

February 2007

Hi Everyone,

I am finally going to sit down and tell you about my holiday to India, Bali and Bangkok – with lots of photos of course. It was my first time in any of those countries and I love all of them. I only got a small taste of each but enough to know that I will definitely return.



Here I am finally leaving for a holiday – notice that I only have one suitcase – of course I had to buy another one in Bali to hold everything that I bought. I didn't do many tourist things in Delhi – I stayed with the family of my boss at CHAI (he lives in Delhi). I stayed with Sunita and Priti Singh in their home which was a wonderful experience. I feel that I was able to see the “real” India – I went with Sunita to the local market (which was much like ours here in Zanzibar) and then they had a lunch for some of their friends and I was invited. Priti and I went out and had lunch with his sister and her daughters at her house – I had a lovely time. It was great to sit and talk (which you all know I do best) and learn about Indian culture and society. Of course, my brain is old and I don't retain all the facts but Priti is a Sikh and his family had to leave Pakistan in 1947 with absolutely nothing but what they could carry. They worked hard and have become quite successful. I listened to stories of the family history and the history of India and the British occupation. The last night I stayed with Deepak (my boss) and his family outside of Delhi. His wife, Priya is an artist and their daughter, Tara, is 9 and a beautiful young woman. They had lived in the US for over 20 years where Deepak had a very successful business. He is now the new CEO of CHAI and has moved back to India where they can be near their families and raise Tara in the Indian culture. I did go out one day to see the India Gate and Humayun's tomb but I had much more fun with the family. The meals were incredible although I'm not sure what I was eating and most of all I loved the “bed tea” in the morning. Their servants are Nepalese and they are all a wonderful blended family.



Bali was next and it is really a lovely paradise but it seems so much bigger and more developed than Zanzibar. There is a HUGE tourist trade with all of the surfer dudes (they were easy on the eyes), the honeymooners, Australians and Japanese. I don't quite know why but I wasn't prepared for the fact that Indonesia is business driven rather than donor driven. In Zanzibar when someone comes up with an idea for a project the first thing you ask is "Who will give us the money for this?" and to have donors who are not expecting a return on their money. In Bali it seemed to be more that people would start businesses, often with foreigners money who did expect to make a profit. The beaches were beautiful but very very dirty with waste and garbage – I wouldn't even walk in the water. I'm not sure why their pollution is so bad but it is. But it was very cool – by the ocean there's this long street (part of it is the photo on the right) with restaurants that have free WiFi so everyone has their laptops and they're IMing or Skyping. The street is lined with mini-bikes – that is the main means of transportation and the beach across the street reminded me very much of say Venice Beach in California. JD and I had breakfast at the Zanzibar restaurant in the morning – that was a surprise!!! Kuta is where JD lived and where the ocean is in Bali. JD and I went to a fancy restaurant one night and there were guards who checked our car and our bags for bombs before we could drive in. The bombings have really taken a toll on tourism there but it seemed to be pretty packed to me.



The AA meetings were great there – wow it was so nice to be with other recovering people and to hear their stories and to share. The meetings were held in restaurants (some by the ocean) – boy did I love that!!! At the one in Ubud (in a gorgeous restaurant) I sat down and the guy next to me was eating a strawberry tart – now I hadn't seen a strawberry in a very long time so I started drooling. The waitress brought me one and I ate it while listening to the preamble and people share – what a life guys!!!! There are mostly men in the meetings (and the majority seem to be Americans) and very few Indonesians but the ones that I did meet are pretty amazing. There were a number of Australians who are usually crazy to begin with (I can say that as one of my good friends is Australian and would be the first to admit it). It was wonderful to meet JD's friends and his support group – as a mom I feel very reassured. Oh – the dog on the right was very cool – he came to all of the meetings and would always chime in during the closing Serenity prayer – who knows what his story is. The meetings in Bangkok were really neat – the one I went to was in the lobby of a hotel – yes that's true!!! One stop traveling!!



JD took off to Bangkok where he moved to and I headed on up to Ubud in the mountains of Bali. I stayed with a friend of a friend and on the left is the view of the Four Season Hotel from her terrace!!!! She had a gorgeous place with an open area and a pool – isn't that just heaven?? On the right is the window in my suite that was built below in the cliff with windows overlooking the valley of coconut palms and the volcano on the right. What a life!!!! She and her partner are opening a new spa in Ubud – Ubud is very interesting. It reminded me a bit of the main street of Westport with a Balinese flair. There are utterly magnificent restaurants and health food stores and a gorgeous supermarket with everything that you can think of in it. I had a massage and then soaked in a tub with rose petals, had reflexology for the first time and had acupuncture twice which I believe really helped my back. I am pretty much pain free for the first time in a year and I'm ever so grateful. Bali and India are both wonderful in that people focus on taking care of themselves – they do breathing exercises, yoga and meditate and it's integrated into their daily lives – very nice.



