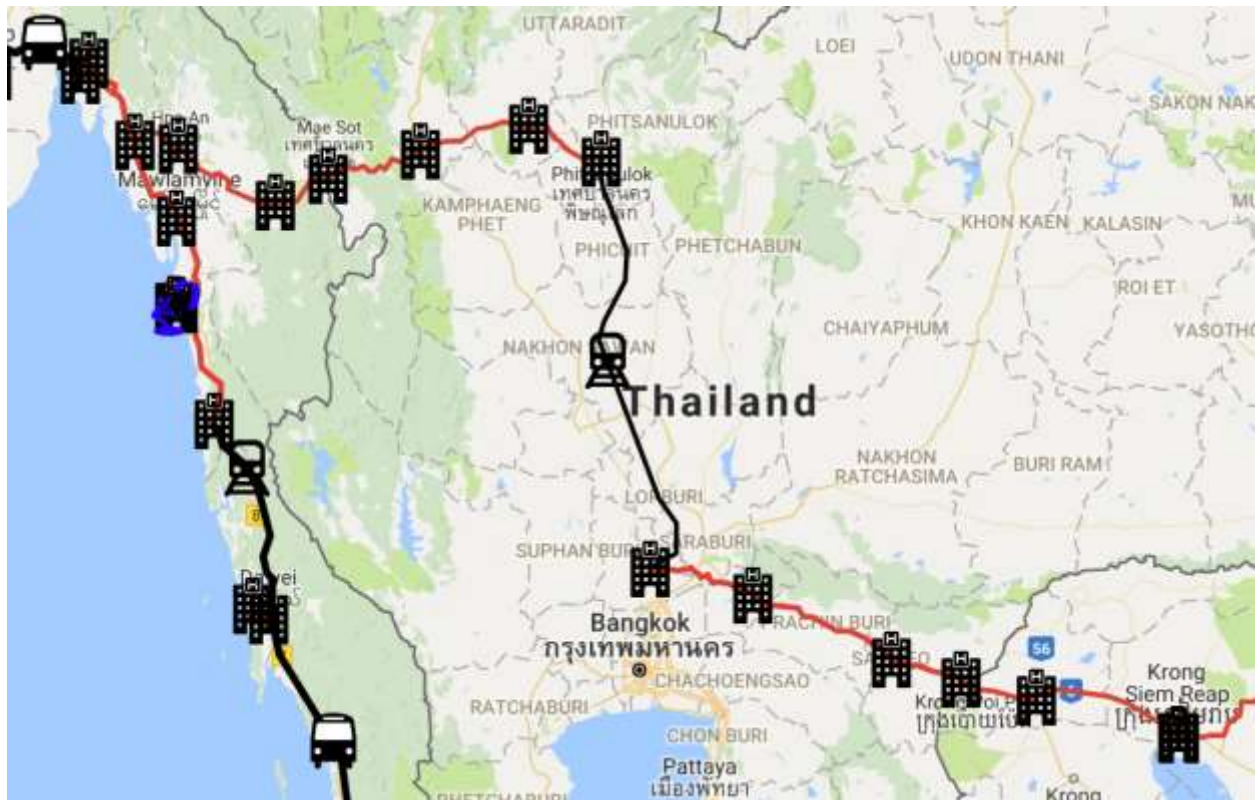


Season 8 – Part 1. Back in Thailand again



Su 22.4.2016, day 315. Relaxing! (Mae Sot, 0 km)

Even though we hadn't done so much biking in Myanmar, we still had a very busy time there and were quite tired. Also, rainy season had finally come, ending a record drought in Southeast Asia, with a vengeance. It was pouring with rain! Therefore, we were not so keen on continuing biking right away and decided to take a day's rest. And what a rest day it turned out to be! We started the day with bagels and coffee at "The Canadian" a great restaurant run by a Canadian together with his Thai wife. After breakfast, we went for coffee and cake, then went for a Pad Thai for lunch in a little street corner shop, afterwards to another place for coffee and a huge ice cream, bread, honey and whipped cream concoction. It was so good we ordered a second one. Afterwards it was time for an afternoon nap before going out for dinner. What a day!



Mo 23.4.2016, day 316. Very wet biking day (Mae Sot – Tak, 90 km)

We got up quite early, had oatmeal, milk and bananas for breakfast. We were happy that it was not raining and wanted to get the most out of the dry spell. And so we packed up the bikes and just then the heavens opened up and it started pouring with rain. We stood there wondering what to do. We decided to wait a bit until it eased off. But it didn't. After an hour or so we finally decided to hit the road. We didn't bother to put on wet wear, there is no point anyway in the tropics. Very soon we were drenched to the bone and it was surprisingly chilly. The road was excellent, wide and smooth with a good shoulder. We climbed the first hill of the day (650 m) and descended back down into the valley where we found a nice little place for noodle soup. It was still pouring with rain. We then headed off again just after we had left a scooter came tearing after us. It was the guy from the restaurant with my jacket that I had forgotten. Uuuups!

