

# FILM IN THAILAND

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## What's News ?

**In an ongoing effort to create common understanding about the rules and regulations pertaining to filming in Thailand among local coordinator companies, the Thailand Film Office, Office of Tourism Development, Ministry of Tourism and Sports held a Seminar between July 1-3 2009 in Bangkok.**

The Seminar brought together representatives of **the Immigration Bureau** and **Department of Labor** (visa types and application process for working foreign crews); **Bureau of the Royal Household** (filming in locations under the Royal Household's care); **Customs Department** (process and procedure for import of equipment and materials used in filming); **Fine Arts Department** (rules and regulations for filming within its jurisdictions); **Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation** (rules and regulations for filming within National Parks); **Revenue Department** (tax rates, payment methods and double taxation laws); **State Railway of Thailand and Airports Authority of Thailand** (rules and regulations for filming within their jurisdictions); **Royal Thai Army Headquarters** (filming in military jurisdictions and request for weaponry support) and **the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration** (filming in Bangkok).

Over 200 representatives of the film production services sector attended the meetings, information from which will help increase their understanding of processes for foreign production filming in Thailand so they can advise foreign productions better.

In her opening statements, Ms. Wanasiri Morakul, director of the Thailand Film Office noted that foreign productions in Thailand generate income of over US\$ 56.8 million a year plus an undetermined amount that gets spent and filters into the grassroots economy in the provinces.



Left : Over 200 people attended the Thailand Film Office Seminar

Right : Lt. Saksiri Korsoongner, Chief of Planning and Projects, Public Relations Division, Royal Thai Army Headquarters speaks to the Seminar.

## Tourist Visas Fee Exempt

**According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand:**

All foreigners who apply for Tourist Visa at the Royal Thai Embassies and the Royal Thai Consulates-General worldwide, including eligible foreigners who apply for Visa on Arrival at designated checkpoints, will be exempted from Tourist Visa fee from 25 June B.E. 2552 (2009) to 4 March B.E. 2553 (2010). **Such arrangement is for Tourist Visa only.**

[More information can be found here.](#)

Please check with your local Thai Embassy or Consulate for the proper type Visa necessary if you are planning on coming to Thailand to shoot on location.

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## What They Are Saying

**At the recent World Comedy Film Festival in Bangkok, freelance journalist Lekha Shankar met up with the following film makers and caught these reactions to filming in Thailand (as published in [Wise Kwai's Thai Film Journal](#) blog)**

Singaporean director **Jack Neo** ("I Not Stupid", "Money Not Enough"): "The theatres and facilities in Bangkok are excellent. I do my post-production work here. ... I'm ...amazed by the facilities!"



Jack Neo

Malaysian actor-director **Hans Isaac** ("City Sharks"): "We always come to Bangkok for our post-production work, but it was on this trip, that we realized how advanced, the film facilities are, and how many options we have!"



Ari Gold

American director **Ari Gold** ("Adventures of Power"): "I'm stunned by the film facilities and plan to convert my film from digi-beta to 35mm here. The service in studios like Kantana is so impressive."

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# Meet Our Staff

## Ms. Chanjira Chantanajulaka



*Ms. Chantanajulaka on the set of the movie "Shanghai" filmed in Thailand.*

**FIT:** Thanks for taking time to chat with us. You are in charge of the Cooperation and Special Affairs Section. What exactly is that Section tasked to do?

**Chanjira Chantanajulaka (CC):** As Tourism Development Specialist for the Thailand Film Office, I am responsible for coordination and cooperation of film related activities between government agencies. I am also responsible for coordination with the private sector for participation at various film markets and film festivals. My responsibilities also include processing applications for foreign governments and international organizations that wish to film in Thailand.

**FIT:** Is it difficult to coordinate between different branches of the Thai government?

**CC:** No, it is not really difficult to coordinate – it just takes time. However coordination really depends on the matter being discussed and the agency and staff dealing with. As I said earlier, concern is timing. Sometimes it takes awhile to go through the bureaucracy (so to say). Sometimes agency staff want to help but they cannot provide support or cooperation because there are many regulations.

**FIT:** Please tell us something about yourself.

**CC:** I graduated from Chiang Mai University with a degree in media. I first began working with the Thailand Film Office when it was under the Public Relations Department in 1990. After the government restructuring in 2002, the Thailand Film Office was transferred from the Public Relations Department to the Office of Tourism Development, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Therefore, I was transferred over here.

