM, AND YOU WILL NOT MAKE EYE CONTACT.

I was going to put our route details here but then I got burned out on making this stupid book. Sorry. Route planning is really not that hard. Here are some useful websites:

travellingtwo.com

mr.pumpy.com

Figure it out yourself.



A FEW PARTING WORDS

MY FRIEND. I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT YOU'VE READ THIS COVER *to* COVER, AND IF YOU HAVE, I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY. DO YOU

FEEL SMARTER OR PRETTIER? DOUBTFUL.

DO YOU FEEL ANNOYED WITH ME FOR USING SO MANY WORDS *to* CONVEY VERY LITTLE INFORMATION? PROBABLY.

I WANT TO TELL YOU ONE MORE THING. IT IS THE MOTTO THAT MY TRAVEL PARTNER AND I MADE UP *to* DESCRIBE HOW TO RIDE BIKES ON SE ASIAN ROADS. IT IS SIMPLE, AND THE MEANING IS CLEAR: JUST GO.