We then came to the second hill of the day (900 m). The rain started to ease, but it stayed nice and cool, nothing like the scorching heat we had in Myanmar! I somehow wasn't fit and fought my way up the hill painstakingly slowly with Siria trundling along behind me, seemingly effortlessly.

At the top there was a "hill tribe" market, which was actually just a normal market. We had a great fruit shake and some fried rice. Then we sat down for a quick coffee and I decided to change the rear brake pads before the long descent. It was certainly time. They were completely worn. So that's 5 sets of pads I have worn out, 2 front and 3 rear, and Siria is still on her very first set. It's just not fair!

The rest of the ride was magic. All downhill and we had a good tail wind to boot. In Tak we stayed at a very nice business hotel for about 12\$, then went to the hotel restaurant for some dinner. This was quite funny, as we were served completely different things than we had ordered. We ate them all the same and then waited for the bill for quite a while. A couple of minutes after we had gotten up and asked for the bill, the curry we had ordered arrived packed up for take away. It was all very strange! We hadn't had enough yet, so we got some noodle soup on the street and then went to 7 Eleven for ice-cream and off for an early night after quite a strenuous day.







Tu 24.4.2016, day 317. Lovely biking on back lanes (Tak -. Sukothai, 95 km)

We had a breakfast of oatmeal and milk in the room then got off to a good early start. We still had a nice tail wind and made good progress. We stayed on the main road, there was some traffic, but there was also a nice shoulder and biking was very nice. We arrived at the Sukothai archeological zone in the early afternoon. We stopped for an overpriced shake, biked round a bit deciding if we wanted to pay the entry to the park or not. We finally decided to skip it and biked into town. There we found a very nice little hostel. Just when we had checked in it started to pour. Also I had picked up a wire and had a puncture in my rear wheel. So actually we were very lucky: if we would have been just a bit slower I would have had the puncture out on the road in the pouring rain!

We had a very nice evening, taking a stroll along the river and back through some night markets having a bit to eat here and there...





We 25.5.2016, day 318. Didn't quite make it onto the train (Sukothai – Phitsanulok, 72km)

We left relatively early, biked first on the main road, then took some small roads to the south of the main road, which lead through farm land and were great to bike on with no traffic whatsoever. We arrived in Phitsanulok at about 1 pm and went straight to the railway station to check about trains. There was one running in 10 minutes, I asked if it was possible to take the bikes, the guy at the counter said yes, so I bought tickets. Siria dashed off to get some provisions for the train ride and I rolled the bikes onto the platform. Soon the train arrived and the lady station master said it was not possible to put the bikes on the train. I asked the guys in the train and they said yes and waved me aboard. Then the lady started talking to them and soon their yes turned into a no and then the green flag was waived and we waived good bye to our train. We asked the lady when there was a train which would take bikes and she said, for example 9pm, or 10pm. Later we realized that she was just mentioning any train that left after her shift was over. So we decided to check if there were busses running and went to the bus station. Unfortunately, there were no busses to Ayuttaya. There was a bus to Pattaya and for a short moment we considered taking a bus all the way down to the coast south of Bangkok. But then we decided to check out the train at 9pm first. So we went back to the station, again I went and asked for tickets and found out that the train at 10 pm would arrive at 2:30 am. And there was a 80% probability that they would accept the bikes. However, the train at 6am would take the bikes for SURE! I first thought that this guy was also just naming any train that ran after his shift was over, but after some chatting and after he came out and had a good look at the bikes I started to believe him. We also got chatting to a Tuktuk driver who was fascinated by our bikes. He recommended a cheap hotel and we went and checked it out. It turned out to be perfect and so we got an early night in, ready to be up at the crack of dawn to catch the early morning train.



Th 26.5.2016, day 319. Train ride to Ayuttaya (Phitsanulok – Ayuttaya, train, 20 km bike)

We didn't oversleep this time, got up and packed our stuff arriving at the station in good time. The train ticket for the 6h ride to Ayuttaya was 58B, about 1.5\$, they asked 90B for each bike and an additional 90B for the trailer. So bikes and even trailer cost more than humans! But in all it was very cheap.

The train was already at the station and had a luggage waggon, so it was no problem whatsoever to load the bikes. We got on board and the train pulled out of the station. It was quite a pleasant ride, we spent most of the time either eating mangosteen and rambutan fruit or sleeping.