**FIT:** Do you have any hobbies? What do you do in your free time?

**CC:** Well, I like to spend time in my garden and reading books. I also like to travel, both here in Thailand and abroad.

**FIT:** What are some of the common problems foreign film makers have when filming in Thailand? What suggestions do you have for them to make their filming experience easier?

**CC:** Seems most problems we have are street shoots. While road closures are possible, difficulty ranges based on which streets and time of day. Consideration must be given to the public as to not cause inconvenience to them.

Another area of concern is when filming animals, especially large animals like elephants (which everyone loves to film here in Thailand). We don't really have animal wranglers like they do in the West where they babysit the animals as well as train them. Therefore special attention needs to be paid to animals if using them in filming. Even if well trained, animals sometimes are unpredictable so caution must always be practiced. And because Thailand is in the tropics, special attention needs to be taken to protect animals in this type of environment.

**FIT:** What do you think Thailand has to offer film makers that other foreign locations do not have?

**CC:** Thailand is very fortunate to have a wide diversity of locations, everything from mountains to beaches, from islands to jungle waterfalls, from lakes to cornfields and from modern city landscapes to ruins of ancient civilizations. You can find locations here resembling nearly every other country in the world. The only thing we lack is snow! But we can always create that in a controlled environment.

Of course having worked with foreign productions for many years, our crews are quite skilled and readily adaptable to any cultural nuances. We have advanced post production services here in Bangkok, some of the best in all of Asia.

And of course there is the nature of the Thai people. Our crews are hospitable and don't mind hard work over long hours. They are truly professionals in what they do.

We must not forget that one of the biggest advantages for a location shoot in Thailand is value for money. You can do more for less here.

**FIT:** Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us.

**CC:** You're welcome.

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# What's Up Private Sector ?

Only line production house based in Phuket, Thailand, **I-Sea Film** specializes in island locations and underwater shoots in southern Thailand. They recently worked with Swiss based Media Fish on the reality TV show "Super Single".

isea@iseafilm.com



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From the Hong Kong director Wilson Yip and writer Edmond Wong came this great kung fu and martial art movie 'Ip Man'. The story is a semi-biography of Yip Man, the first martial arts master to teach the Chinese martial art of Wing Chun. This film involved **Oriental Post's** DI team which handled scanning, MTI, output, and footage.

kamontip@orientalpost.co.th



Film 'Ip Man', courtesy of Mandarin Films

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Chiang Mai based **Creative Kingdom** announced June 19, 2009 plans for CNX-Wood a 175 acre mixed use film studio and residential development. According to Eduardo Robles, CEO of Creative Kingdom, Inc., "The new CNX Movie World Studios will serve as the hub for Asia's booming film industry and become one of the premiere destinations for the world's movie makers."

The Studios will purportedly feature a series of state-of-the-art film production studios, animation facilities and special effects laboratories. The facilities will provide film makers with advanced tools and technologies for developing and producing top quality domestic and international movies.

berny@creativekingdom.com



renderings courtesy of Creative Kingdom

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Winner of the US \$10,000 DI services "Lucky Draw" at the **Technicolor** Bangkok Digital Imaging Open House was the movie "Karaoke" (Tanjung Aru Pictures). The movie had full sound work done at the Bangkok facility. The Malaysian movie will premiere in September 2009 at the Toronto Film Festival.

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Producer Pierre Laburthe accepts Award  
photo courtesy of Technicolor Bangkok

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# Film Me

**Tarutao National Marine Park consists of 51 islands located in the Andaman Sea, off the coast of Satun Province of Southern Thailand.** The Tarutao National Marine Park (it became Thailand's first marine national park in 1974) consists of two island groups: Tarutao and Adang-Rawi), which are scattered from 20 to 70 kilometers distant from the southwestern most point of mainland Thailand. The park covers an area of 1,490 square kilometers (1,260 ocean, 230 island).

Tarutao is a Malay word meaning old, mysterious and primitive. Preliminary geological work has borne out the first of these adjectives. Much of Tarutao is composed of very old Cambrian sandstone. The northern and southeastern portions of the island consist of limestone rock. Most of the caves on the island are formed in limestone rock.

It is estimated that the park contains about 25% of the world's fish species. Some of the more important include members of families such as shark, ray, grouper, eel, carp, catfish, salmon, flying perch, angelfish and butterflyfish. 92 species of coral-reef fish were identified in one study.

