

BANGKOK VISIT - part 1



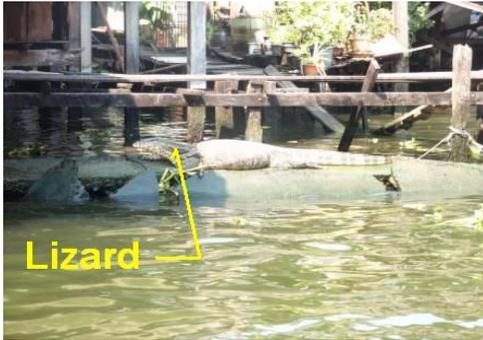
"James Bond" boat on main river.



Guide took pix of us on an almost empty boat. Full speed ahead on truck engine.



Waiting our turn to enter locks to local canal. Inland canal, 1.5m lower, has protected monitor lizards, and giant catfish.



Amazing. "Meralco" posts in water.



Stately old house, but many expensive ones. Potable water pipe arcs across.



Approaching lock back to main river.



One of the temples along river.



Inside the temple.



Closeup of elaborate temple surface.



Skytrain with view of some skyscrapers.



Walking on overhead sidewalk.
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Scenes were taken on the first full day of our trip. We ventured out on our own and it was indeed well worth it: about 2 hours worth of riding on a "James Bond" boat - see pictures - a sleek teak boat with an inboard Isuzu truck diesel driving a long propeller shaft. They go fast. First half hour or so was navigating up river until entry into the local smaller canals via a lock (like Panama) since the river is 1.5 meters higher than the local inland canals. Then out again on a different canal to the main river, after meandering for almost an hour amongst very picturesque congested back "country" canals. This was capped by a visit to a temple nearby. All for an equivalent of about \$25 each - which we contracted for at the river pier after we took the Skytrain. That was a lot better than the \$100 quote at the hotel lobby. Then the bonus for us only: the tour guide (we were only four in the boat, which was good for 14) got Lisa and I into a van and drove us around, complimentary, for another half hour of sightseeing, finally ending up at a jewelry shop. That apparently was the catch: they certainly get a cut of whatever sales the tourists they bring in are sales-talked to buy. We spent almost an hour and ended up with Lisa getting some loose stones at a pretty good price (just the same, we gave the tour guide girl a good tip). She then dropped us off at a very reasonable seafood restaurant near a Skytrain station where we had our late lunch. An hour and a half later, we were back at the hotel, and this time, picked up some chicken and other goodies at some sidewalk eatery for our supper in the hotel room, which is complete with kitchenette. Too tired to go out and eat, even to the hotel's Japanese restaurant which wasn't to our liking.

Tomorrow, we take the Skytrain to the famed week-end market, Chatuchak, which everybody says is a must-see.

Turns out that for us, it wasn't. It reminded us of Baclaran, much bigger and much more organized, but there was nothing really extraordinary. See some pics below.



Chatuchak sidewalk beside Skytrain.



Inside the neatly laid rows of stalls.



Typical stall, repeated ad nauseum.

Turns out that the third day's outing was more interesting, a subway ride to the end of the line: the massive train terminus at Hua Lampong, then a short ride on a "tuktuk" (three-wheeled motorized scooter) to Chinatown, where we meandered through back streets (what would be like Ongpin and Gandara in Manila), and finally, after missing out on the Chinese restaurants at the main roads, had to settle for a "banketa" type meal of noodles at a back alley sidewalk.



On the tuktuk to Chinatown.



Sidewalk tattoo-artist and client.



One of the many Buddhist altars(?).

After Chinatown, we went to the famed Patpong.

To be continued