

FILM IN THAILAND

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What's News ?

Thailand Film Office, Office of Tourism Development Conducts Filming in Thailand Workshop

Intended to provide awareness of relevant rules, regulations and procedures for international location shoots in Thailand, the Thailand Film Office, Office of Tourism Development held a two day training seminar July 30–31 2009 in Bangkok for representatives of the Thai government which have licensing, monitoring and other procedural matters related to international film shoots in Thailand. The Seminar also looked at ways in which cooperation between relevant government agencies could be facilitated and handled in a more expeditious and professional manner.

Chaired by Mr. Somprasong Khommapat, Deputy Director-General, Office of Tourism Development, and training led by Dr. Patamavadee Charuworn, Associate Dean Faculty of Communication Arts Chulalongkorn University, the seminar was attended by 70 participants from the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, The Department of Fine Arts, Office of Tourism Development, Provincial Sports Departments, the Royal Thai Tourist Police and others.



Seminar participant Chaitthach Boonphuphantanti, (Khao Sok National Park - Surat Thani province, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation) receives Certificate of Seminar completion from Thailand Film Office Director, Ms. Wanasiri Morakul



Seminar photos courtesy Thailand Film Office

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Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket and Ko Samui Take Top Awards

New York, July 16, 2009 — Two cities in Thailand, Bangkok and Chiang Mai, were voted among the top 10 cities in the world, according to *Travel + Leisure's* World's Best Awards, the results of which were published in the August 2009 issue of the magazine.

Travel + Leisure readers selected Bangkok and Chiang Mai as the third and fifth best cities in the world, respectively — as well as second and third best cities in Asia. The Thai islands of Phuket and Ko Samui were awarded the third and fifth best islands in Asia.

Chiang mai



Bangkok



Phuket

Among The Top 100 Hotels in the world, eight were in Thailand, including the Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle in Chiang Rai (#7), the Mandarin Oriental in Bangkok (#20) and the Anantara Golden Triangle in Chiang Rai (#53). And 11 Thai hotels were also named among the top 40 resorts and city hotels in Asia.

The 14th Annual *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards ranks the best cities, hotels, resorts, cruises and airlines worldwide. The awards are the results of an annual, impartial survey that allows its readers to vote for their favorite travel destinations around the world.

news courtesy Tourism Authority of Thailand

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Meet Our Staff

Ms. Ubolwan Sucharitakul



Fit: You are in charge of the Shooting Permit Consideration Section. What exactly is that Section tasked to do?

Ms. Ubolwan Sucharitakul (US): The Shooting Permit Consideration Section is responsible for the checking of all the documents required by the Movie and Teleplay Screening Committee which actually grants or refuses the issue of shooting permits. We also coordinate with other government agencies to aid foreign film crews shooting in Thailand. Examples would be the issue of visas and work permits and permission to shoot in areas under the jurisdiction of particular agencies such as national parks or sites of historical interest.

Fit: Are you also in charge of the One Stop Service Shop? How does a film maker make best use of that service provided by the Thailand Film Office?

US: Yes I am. Here, film makers shooting TV programs or commercials, music videos and non-sensitive documentaries can obtain necessary permits under one roof within 3 working days. This is done with the aid of a local coordinator, either an individual or company whose services the film maker is required by our regulations to engage.

Fit: Are there particular items that a film maker must pay attention to when requesting permits?

US: Producers of any kind of material wishing to shoot in Thailand should be culturally sensitive. High regard for the Monarchy in Thailand is well known and any material which shows this and/or other institutions such as the government or religion in a poor or negative light would be unlikely to receive permission to shoot.

Fit: For example, what kinds of permits are available? Traffic control? Street closure? Demolition?

US: Other types of permits such as traffic control and street closure are available with the help of a local coordinator.

Fit: Tell us something about yourself – How long have you worked with the Thai government? How long have you worked with the Film Office? Do you have any hobbies? What do you do in your free time?

US: I have been a civil servant for almost 15 years, I have worked for the Thailand Film Office for nearly 4 years. When I have free time, I enjoy shopping and knitting. I like listening to music too.

Fit: What are some of the common problems foreign film makers have when they apply for permits? What suggestions do you have for them to make their filming experience easier?

US: The most common problem faced by foreign film makers is incomplete or incorrect documents. I therefore recommend that they always allow themselves plenty of time rather than waiting until the last possible minute and possibly jeopardizing their shooting schedules.

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

US: To anyone thinking about filming in Thailand, I say “do it”! Everyone knows about our beautiful islands and beaches, fantastic food and definitely warm and friendly people, but we have a lot more to offer as well. There are many experienced professional film crews and technicians and first-rate pre and post production services. Whatever your filming needs, I'm sure Thailand has the answer.

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New Thailand Film Office Website Design

The Thailand Film Office is pleased to announce the re-design of its official website, www.thailandfilmoffice.org. The new launch will be completed by September 15, 2009.

Please be advised the website may be down a few days from September 10.

