



Have you been to Khao Sok?

Description

Spectacular lake, surrounded by high limestone cliffs, green, falling into the water. Ghost groves of trees emerge from the lake surface. Too much water can also be harmful. Choked trees. A jungle teeming, noisy, and yet an unspeakable silence. Basic guesthouse, tropical rain, tin roof dinging hours after the rain had stopped. Wi Fi only in the restaurant, mosquito net in bed and the silence of the jungle, which is actually very noisy.



We are in Khao Sok. Three days ago we took a night ferry from Koh Tao to Surat Thani and from there by bus we arrived in Khao Sok. With one of those buses that simply unload you on the road. It does not exactly look like a station and it is unclear where the village is but there we are. A small confusion with local taxi drivers about the name of the guesthouse (we remembered something with "Green" but it turned out that there are two "Greens" in that small village, some small!), but at the end we found the shuttle that took us to the guesthouse we were supposed to stay for two nights and will eventually be leaving after three, because yesterday we took a day trip to the lake, that one from the opening paragraph, and we decided to take the first day and chill out a bit. I had some work to do, the children had to do their school stuff, The One had yet to pave us the rest of the way. By that time we still have not even decided where to go from here. And why.

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We are constantly moving between the two ends of a strange scale. On one hand, there is the “Come on, we’re here, wouldn’t we do this must-see and that must-do and that really-really-must-do???”. On the other hand there is the knowing that we are no standard tourists. We did not go on a trip for a year. We went for a year to live another way of life, some of which is going to be a trip. And this way of life has a planned and limited budget. There are considerations that can pull us to different directions all the time. For example, where do we go from here.

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We initially thought to go to Krabi and soon enough we realized that it was not in our budget. It's high season, it's crowded there, it's expensive, it's not for us. It seems that Khao Sok is really cheap in terms of accommodation (450 baht per family room per night, with cold water in the shower, a fan because there is really no need for an AC here right now, the tin roof mentioned earlier, and a variety of insects and arthropods that lived here before us and will live here after we're gone. God forbid.) but in terms of food, just a bit cheaper from (the expensive) Koh Tao, and in terms of attractions can easily separate us from a month budget within days.

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There is elephant riding trip, there is a day-trip to the Cheow Lan lake, a two-days trip to the lake including a night in a rafthouse (believe me, when I saw these lake rafthouses we would have slept in if we have taken the two-days trip, I was horrified. I would never have gone through the night. And we never had this post. Instead, you get The One's post here describing how he had to ship my corpse and stuff back home, and it's not easy.), there are jungle treks with or without overnight stay, there is tubing in the river, you name it .

We have to choose, because the budget is limited, so we chose the lovely day we spent yesterday which included a longtail boat cruise in the lake, a cool local lunch, a small jungle trek including a cave with waterfalls (The Petite and I did not get into the cave, past experience from a similar event already proved that it is better for us all to split up at this point, so The One went with the boys to the cave and I and the youngest stayed back near the creek and played), swimming in the water, sliced pineapple and watermelon and then back the pier from which we came from and a minibus to the village.

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The day was truly amazing. The rest of the time we walked around the village. A German family we met in the guesthouse told us about a lovely place for bathing in the river with an improvised swing to jump into the water with. Tropical rain caught us on the road back, during which your humble servant clipped off with her nails (!!!) a giant leaf from one of those exotic trees around, to shield the camera and mobile phones so they do not get wet, and by the way caught an annoying allergic reaction of tingling and itching hands (I took an anti-allergy pill and it helped, but I was terrified to death until it passed) and even a super cool culinary surprise last night as it turned out that one of the best restaurants in Thailand is right here in the small village of Khao Sok and we found it and it was a really excellent dinner. Our best in Thailand so far, without a doubt. If any of you ever get to Khao Sok by chance, then go to Pawns restaurant which is on the main street of the village, not far from the bridge, in front of the "Morning Mist" mini-market. In that store I bought a Winston pack for 70 baht, which by the way reminds me that it's very funny how back at home I'm so picky with the type of cigarettes I smoke, while here I just smoked what I come by, so far it was a Marlboro Light for 100 baht (97 baht at the 7/11) and now this 70 baht Winston. Funny.

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Yesterday when we went to sleep we still did not have a place booked to stay in or a clear destination for the next day, but this morning The One found a place that looks really terrific in a town called, hold on tight, Prachuap Khiri Khan, a small fishermen town that just fit in really nice in our route, which is basically the direction of Cambodia now. We plan to slowly straggle our way up north towards the border with Cambodia, there we will travel overland and end up in Vietnam.

Khao Sok

*Khao Sok is a beautiful national nature reserve in southern Thailand lies on the road connecting **Surat Thani** with **Phuket**. The entrance to the reserve is located in a village with the same name. We purchased tickets to Khao Sok from Ko Tao (combined ferry and bus ticket) at a price of 850 baht per person. The bus simply dropped us off at the entrance to the village (there is a quite large sign on the north side of the road) there waited for us the pickup vehicle of the guest house where we spent the next three days. The guesthouse is called **Evergreen House**. It is a very basic guesthouse but for a reasonable value for money. It should be taken to consideration that the village and park themselves are located within 2 km from the main road which means when getting off the bus expect to be charged by a group of taxi drivers who immediately put on the stunned passengers.*

The village itself is entirely based on tourism and all around the national park you can find offers for accommodation, food and a variety of (not cheap) local attractions. These include trekking in the park, canoeing, tubing, elephant rides and day or two-days tours to the lake. Prices vary slightly from place to place. We decided on a day trip to **Cheow Lan** lake. The price for all of us after a small discount " 4600 baht, and it excludes the park entrance fees. It is also possible to enter the park on your own and get to up to 2-3 km deep into the jungle. They park entrance fee is 200 baht for adults and 100 baht for children (up to age 14). Prices in Khao Sok are affordable and little cheaper comparing to Koh Tao (around 10% -20%).

The park is famous also for the **Rafflesia** flower that grows in it, which is the world's largest flower and has a very unique look (and smell). We really wanted to see it, but it required a separate (expensive!) trek and we got a hint that it does worth the price. We decided to let go. You can't do everything.

Cheow Lan is an artificial lake created from the dam built on the site (**Rajjaprabha Dam**) that caused flooding of the rainforest and the formation amazing limestone rock configurations scattered all over partially buried under water. Cheow Lan lake entrance is separate and located about 60 km east of the main entrance to the park in the direction of Surat Thani. It may be possible to reach it directly without having to go the village itself. We did not try. In any case a trip to the lake requires a guide. The trip itself is amazing and takes directly into the thick jungle of southern Thailand. The tour includes an amazing longtail boat cruise in the lake, swim in the warm water of the lake, hike in the jungle, exploring the caves in the park (depending on the season) and of course lunch and fruits.

Except for the lake and the park Khao Sok has some points where you can bathe in the river. We were told that during the afternoons the local macaque monkeys come down to swim. We visited the place a few times at the designated times and unfortunately we have not sighted any monkey. You can find monkeys also in the Buddhist temple located a few hundred meters east of the entrance to the village on the main road.

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1. Thailand

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Author

nitzane@hotmail-com