

## We're not in Kansas anymore

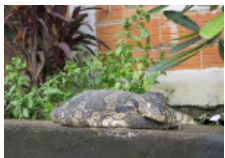


I've never quite so obviously been called a "foreigner" as here in Thailand. Twelve days off the bike, it's going to really hurt when I get back! But this is November, things are supposed to slow down at the bike shop because the weather is supposed to get sucky, so that's when I take my wife on vacation someplace where it's a bit warmer. Who knew that it would be one of the longest dry spells in history? I just looked at the 10 day outlook for the Bay Area, and it's got a "few showers" for this coming Tuesday... and that's it.

But Thailand called. Why Thailand? First, it's warm. OK, too warm actually; mid to upper-80s and muggy. Is this Orlando or something? Second, it requires long plane flights and for some reason I decided that November I wanted to fly 35,000 miles and there aren't too many places further than Thailand. Third, never been here before, and wanted to see something a bit different.

So far, I've accomplished all goals (well, I haven't actually flown the 35,000 miles yet, but I assume I'll make it back home). As I said, it's really warm, it's a long way from home, and yes, it's different. Think Shanghai, only not quite as built up. From my hotel window I can see maybe a dozen or so taller buildings, unlike Shanghai, where they stretch for as far as the eye can see.

English is spoken fairly widely, but unlike other places I've been, it's not a "bridge" language. The focus here is much more on the Chinese, and actually learning the Chinese language. Ironic since, in China, they're learning English because it's rapidly becoming the go-to intermediary or bridge language.



This guy looks like I&#8217;ll feel when I finally get back on my bike.



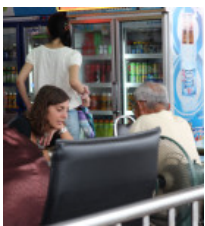
Was this house built primarily to serve as a clothes dryer?



Scary glove!



Stairs stairs &#038; more stairs, very much like China.



This woman was hanging on every word the fortune teller was saying.







Commercial products on umbrellas over burnt offerings surprised even me.



Why fixed bayonets? Expecting the crowd to charge?