Stop back and visit our new website and let us know what you think about the new design.

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What's Up Private Sector ?

“Creation” Movie

Bangkok based **De Warrenne Pictures** facilitated Academy Award winning producer Jeremy Thomas (“The Last Emperor”) for The Recorded Picture Company and BBC Films when Hollywood director Jon Amiel (“Entrapment”, “The Core”) shot scenes for “Creation”, a bio-pic of Charles Darwin starring Paul Bettany and Jennifer Connelly, in various locations around Thailand.

Thai producer, Tom Waller and production supervisor, Oscar Kahar hired art director Pongnarin Jonghawklang and his team to construct an elaborate set for a nineteenth century London Zoo at Moonstar Studios in Bangkok, whilst Khao Kiew in Chonburi and Pa Sak River in Saraburi province stood in for the Borneo jungle. Several orangutans from Lopburi Zoo were featured in scenes depicting the capture of apes by Dayak savages under the supervision of veteran animal consultant Rona Brown (“Gorillas in the Mist”, “Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan”). “Creation” will be released in cinemas worldwide by Icon Distribution from September 2009.

“Creation” which also did negative development and telecine work in Thailand at Kantana with Gearhead providing equipment for the shoot will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2009.

tom@dewarrenne.com



photos courtesy of De Warrenne Pictures



“Shadows” Shoots in Thailand

An American film, starring Academy Award winner William Hurt, Cary Elwes and Thailand's own Ploy Jindachot and Paula Taylor, finished principal photography in Thailand in March 2009. Shot in Bangkok, Pattaya, and Kanchanburi - “Shadows” is a supernatural thriller, due for completion by the end of 2009.



photos courtesy of Greenlight Films

This is the first feature film for **Greenlight Films, Ltd.**, a Thai based company with both a Thai and an American producer. “Shadows” is currently in post-production at Post Bangkok.

gong@greenlight.co.th



Warship Docks in Thailand

Granada Media's ITV Studios based in the UK worked with **Persona Travel Ltd.** to coordinate the documentary “Warship” which was docked in Thailand from June 17-22 2009. After the shoot, Persona Travel hosted the crew at Phuket FantaSea for dinner and show.

nino_hkt@hotmail.com



“Empire of Silver”

A 2009 production from the director Christina Yao and starred Aaron Kwok, “Empire of Silver” depicts the story about a carefree young man who is obliged to take over his family banking empire in 1899. This film involved **Oriental Post's** DI team which handled scanning, color correction, online editing, dust busting, MTI, and output.



kamontip@orientalpost.co.th

Picture from ‘Empire of Silver’, courtesy of Crystal Clear Pictures and Polybona Films



Film Me

Phuket, Thailand

One of Thailand's most utilized location destinations, used by film makers from around the world, is the island of Phuket. Phuket has its own international airport with direct flights from many major cities.

The island itself is Thailand's largest at 48 km in length (approximately 30 miles), 21 km (13 miles) at it's widest, and is located in Southern Thailand, on the west-facing Andaman Sea coastline, suspended from the southern tip of Phang Nga Province by a pair of short but substantial road bridges.

From the Sino-Portuguese architecture in Phuket City, to its pristine beaches, million dollar yachts, undersea coral beds and magnificent hotel/spa structures to Arabian indoor settings, indigenous Sea Gypsy camps and spectacular rainforest, Phuket has locations for countless film shoots be they documentary, still photography/commercials, feature films, TV or music videos.

If you haven't shot in Phuket, you are missing the film shoot of a lifetime.

Shinpracha House, Phuket Town

picture courtesy Royal Phuket Marina



Phuket Provincial Hall used in "Tomorrow Never Dies" (1997)

picture courtesy Tourism Authority of Thailand Newsroom

used in "The Beach" (2000)

picture courtesy Tourism Authority of Thailand Newsroom



underwater photos courtesy of Philip Hodson



Pitch It to Me

Phuket - Pearl of the Andaman Sea

The Island of Phuket has a long recorded history. A chronicle dating back to A.D. 1025 indicates that the island's present day name derives in meaning from the Tamil manikram, (crystal mountain) (which is equivalent to the Thai words phu , meaning mountain, and ket, meaning jewel). Many modern tourist brochures often refer to Phuket as the Pearl of the South.

However for most of history, and especially on old European maps, it was known as Junk Ceylon (or variations thereof). This is thought to be an English corruption of the cape of Jang Si Lang, which was recorded by a third century A.D. geographer en route to the Malay Peninsula. And most geologists believe that the area known as Phuket today was once a cape that extended into the Andaman Sea before becoming detached from the mainland over time.

Other early accounts sometimes refer to the island as 'bukit' (the Malay word for mountain). King Ramkhamhaeng named the island "Cha Lang", (then the capital city on the island), which evolved to "Thalang". During the reign of Rama V (1868-1910) the island was officially named as Bhuket, and in 1967 the spelling was changed to the present day Phuket.

