

Bangkok, Buddhas, and Boost, Oh My!

Description

Bangkok, Thailand! We had the opportunity this week to go there for our annual Asia Area Humanitarian Conference. It was a marvelous experience, two days of training and on either end, two partial days of sightseeing. During the trip from the airport to our hotel on the 4-lane freeway, we were pretty giddy from riding on smooth roads at high speeds — well, 120 kph anyway — that's **only** 75 mph! About 45 mph above the fastest we typically go in Nepal!

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Bangkok from our hotel



Another view from hotel



Bangkok park we walked to



Water taxi we rode

The sights we saw were spectacular, dominated by the Buddhist element. (Thailand is 80% Buddhist. Our Tuesday morning private tour guide, Alice, is a very devoted one. At every temple she took us to she would take the opportunity to kneel, bow low and worship the Buddha there.) We saw the Golden Buddha, the Emerald Buddha, and the Reclining Buddha, to name a few. They are all quite impressive — especially the 45 meter long, 15 meter high Reclining Buddha statue!

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Temple of the Golden Buddha–Wat Traimit



The 3 meter tall, 5 1/2 ton solid gold Buddha was discovered in 1957. It had been covered in stucco
it from invaders.







The Golden Buddha and his seven-headed serpent guards





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The Reclining Buddha–Wat Pho Chetuphon

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With Alice at the Grand Palace

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At the Grand Palace

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Floral designs at the Grand Palace





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วัดพระศรีรัตนศาสดาราม



Mural paintings in the Grand Palace Museum

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Marco Polo statue at the Grand Palace

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Lonely guard duty

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Keeping his companion company

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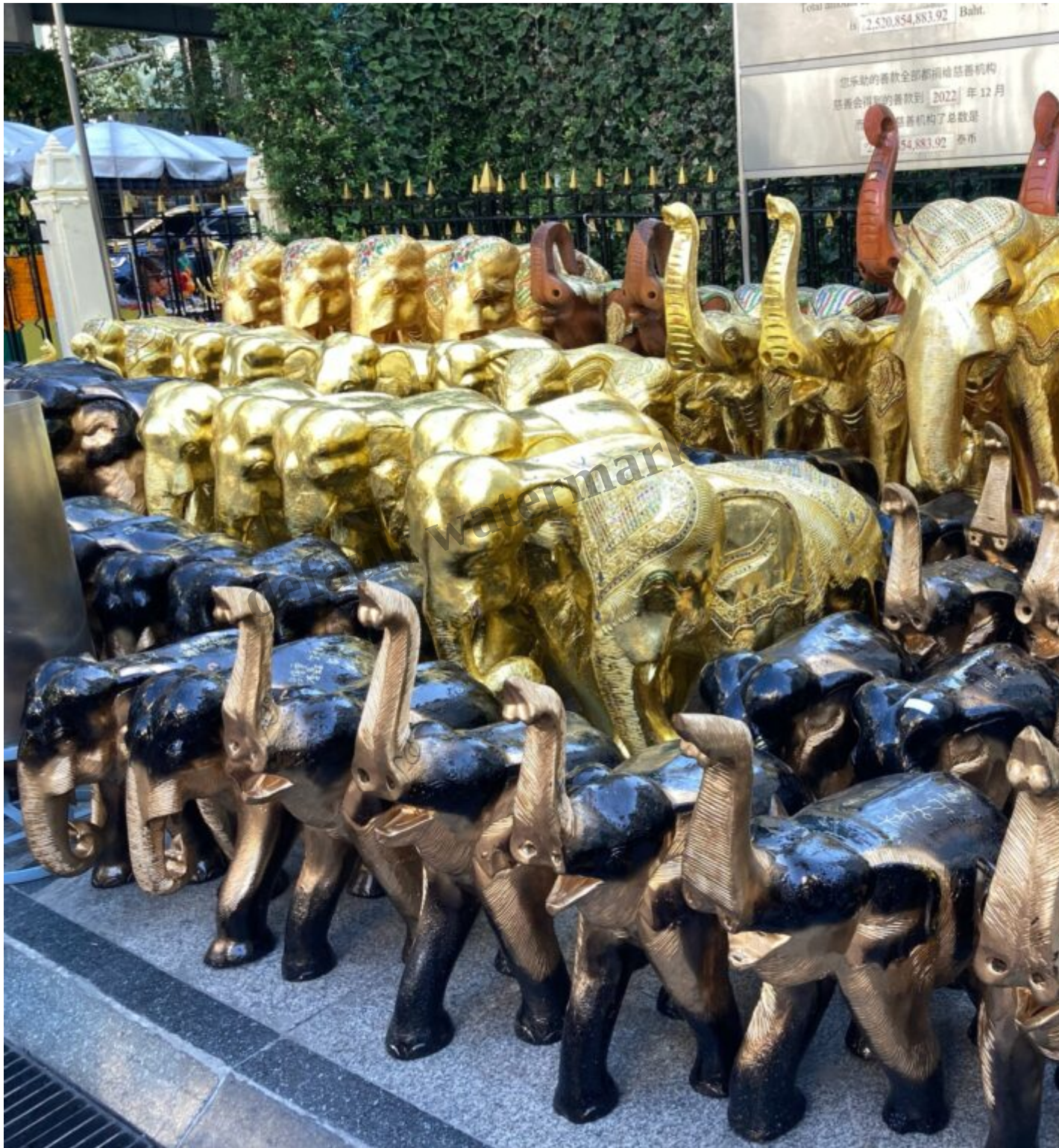


