



Aislinn

From Brampton to Thailand

Floating in Thailand

Have you ever looked out your window to see a turtle swimming in the lake waters below? Have you ever had to move to the other side of the sidewalk just to avoid touching the passing monks? Have you ever lit a floating lantern and watched it fly into the full moon sky? Have you ever climbed a mountain, testing yourself against extreme heat, freezing showers, leeches, spiders the size of your hand, and wild elephants? Ever been on exchange to Thailand?

I have. In fact, I am sitting here in Korat, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand and have been since August 10th, 2011. Let's just say that so far, I've been having quite an experience. I came here without knowing a single thing about Thailand, unless you count what I had read on Wikipedia. Nothing could have prepared me for it. I'm sure you can guess that it is absolutely nothing like Canada.

It is because there is so much difference that I find myself at a loss for words. I know not what to write in this Beaver Tale because I think that if I start choosing one topic, I will move to another and then another and then I will never finish. Therefore, I think I will try to keep the topic focused on the first of the trips in Thailand: Mount Phu Kradung.

I do not know how many inbounds were on the trip but I would have to say anywhere from 30 to 50 attended. It was the first time that I really bothered to spend time with the other inbounds who come from Brazil, Mexico, France, Venezuela, America, Canada, and Japan. We drove several hours on a bus,

picking people up along the way and stopping for food and bathrooms every so often. Then we arrived in a town called Phu Kradung where we would spend the night at the Loi Krathong festival.

Loi Krathong is set on the full moon night of (usually) November. The word Loi means "to float" while a krathong is something made of flowers and leaves that is set into the water as an offering to the water spirits as thanks for allowing the Thai people to use the waters. I floated 3 krathong that night. They were absolutely beautiful. Even more beautiful than those, however, were the floating lanterns. Many of us lit them together at the festival, watching them float into the air with their soft orange glow. We have so many pictures of the hundreds that were sent up that night. There was also a beauty contest in which an inbound was chosen to represent Rotary, and then there was a brilliant fireworks display.

The next morning, we climbed a mountain: Mount Phu Kradung. The first 5th of the climb was deadly, and we had to rest so many times, but it felt better and better the higher you climbed as the air got cooler and a gentle breeze flowed through, not to mention the amazing view. I hiked up with a group of friends (who I pretty much spent the whole trip with) who called our group "The Adventure Gang". We bought little road signs that say this for our blazers.

Over the next few days, we hiked over hill and dale to several different cliffs and waterfalls, looking for elephants and avoiding what we ended up calling "Jennies" or as more commonly known, leeches. So many people got bit by them, it was ridiculous. I happened to get lucky on that one though I did find one on me that had yet to attach itself. Also, I luckily avoided the giant spiders that one of my friends woke up beside. All the boys in their cabin were freaking out! Unfortunately, as I avoided the others, I also avoided the wild elephants (though I am not sure how upset I am about this since the prospect of running into an elephant on the trail is quite frightening).

The last day, we climbed back down the mountain. I think everybody slipped and fell at least once. It was really painful and very scary. However, we had plenty of time to talk about the trip, about our next trip to Pattaya, and all the things we have to do before the end of the year. There is still much much much more to do (like working on that Thai language).

I can't think of anything else to say about this amazing place except that if you want to know what it is like, you have to go. Not even I can explain how it feels to wake up in Thailand...

Until next time...

Aislinn

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