



Our life (episode 2).

Last time, I promised to write a little about the sort of people who share our lifestyle. Well, as it happens many of our friends are now returning to join

us here in Thailand, so let's start there ! They come from places as far apart as Norway and Sweden, Spain and Germany, Canada and the USA, and believe it or not , from Ireland ! Male, female, married, divorced, single and retired, they come for a variety of reasons. The usual age grouping is somewhere between nineteen and ninety years old, but there is the odd exception !

Now ! what do all of these lovely people have in common. It can honestly be said that in general they do not like Winter in their own country, especially the cold dark days. Economics plays a big part too. Heating a house in sub zero temperatures can often cost as much as air fares to Asia for two people. More than anything else, our friends are adventurous souls who love the freedom which travel offers. Single travelers often come here seeking partners. This subject would fill several books and I will not go into it today. Suffice it to say that many

happy relationships are forged. However, for every happy one there are many disasters. More of that another time !

Whilst most people come to escape the cold Winter months, others come to immerse themselves in the culture of this amazing land. There again some younger travelers, often bored with dead end jobs, come to work teaching English or even working in an IT role.



Living in a cold climate leads to isolation in Winter. People stay in their homes and venture out only when necessary. You can picture the scene ! It's a freezing cold morning and raining too; and you haven't been out of the house for three days. You dash to your car, drive to your local Supermarket, get what you need and drive back. Maybe you nod to an acquaintance whilst shopping, or even exchange a moan about the weather or the economy, but you do not have a meaningful conversation



with anyone. How boring !
We of course live a completely different life to you. Not necessarily better, it depends on your outlook, but certainly different.

Our friends are a diverse group of all ages. We live a largely outdoor life and mix socially with young and old alike ; which broadens our horizons immensely. In Ireland, and I'm sure in Italy too, it is not usual for an Eighty year old to socialise with people young enough to be their grandchildren. This

however, is quite normal amongst travelers ; who whilst eating in pavement cafes make many friendships, share information and give lots of help. Only this morning I had a highly amusing incident in our local Coffee Shop. It involved two Italian girls, about nineteen years old, who were ordering coffee. They had no English whatever and of course the Thai staff had no Italian. In the exchange the girls agreed several times with the girl serving them, saying Si, Si . What they did not realise was, that the Thai word for four is also pronounced Si. As a result of this they ended up with four coffees instead of the one which they wanted. Luckily, I was able to come to their rescue. I'm sure that when we visit Italy next year that we will have similar problems, and know that we will be helped by others.

This of course, is the magic of travel !

The most common question I get asked is " Don't you get bored sitting on the beach every day ? ". As we live hundreds of kilometers from the beach it is hardly likely ! But just to satisfy the curiosity of all those who ask, let's deal with the subject of boredom. Boredom happens when you have nothing interesting to do. A common enough occurrence on dark Winter evenings, when the most interesting possibility open to you might involve cleaning the oven , or doing the ironing. This, due to the fact that you have already seen all of the repeated programmes on TV. We, who mostly live in small hotels and guest houses do not have the benefit of an oven to clean or ironing to do. Therefore we have no

choice but to go out in the evening, dine with our friends or attend one of the numerous clubs and associations within walking distance. These range from Bridge Clubs to photography, writing, travel, cycling , and others too numerous to mention. Afternoons,



which are often too hot for walking, might necessitate a visit to the cinema or, even as a last resort, the swimming pool. So to answer the oft asked question, no we do not get bored, we simply don't have the time.

"Live Like You Mean It !" Screamed the advertisement for Beer which adorned the chair backs in one of our local Italian Restaurants. This of course could well be the motto of the seasoned traveller. It is not however my favourite ; which to this day is the motto written on a Tee Shirt admonishing us to "Live Your Dream, Don't Dream Your Life". To me this says it all. How many times do we hear people say that they wished they had done this or that. Or promising to travel the world some day. We believe that yesterday is gone and tomorrow may never come, so whatever you plan to do, then do it now. Some fifteen years ago, we took our own advice and began to travel. As the travel bug took hold of us, we downsized our home, in the process selling a National Award winning garden which had taken the previous fifteen years to develop. "How could you sell, that beautiful garden", my shocked sister asked.

The truth was, that although we were justifiably proud of our garden, it was beginning to take over our lives. Every waking moment had to be spent tending it, except during the dormant months from November to early Spring. This limited our opportunity for travel, so the garden had to go. What then brought us to where we are today ? Asia, having been recommended to us as a good place to travel, seemed a good place to start our adventures. So when in 1998 a small Insurance Policy of Ann's matured, we decided to take "the holiday of a lifetime." It had been our intention to go to Bali, but the political situation was too unstable ; so we went instead to Malaysia on a three week package holiday instead. Once there we soon learned that independent travel was far preferable to being herded around like sheep. Everyone who has ever gone on a Package Holiday is familiar with the hard sell of trips and tours, which masquerades as the "Welcome Meeting and free Cocktail". Once one decides to be independent there is no possibility of ever returning to the Package Tour. It is so much cheaper and so easy to arrange all your own travel and accommodation

Next time we will visit an Asian country and see first hand how easy it is to get around . Hope that you will find the time to join us.

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