He looks tired of holding it up

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Fancy street corner Buddha shrine—Erawan Shrine



Elephants for sale as offerings

Point of interest and pride (for Nepali Buddhists anyway): As all international arrivals are reminded by the big sign on the wall at the Kathmandu airport that you can't miss: *Buddha was born in Nepal!*

At the Welcome dinner on Tuesday we started meeting people from all over the Asia area, some we had only "met" electronically — like the Gerlachs, the couple who were serving in the south of India before being reassigned to Cambodia.



With the Thurstons, our Area Welfare Specialists, super couple who support us unwearingly

On Wednesday and Thursday we were trained and motivated by our leaders and support team, and got to rub shoulders with more amazing fellow senior couples – 17 in all. We shared ideas, stories, heartaches and triumphs. It was a tremendous booster shot for our humanitarian work. Newly motivated, we have four months (to the day) now to go and do the most good we can!

We learned a lot at the conference through case studies, group discussions, role playing and other learning activities. Here are just two things we discussed:

Saying Yes and saying No. Not every project will be approved, and we personally know the pain of having to tell a potential collaborator their proposed project was rejected. Ways to lessen the pain were duly noted. This is the Lord's work, and as we trust in Him we will learn the language of love and encouragement to keep proposing and building relationships, even when we have to disappoint in the short term.

Passing Knowledge. The nature of our volunteer service is that our time is limited and we must take great care to successfully pass the knowledge baton to our successors. As we mentioned two weeks ago, we know who they are and when they're coming, and have been communicating with them. We earnestly desire to smooth the way for them to take over this important work.

Personal growth-wise, we had another chance to sing Peace in Christ, the song we sang in sacrament meeting a couple of months ago. We have been diligently practicing ever since we were asked to sing for the conference, and while performing the Spirit helped us to do it justice. We all felt the peace of Christ, his gifts of hope, strength and shelter being so much needed and loved.

Now, a word about the food! We enjoy Nepali food, and especially the food lovingly prepared for us by members. But the food we had this week was amazing in sheer variety and quantity (overindulgence was a temptation we did not always resist) Bounteous buffets for both breakfast and lunch. Not just Thai food, although there was plenty of that. We got to enjoy treats we are hard pressed to find here. Cheddar cheese! Strawberries! Crispy bacon! And of course, beef, which I especially have been having a real hankering for.



Ready for beef!



From the breakfast buffet



Sample lunch fare



Some Thai desserts

We were all treated to a surprise Thanksgiving celebration — our first in a foreign country. The meal they arranged for us Thursday evening was scrumptious, and had turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, pumpkin pie (in miniature) and more. We felt truly blessed!

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Turkey and other Thanksgiving delights

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Yum!

The most joyful part of the experience was going to the newly-dedicated temple — twice! It had been

almost a year since our last visit to the temple. The *Peace that Passeth Understanding* is so palpable there in the House of the Lord.

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Welcome to THE Temple!

*There is peace in Christ
When we learn of Him.
Feel the love He felt for us
When He bore our sins.*

*Listen to His words.
Let them come alive.
If we know Him as He is,
There is peace in Christ.*

*There is peace in Christ
When we walk with Him
Through streets of Galilee
To Jerusalem.*

*Mend the broken hearts.
Dry the tear-filled eyes.
When we live the way He lived,
There is peace in Christ.*

*He gives us hope
When hope is gone.
He gives us strength
When we can't go on.
He gives us shelter
In the storms of life.
When there's no peace on earth,
There is peace in Christ.*



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