

Title:

Night In Satun

Word Count:

1008

Summary:

My Mercedes is waiting. The sun beams diffusely down through the moisture laden air causing beads of sweat to drip continuously on my already drenched t-shirt. I am going to Satun and the Mercedes is a classic well kept 1962 model. In fact there is a whole fleet of Mercedes waiting to take tourist to Satun from Hai Jai in Southern Thailand. They are all black with an exaggerated curved body indicative of automobiles of the late 50's. And believe it or not, they still retain t...

Keywords:

hotel reservations, hotel reservation, accommodations, family vacation, hotel rooms, flights, tours

Article Body:

My Mercedes is waiting. The sun beams diffusely down through the moisture laden air causing beads of sweat to drip continuously on my already drenched t-shirt. I am going to Satun and the Mercedes is a classic well kept 1962 model. In fact there is a whole fleet of Mercedes waiting to take tourist to Satun from Hai Jai in Southern Thailand. They are all black with an exaggerated curved body indicative of automobiles of the late 50's. And believe it or not, they still retain the comfort that Mercedes is famous for.

The year is 1998 and I am going to the Andaman Sea in the Straits of Malacca. There I will plant myself for two weeks on one of the many somewhat deserted islands that dot this reclusive part of the world. A world inhabited by pirates and honeymooners in the Koh Tarutao National Park system in the very south of Southern Thailand.

Which island I am going to, I don't know, but I am not the only one. Sharing my taxi ride is a young couple in love from Germany and a family from Thailand, husband and wife with their 5 year old son.

It takes about twenty minutes for the taxi driver to stuff everyone's belongings into the trunk. I have made substantial purchases of deliciously fresh dried fruits and filled my water container with pomegranate juice from one of the

'made for tourist' vendors surrounding the taxi. We squeeze into tightly together; the family and myself in the rear of the taxi and the couple from Germany in the front and prepare for a long and fascinating journey.

"Are you comfortable" the driver asks in broken English.
I answer like an excited kid, "Let's get this rocket rolling."

My feelings were of excitement and anticipation and I don't know why I said such a strange thing. No one else said anything and I felt as if my words were still echoing in the silence minutes later. But no matter, here I am in the middle of the world, on an adventure that relatively few have gone before.

The journey takes 3 hours of driving through exotic and undeveloped country side; incidentally through a warm and friendly Islamic side of Thailand. At one point we passed two foreigners on bicycles pedaling in racing uniforms. Later they caught up to us in some remote village on the way as we were stopping for refreshment. They came up next to our taxi and said with a heavy European accent "hello?" I answered, "Wow! I can't believe this! What are you doing way out here in the middle of nowhere on bicycles?"

The young man in his twenties answered, "We are traveling around the world. We are on our way to Indonesia." The other couple traveling in the taxi with me immediately took notice and a very long and interesting conversation ensues between all of us.

It turns out that the bicyclists are a married couple and the last county they pedaled through was Myanmar. After Indonesia, they planned to cycle the islands of Hawaii and then to Mainland USA.

To this day I still have dreams of that encounter and the miraculous and dangerous journey they were taking. I have never heard of them since and have no idea what became of them.

Before we know it, the taxi driver is honking his horn for us to return and we are saying our goodbyes to this marvelous couple. We pile into the taxi for the last leg of our journey. Looking out the window we pass fields of coconut palms, women balancing wood or foods in baskets on their heads wearing colorful loose clothing down to their feet. The homes we pass by are often made of palm frawns or a patchwork of wood and debris. And in the fields are men and women, young and old with their ox and children tilling vegetables in the same way at their ancestors have done for thousands of years.

Finally we reach Satun. I don't know what to expect. The town is about two

blocks long; a fishing village whose main street leads right to the ocean. There fishing boats made of old rotting lumber wait to take us to one of the many islands we will now select in the many makeshift tourist offices that line the street.

Each old rickety tourist office has pictures of the islands they offer and provide for a fee, the means to get their. And if you are uninformed, you will pay in advance for you accommodations. Something better to do when you arrive on the island. Occasionally an owner of one of these offices tries to get us inside by enticing us with words like 'beautiful, exotic, cheap...' We all walk down the main avenue looking and asking questions until each of us select our travel destination destiny.

I study all the pictures from all the offices of all the islands carefully and I choose Langkawi only 5 kilometers away from the southern tip of Tarutao Island. I pay the equivalent of approximately \$7 for a round trip boat ticket and I am then led to one of the boats. The boat can fit about 4 people and sits low to the water. There is single engine propeller that is barely hangs attached to the rear of the craft. I wait about 15 minutes before we begin our three hour journey through rough and dangerous seas to the somewhat deserted and exotic island of Langkawi...

My days on the island with boa constrictors, pirates, a lost tribe of Islamic fishermen, my isolated beach cottage right on my own private beach, the couple isolated on the other side of the island studying esoteric Buddhism, the small exotic café serving daily fresh fish from the sea, the many tourist from Europe that came and went, lightening in the sky on a clear day and the marvelous skin diving in clear deep tropical sears are topics I will discuss in my next article. Stay turned.