Tarutao Island (or Koh Tarutao as it is known) was the setting for *Survivor: Thailand*, the 2002 season for the USA reality television series: *Survivor*. The Philippine version of the series was also set there six years later.

Today, Koh Tarutao is a spectacular shoot location with caves, mangrove forests and white sandy beaches.



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# Pitch It to Me

**Filming a pirate or a ghost story or a thriller – Tarutao is your setting.**

*Legend had it that Tarutao was cursed. People who tried to settle permanently on the island usually became ill, suffering chills, high fever, and frequently death. Those who survived were plagued with chronic fever, frequent relapses, and occasional delirium. Although the natives had no name for this dreaded sickness, modern medicine calls it malaria, the scourge of mankind.*

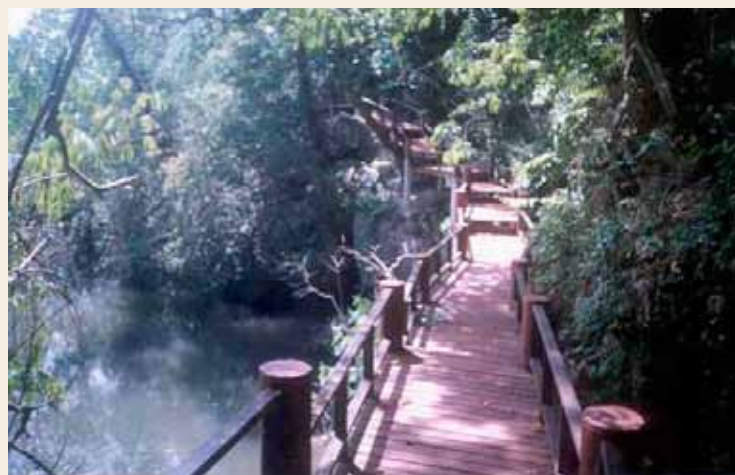
*In addition to mosquitoes, the streams on Tarutao were also infested with crocodiles. Visitors who chose to camp near the seemingly safe, beautiful streams, or wander around at night, often fell prey to those ferocious reptiles.*<sup>1</sup>

On the island, you sense the historic significance Tarutao played in the history of democracy in Thailand. The need for an isolated and forbidding environment to lock away enemies of the state caused the Corrections Department to build a penal colony there in 1939.

Two important revolutionary groups were imprisoned there. Their coup attempts were unsuccessful, but ushered in change nonetheless, and soon a democratic constitution was drafted. The first prison was located at Talo Udang Bay, but hundreds of new prisoners came every month, so Talo Wao Bay became the second site. Prisoners were forced to build a road 12 km. long and 6 m. wide between the two bays.

From interviews of old guards and prisoners, it was learned that almost 1/3 of the convicts died on the island. Malaria was the main cause of death; but cruelty from guards and starvation were also other major factors.

Escape was a disheartening prospect, due to crocodiles, sharks and fierce guards. But not all prisoners were miserable. The political prisoners were naturally respected due to their social status, rank and education; and enjoyed an “open prison” atmosphere away from the common prisoners. They whiled away their time in useful projects, including agriculture, plant propagation and translation and dictionary-writing. After their return to the real world, many returned to high government posts.



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Crocodile Cave

Order eroded in the camps during WW II. Supplies no longer came from the mainland, and starvation ensued. Both guards and prisoners soon became the most feared pirates in the area, preying on merchant ships in the Strait of Malacca.

After WW II ended, British naval troops were sent to Tarutao to clean out the pirate groups. After the Corrections Department closed the prison on Tarutao, villagers from nearby provinces began to settle on Tarutao, in the valleys and inland of the bays. There were fishermen and farmers who planted rice, fruit trees, rubber trees, coconuts and jackfruit.

At Talo Udang Bay the historic outpost remains. Once the site of a unique penal colony for political prisoners; later a bustling village complete with shops, fishing port, and a brothel; little trace of these civilized establishments can be found today. A few remnants of prison days are still visible--a cement foundation for a fish sauce plant, rubber tree grove, and charcoal furnace pit. These are a bit of a walk from the Talo Udang ranger station, but if you want, one of the rangers will show you around. The young men who are stationed here become quite cut off from the world, and tend to yell, sing and tell ghost stories among themselves.<sup>2</sup>



Rock formation on Koh Tarutao beach

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<sup>1</sup> *The Pirates of Tarutao* by Paul Adirex, Aries Books, 1994 ISBN 9748904695

<sup>2</sup>source: [Tarutao National Park website](http://Tarutao National Park website)

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