We biked from the station to the town, hunted round a bit for a hotel, had something to eat and then went for a snooze to escaped the midday heat. Later we had a bit of a bike around town looking at the archaeological sites, went to check out roti-road, a street where they churn out huge numbers of rotis, this variation consists of a coloured pancake dough willed with angel hair, which is sugar fibres. We asked for two and they were given to us for free. I think usually they are bought by the dozen!



Fr 27.5.2016, day 320. Bike ride towards Cambodia (Ayuttaya – Nakhon Nok, 90 km)

Our original plan was to head for the coast south east of Bangkok in the hope of getting in some kite surfing. However research of the area showed that it was very crowded and the sea very dirty. Also it would be a difficult ride on busy roads and we would have had to ride around Bangkok airport. Also we realized that we would be there for the weekend, exactly when millions of people from Bangkok head down for the week-end. So finally we abandoned the idea and decided to head for Cambodia. We had a look at taking a longer, probably more scenic and less busy route entering Cambodia from the north, but then also gave up on this plan as it would have meant 200km more.

So we took a bee-line for Cambodia, first weaving our way along tiny roads heading more or less directly eastwards, then finally we joined the 33 which is the highway that leads straight to Phnom Penh. It was not very nice riding with lots of traffic and not much by the way of scenery, but we had a tail wind and made good progress. We hadn't planned ahead where to stay, but there did seem to be some hotels, so we were confident we would find something. When we arrived in Nakhon Nok we biked round a bit looking for hotels but could find nothing, so we decided to find a place with internet. This also proved difficult, but finally we found a nice café. We asked the girl if she knew of a hotel and she pointed across the street. It turned out there was a hotel right next door, only we had no idea as everything was in Thai language.









Sa 28.5.2016, day 321. Long day on the highway (Nakhon Nok – Sa Kaeo, 120 km)

We had decided to try and reach Sa Keao, where there seemed to be plenty of hotels. It was quite a long ride, but we knew it would be perfectly flat and also we were hoping for some tail wind. However it turned out to be a very tough ride indeed, as we had the wind in our faces most of the day. The ride was not very pleasant at all as there was lots of traffic. And the habit that the Thais have of parking on the shoulder forced us to always slow down, check that there was no car coming and then pass the parked car at a safe distance to be sure not to get doored by the driver should he think of getting out without looking. The wind gradually picked up and the sky got darker and darker. Then the rain started pouring down. Luckily we were in a small town and found a place to take shelter. After about half an hour the rain passed and we pushed on. We finally arrived in Sa Kaeo just before 6pm. Again we hadn't checked where to stay the night before, so we again biked round town a bit, but didn't see any hotels. Finally we stopped at a café where they had internet. We had some cream puffs and checked out the location of some hotels. There seemed to be three that might be OK. I suggested to check out the one closest to where we were first and then decide if we wanted to check out the other two as well. Siria wanted to go straight to the one that seemed to have the best reviews and then bike back if that one should turn out to be too expensive or full or whatever. As I thought it would be a wasted opportunity not to quickly check the hotel we would anyway have to ride past and I insisted we should go and check it out and so we did. For me the place seemed OK and was 470B, this also seemed OK for me. Also the location smack in the centre for town seemed nice and so I suggested we stayed. Siria first said she still wanted to check out the other place, but then agreed to stay, not wanting to make a fuss and be complicated.

So we checked in, I rolled the bikes in and started unpacking and Siria went to the room and then she got really angry, saying that 470B was far too expensive, that it was a mistake to stay here, the place was terrible, etc... I really didn't know what to say, for me everything was OK and I didn't have the feeling I coerced her to stay here, it would have been no problem for me to quickly go and check the other places. This incident again showed me how important and how difficult communication is and also how difficult it is to live 24/7 right on top of each other. In retrospect I think we are doing really well together as this was the very first and completely harmless disagreement we have had for quite a long time now and I think most of it was due to being tired and hungry after a really long and tiring day.



Su 29.5.2016, day 322. Short but shitty day on the highway (Sa Kaeo – Aranyaprathet 60 km)

For me it was not such a good day. Headache, tired legs and I have a sore at the worst possible place for biking, yes, right where I am in contact with the saddle. I was also really getting tired of the road and I caught myself thinking “If only we had taken the other road!” and also caught myself questioning the whole project. What is it all about anyway? Is it really just about biking down busy dangerous roads?

At least we arrived in good time, easily found a nice hotel and took it easy all afternoon. I had another puncture in the trailer, that’s three days in a row I’ve had to fix a puncture and the tire is looking very worn. I really have to get a new one, but where?

In the late afternoon it started to rain hard with thunder and lightning. I guess this is normal during wet season. From now on we’ll have to make sure we find a place to escape in the afternoons.

And tomorrow we will be crossing over to Cambodia, the 14th country on our trip so far and a very poor country. I wonder how it will be!