Phuket was first inhabited by Negritos who lived side by side with sea gypsies from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Moken or Chao Lay people of the sea). The Sea Gypsies, who still have colonies on the island, gather shellfish as they roam from cove to cove.

Portuguese seafarers arrived in the early 16th century to seek ship masts from the forests, rhinoceros horns for markets in Europe and to buy pitch to caulk their boats. The Portuguese established settlements and their presence is reflected in the Sino-Portuguese architecture in Phuket Town.



Sino Portuguese Architecture, Phuket Town

In economic terms, Phuket's history has been shaped by tin mining, rubber, agriculture and tourism.

It is known that tin was discovered a couple of millennia ago in the Kathu district of Phuket and was mined until 1992 when the last mine on Phuket closed. Cassiterite (the principal ore of tin) was found in abundance in Phuket and the neighboring Andaman coast (notably from KhaoLak to TakuaPa).

As a perfect stopover sheltering traders from monsoons, Jung Ceylon welcomed merchants from India, Persia, Arabia, Burma, China and also Siam. By the 18th century, the island was a popular trading port for tin with Portuguese, Dutch, English and French traders flocking to the island. This contributed to making the development of mining so unprecedented, but it was not until

the mid 1800's that demand for tin really surged, although Phuket's tin abundance was well known to the rest of Asia in the 13th century and to the first European arrivals in 1512.

Tin was widely sought after and was regarded as an extremely valuable commodity not only by the Thai Kingdom, but by all Oriental and European powers. Its main importance was the formation of bronze by smelting with copper. Bronze and other related alloys have been used for all kinds of weapons, body armor, coins, roof tiles, cannons, temple bells and religious items, and more recently for anti-rusting coatings, tin cans, foils and electronics. It is only in the last twenty years that new high-tech composite materials have forced the decline of tin.

Thousands of Chinese migrated to Phuket to work in the tin mines where conditions were adverse and labor intensive. History was made at Wat Chalong in 1876, when a riot involving 25,000 migrant workers was quelled by two temple abbots who rallied with the local people. However Chinese businessmen and miners did eventually enjoy thriving business, wealth and most decided to settle in Phuket.

In 1909 the search for tin took to the seas. The Australian Edward Thomas Miles brought the first tin dredge to Phuket in that year. In 1969, the Tin Mining Monument (shaped like a large drill bit) was erected at Sapan Hin, Phuket Town on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of tin dredging in Phuket.

Blocks of pure tin were used as currency and were considered as legal tender to pay taxes in Phuket until the democratic revolution in 1932.

The tin mining business has repeatedly come under fire throughout its long history in Thailand. The environmental impact of early mining was considerable. Open cut tin mines devastated the pristine landscape of Phuket and eventually angered residents. In 1985 construction began of a tantalum refinery, a valuable metal by-product of tin processing. The procedure would have significantly damaged air and water quality, but a 50,000 strong citizen protest broke into chaos resulting in the destruction of the plant.

Paradoxically, tin mining in Phuket has played a helping hand towards tourism - namely the gentleman's game of golf. Tin miners used to excavate freely and cut canyons into the virgin countryside. After the mining died out, the fabricated terrain of sections of Phuket Island proved to be perfect locations for a number of golf courses. However it did require ingenious designers to devise means to rejuvenate barren acidic land and exploit the ungainly angles of the miners' strokes, to develop some of the most challenging and scenic holes in the world.

The first golf course in Phuket opened in 1989, over a reclaimed tin mine site.



Laguna Phuket Golf Course

Natural rubber is obtained from the white milky fluid (latex) found in many plants.

The first rubber trees were planted in Phuket in 1903 and cultivation expanded to consume nearly one third of the island.

The latex is extracted (tapped) by making a series of rotating cuts in the bark, and it is collected in a small cup. Most prime cultivators and tappers were, and are, Thai Muslims. Rubber planters are typically small holders, each family cultivating perhaps only 16 rai (approximately 6 acres) of land.

Wealthy families were preoccupied with the riches of tin mining, whereas poorer families found rubber to be an attractive prospect. With rubber plantations, after an initial three years of hard work and a further four year wait, one could then settle back and enjoy a relatively easy living for perhaps decades. Tappers usually work from 2.00 am until dawn, and their lamps can be seen flickering like fireflies. Thailand is the world's biggest rubber producer.

Prior to 1980, Phuket was quite isolated and obscure, even though it regularly contributed more than other provinces to the national revenue. Thereafter it initially became an undiscovered getaway spot for tourists.

Today it is a world class destination with its stunning beaches and picture-perfect landscape.

Nowadays, although tourism and rubber plantations are the two pillars of the economy, other products contribute significantly to the economy. Pearls are commercially farmed along with shellfish and abalone. Phuket's fishing port is at all times full while luxury class yachts fill slips at Phuket's multi-million dollar marinas. Prawn farming is a thriving business on the east coast of the island while cashew nuts, dried coconuts (copra) and pineapples also contribute to the economy.

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