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Thailand Post Tsunamis

By **Henry Vacher**

It is the dawn of a new morning in the beautiful Andaman Beach in Phuket. Vendors start arriving

with their colourful goods; resort workers conscientiously prepare the many lounge chairs and umbrellas that will shield the noontday sun. The masseuses are waiting near the trees, chatting as they wait for customers. Life goes on for these Thais who depend on tourism for their livelihood. Everything is as it has always been, except for one important detail.

The tourists are nowhere to be found.

After the devastating tsunami that hit this once tourist-dense area of Southeast Asia the day after Christmas in 2004, the number of tourists in this picturesque Thai destination has gone down to a mere handful. Just a year ago you would have seen an almost frenzied horde of foreigners filling the beaches and the resorts, but today the picture is less festive, and more sombre.

However, the resilience of the people of Thailand is evident everywhere, especially where the tsunami's devastation hit the strongest. They are picking up their lives, continuing to perform their daily duties even though there is overwhelming evidence that things have definitely changed.

Tourism in areas near the coast of Thailand is at an all-time low. Resort operators are feeling the significant lack in tourist arrivals. Most hotels can only book less than ten percent of their capacity -despite cut-price rates and cheap packages being offered to lure back the tourists. In their frustration, operators now blame unfair media reporting that focused solely on the tsunami, but failed to report how these places have `bounced back'.

And the truth of the matter is, they're right. There really is no reason now not to return. The areas that were most damaged by the calamity is certainly back on its feet. The west coast of Thailand (which bore the brunt of the tsunami) is bouncing back, and the infrastructure is back in place. Just take a drive along the western coast, and you'll be greeted by such striking natural beauty, the same view that brought travelers here in the first place. Pristine beaches like Kata Beach, which was spared from the vicious waves, remains one of the most beautiful in the area, the gorgeous Phi Phi island is as idyllic as ever, and even the so-called `James Bond Island` off Phang Nga Province is as lovely as it was before the tsunami. Travelling to and from islands is back to normal, with boat transfers from the mainland all fully operational.

If you want a taste of paradise minus the crowds, and at extremely wallet-friendly prices, there has never been a better time to visit the western coast of Thailand. All the amenities and travel conveniences are in place. The cost of a great room on the beach and a delicious meal is achingly low. Even the wily street vendors are offering their goods at genuine bargain prices. The wonderful scenery is undeniably back to its former beauty, and the Thais are as hospitable as ever. A little scarred perhaps, but there with a ready smile, and an infectious optimism. No doubt about it, the crowds will be back sooner than we think.

Henry Vacher Sticky-Rice.com – For eating with your fingers!

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Visit Thailand - The Land Of Buddha

By Barney Garcia

Thailand is the perfect tourist destination for nature lovers, shopping lovers and for the followers of Buddhism. Thailand is all these teemed together and much more. Situated in the heart of South East Asia, Thailand has some of the best Buddhist temples, which offer peace, serenity and tranquility.

The Grand Palace and the Emerald Buddha

The temples and monasteries of Thailand date back to a few hundred years. The Emerald Buddha Temple is one of the most sacred sites in Thailand and requires visitors to be properly dressed before they can enter the holy place. The Jade statue of the Lord, which is elevated off the ground is a visual treat for visitors. This temple occupies just one corner of the court of the grand Palace.

Magnificent Bangkok

You must be out of your mind, if you visit Thailand and leave without visiting Bangkok. The capital of Thailand has everything that a tourist can dream of. Shopping plazas, Temples, Museums, Hotels offering exquisite Thai food, Islands, Beaches, Tall high-rises and a sprawling nightlife, Bangkok has it all. Be it the largest building in the world to be made of Teak wood, in Vinmanmek Teak Mansion, or the 46 meter long statue of reclining Buddha in the Wat Pho temple, you will never ceased to be stunned by the beauty of Thailand.

Shopping enthusiasts can head off to Siam Square, which is one of the most popular shopper's destinations in Thailand. Ma Boon Krong and Siam Center are two of the biggest shopping centers here. You can spend an entire day here and yet come back unsatisfied. There are so many restaurants, theatres and shops to keep you busy. Thailand also has cheap roadside shopping opportunities for tourists who do not wish to blow away much money on shopping.

For Nature Lovers

Nature lovers can head straight to the Ko Chang national park that has many activities. Apart from the wildlife, tourists can also pursue diving, snorkeling or elephant riding over here. The place usually overflows with tourists all the time. Beach lovers can head off to Pataya, which is a pretty serene beach. It is located just 150 kms away from Bangkok.

Go discover Thailand!!

Barney writes about various topics, please visit

<http://www.thetravelblog.info>

and

<http://www.kenya-traveller-tips.info>

for more travel information, tourist destinations and travel tips.

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