Back in Ubud – this is a typical village street. On either side are family compounds or villages – the families live together in separate homes usually with a large garden in the center. The photo in the center is one where my friend Dave lives and the statue of Ganesh is the centerpiece. As in Africa the immediate and extended family is paramount and daily life revolves around them – whether it be with work, taking care of the family compound or the religious festivals. I went to look at land and rentals while I was in Ubud – I think it would be a nice place for me to go to and just sit still for a few weeks at least twice a year. The rice paddies on the right are the view out the back of one of the houses I looked at. The options are pretty incredible – Dave lives in a family compound on the second floor of a house – he has a large one room with a bath and a huge outside porch for \$150 a month and the 2 bedroom house I looked at near this rice paddy was \$400 a month (negotiable). I don't have the photos but I also looked at some small tea houses that surround a koi pond and have rice paddies out the back – I think they rent for about \$250 a month.



Okay – here's my tourist shot – I finally got to ride an elephant!!! We drove an hour north of Bangkok to Ayutthaya which was the ancient capital of Thailand. I was only in Bangkok for 3 days so it was great to be able to see the countryside. In the center is a Buddhist spirit house - the theory is to build a house for the spirits and feed them etc and they will go there and leave you alone. I like that idea. I rode the elephant at a place where families came to have a picnic and where the kids could feed and ride the elephants. As I was finishing my ride there were over 200 motorcycles coming down the street and they all turned into the elephant park - a Thai Harley motorcycle group!!! It was a promotion for something and a very famous Thai singer was there - I took a photo of him and showed JD's Thai girlfriend and she got very excited that I had seen the guy.



I went to a Broadway type show that told the history of Thailand and here's one of the dancers - it was fun being a tourist. In the center is the colorful rear of a Thai truck - I didn't take any photos of the buses - good heavens they reminded me of the hippies in the 60's with all the colors. And on the right is a man who was just walking through a small village - I love the ten gallon hat!!! I didn't take any photos of Bangkok itself - the city is huge and teeming and I only saw a little bit of it. I didn't go to the "sex district" but I have to say that sex is pervasive there - it's amazing seeing so many white men with Asian women. The women are utterly beautiful but I felt bad for them - I'm not going to even go there - that's another entire email. Bangkok is known for it's first class health care - I got my teeth cleaned for \$25.00 - what a bargain. I met some Americans who go to Bangkok for all of their major health issues - one of the best hospitals in the world is in Bangkok and it's

affordable. It's certainly something that I may consider for the future - especially seeing that there is no health care available where I am.



On the right and left are photos of some ruins in Ayutthaya - I can't tell you how exciting it was to drive down the street and see so many spiritual remains. I would love to spend a long time in Thailand (outside of Bangkok) and learn more about the culture and the people. There is so much spirituality there and so much for me to learn. Okay finally to JD - we had a fabulous visit and talked and talked. In the center is JD and Nyce another model that he was dating (yes he had only been there a little over a week but he moves fast). JD signed with a modeling agency less than a week after he arrived in Bangkok. He has told me that the competition is stronger than it was in Jakarta so we'll see what happens. He is not looking to make modeling his lifelong career but come on he's 25 and living many young men's dream. He has done a fabulous job of living as an ex-pat - he is fluent in Indonesian and it was a joy to travel around Bali with him. I'm sure that he'll be fluent in Thai very soon.

The focus of many discussions that I had with people in India, Bali and Bangkok was about being an ex-pat in a foreign land. Some of the Indians I met live in Australia or the US and have to adjust to discrimination that often happens. As whites living in Africa or Asia we are often seen as the "rich people" who have everything. Yet the truth is that many people choose to live as ex-pats for different reasons, whether it be to escape to a better place or to try to start a new life among a totally different culture or to maybe become a big fish in a little pond. What we all know is that we are guests in other peoples' lands and that it takes time to learn how to live outside our own culture. It was a fascinating trip and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. It was a bit more hectic than I would have liked (3 countries in a little over 3 weeks) and next time I will only travel to one country rather than hopping around. But it was great to see other countries and to eat great food and to shop and shop and shop (I bought lots of sandals).

I have been home for a week and already had visitors here from the Clinton Foundation and I've been working like crazy. There are some very exciting projects in the offing and I will be writing about it all soon. Life is very very good and I am by far the most fortunate woman in the world.

I will be back in the US for the month of May and hope to see many of you

Kathryn