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Thailand's Unrest: Packing Strategies For The Coup Near You

By Nola L. Kelsey

A funny thing happened on the way to my closet. This unforgettable journey from my shower confirmed an age old theory: a lot can happen in fifteen feet.

One night earlier I'd switched on the news to see civil unrest in Budapest, Hungary. My sister August was just there, I thought. Grand old buildings towered behind burning cars. As many do, I wondered: what is wrong with the world? Some of these countries...

At the time, there was no physical sensation caused by my foot being put in my mouth. I was oblivious to its presence. Fast forward 24 hours and enter my studio apartment in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

I pulled the towel from my wet hair as the newscaster spoke: "Another country is in turmoil tonight." Ho hum, here we go again. Now, where are my pajamas? As I stepped past the television, her words rang out: "Tanks have entered Bangkok in a reported coup attempt."

You know those moments in life when the space-time continuum warps around you? Everything freezes, yet your mind processes over three million random thoughts. That's where I stood. Only then did I begin to notice my foot lodged deep in my mouth. In the .25 seconds it took to take one step backwards and wrench my head to the right, I had all the following thoughts.

That newscaster mis-spoke. Learn your job!

She means Hungry.

Buy a map.

What!

Mom's gonna freak.

Wait, I'm 40

Mom's gonna freak.

My mind is getting even for the Budapest comments. I deserved that.

What did she really say?

Eek! What do I do?

Pack.

No. Don't pack.

Stay calm.

Pack.

I own way too much stuff!

I'm not breathing.

Perched on the end of the bed, I watch three channels simultaneously for well over an hour. I resolved to take the coup in stride. But! Maybe I'd pack one bag. It would be a `just in case' bag. The essentials a person would need if a quick exit should be close at hand. Of course, I'd sleep fully dressed in running shoes. Okay, I made that last part up. (My running shoes are in my gym locker.)

Then came slow motion. My eyes panned the room. Books, dishes, bedding, electronics, enough inventory for a small camera shop and clothes, lots of clothes—despite my vow, I had nested. How had this happened?

It was not the first time I had contemplated moving my small household. I had always planned on relocating to Southern Thailand in the spring. It wasn't even the first time this week I realized extra stuff had to go. Just days before Thailand had suddenly tightened its tourism visa laws. Tens of thousands of other long-term travelers, such as myself, must be out of the country in ninety days. We can not reenter for three months. Now this.

The coup gave me a whole new perspective. I had been worried I needed to buy another suitcase to move my precious inane possessions. In my panic, I grabbed just important things. Money, my laptop, camera body & one lens, debit cards, IDs, a couple changes of clothes and three packs of dry noodles. My backpack was only ½ full. I panned the room again.

Sleep prevailed. Perspective had returned. In the morning I had school and simply dumped my bag on the floor in a quest for missing underwear. After all, I'm in Chiang Mai, not Bangkok. But, my unpacked state was not to be.

At school, my teacher was visibly shaken. She'd seen soldiers on her way through town. They stood at

the closed public schools, hospitals and local businesses. Tanks lined the Super Highway. They are in Chiang Mai.

Half the students had not shown up, others had no sleep. In my mind, I packed again. In my class, I absorbed nothing. None of us are any wiser for having been there. Strategies changed. I had time to organize. My `just in case' bag was augmented.

On the way, home I stopped at the mall and purchased the most brilliantly blue suitcase ever seen from space. No doubt, right now, that female space tourist is looking toward Asia and reaching for sunglasses. Alas, it was half price.

Normally bustling, the mall ambiance was semi-dormant. Department store sales reps stood idle. And, I, their only customer, was buying a suitcase to leave. This was a likely sign of things to come for Thailand's economy.

I walked away feeling as though I was carrying a scarlet letter— a big blue scarlet letter. It said, "T" for traitor. It screamed "C" for chicken. I'd have traded all my limited Thai vocabulary to know the phrase for `just in case'. The glow from my suitcase could not be hidden. Shame set in. Stepping out into the

rain, I resolved not to pack a single thing.

And, the beat goes on. Arriving home, I turned on the tele and listened. The Northern Borders with Laos and Myanmar have been sealed. Borders! Sealed? Laos! That was my imagined escape route. The rollercoaster continues. As I write this, it's been less than twenty-four hours since the first reports of tanks in Bangkok. I write and I ponder. Will the coup affect the airline's baggage limits? How much can I pack?

Nola L. Kelsey is the author of *Bitch Unleashed: The Harsh Realities of Goin' Country* and coauthor of the scathing political satire *Keeping the Masses Down*. To read more of Kelsey's work, visit her rarely up-to-date website at:

<http://www.nolakelsey.com>

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

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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 cease 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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