

## **Elephants, Tigers, and Monitors--OH MY! (Phuket, Thailand pt. 1)**

I loved Thailand. I loved seeing things that I couldn't see anywhere else. Phuket (the island we stayed on) was easily one of the most beautiful places I've ever visited. I tried to treasure every single moment because I knew that the experience I was having was potentially one of those "once in a lifetime" things. Going to Thailand was GOOD for me on so many different levels. It helped me regain insight on what matters. It helped me push my complaints to the side and realize that the bottom line of my life is that my life is good.

Sure, I have health problems. Sure, my apartment doesn't have a washer and dryer. Yes, I've lived in Idaho longer that I would have ideally wanted to, but I am alive. I am alive with a home, a bed, clothes, modern medicine, a massive crowd consisting of family and friends that loves me. I live a beautiful life.

With that being said, I want to stress to my reader that traveling is worth every cent. If you are in a situation that allows you to, GET OUT OF THE UNITED STATES--if only for a brief time. After seeing... let's call it *different* government firsthand, our governmental construct isn't that bad. I am grateful to be a citizen of the United States, and that's as political as I'll get.

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### **Elephants**

Now to the fun stuff, within the first 24 hours in Thailand I saw an elephant, even better a baby elephant. Even baby elephants are insanely strong. First I pet the elephant--cool. Then I hugged the elephant--also cool. Then the elephant hugged me...cool for the first 3 seconds, painful for the following 3 seconds, weird for the final 2 seconds. Even a baby elephant's hug is VERY strong. His little baby tusk dug into my shoulder at one point and then he smacked my butt as I walked away. Also at some point he suctioned my lips with his trunk. It all happened so quickly that I concluded that I was semi-violated by a baby elephant.

On our last full day in Thailand we did ride "teenaged" elephants. The elephant's name was Nainun and she was crazy. We trotted through the jungle beneath The Big Buddha. We saw the same enormous spiders that we had seen days earlier. The elephant "handlers" were clearly unafraid of them. They apparently even eat them...mmm? BBQ.

Our elephant was fearless. She did what she wanted. Her handler hailed from Nepal. When elephants were brought to Thailand, Nepali were brought down to train them and handle them, as they had done in their homeland. Our elephant's handler had been with her for over a decade. They were companions of sort. You could tell that they had fun together and knew each other well.

Riding an elephant was something I never really imagined I would do in my lifetime. Riding an elephant was incredible. I am grateful that there are two people per elephant. Adam and I were able to ride together. Honestly, it was an adventure that I wouldn't want to do alone. It was another experience that I was grateful to have alongside Adam.

### **Tigers**

We went to

Other Awesome (and slightly scary) Animals

Monitors

Bugs