

Northern Thailand

Secrets in the Jungle

Special places & people

Mae Fah Luang - the King's Mother lived for 18 years (with her children) in Lausanne, Switzerland, therefore, she was always happy in the mountains of Northern Thailand. She created many projects to help the local Hill-tribe people and she considered her principal home to be a Swiss-chalet-style-palace on the Thai border with Burma.

The only practical means for the King's Mother to visit this region was with a helicopter and the ethnic people affectionately called her – **Mae Fah Luang**- "Royal Mother from the Sky"!



Mae Fah Luang garden at Doi Tung with the "Chalet" in the background.



A tea plantation high in mountains (this Hill-tribe immigrated from China).



Rice paddies in a mountain valley



Secrets in the Jungle

Akha Hill Tribes



The jungle-covered hills in this region have many "Hill-tribes". These are communities of people that have migrated mainly from Burma and China over the past 100 years (most were fleeing communism in their countries). Many of the leaders of these communities were well-educated people, however, here in the jungle, they were confined to their small community and became

dependent upon the resources of the jungle around them.

This small communities lives in the mountains behind our jungle outpost and like others has few monetary resources. It is only the past few years that a source of revenue has become necessary, mainly because the children are encouraged to attend school.

Therefore, everyone was glad when the cover for this photo-album was made by this family; Grand-father, daughter and grand-daughter (now attending school).

The bamboo was taken from the forest around their community. It was then dried and cut in strips so that it could be woven to make the pocket for these albums. Since they had never before seen pictures of themselves, making a cover for a photo-album was like entering a different world. It always was/is a part of their traditions to use bamboo for many of the items in their house; cups, chopsticks, furniture, etc. Furthermore, they can use many different products from

the jungle for weaving; bamboo, vines, large-grass, etc.. – always hardworking and curious, they were willing to find ways to make these photo albums a reality and fortunately is it also a perfect match for their lifestyle.

IF you have an interest in obtaining additional album covers like this: Sheba.asia@gmail.com



Secrets in the Jungle

Pee So Pah – a “Pearl” in the Jungle



This Jungle-Outpost, called PraSert announces itself with the hot-springs. The hot-spring pools, massage facilities, and boiling egg basin are all maintained with care and bring a wide assortment of visitors.

However, it is Pee So Pah discreetly managing her restaurant (located opposite side of road from hot springs) that has made the visit to this Jungle Outpost memorable for many people.

Restaurant is not really the right word for this - it is more like Pee So Pah's large terrace, with Pee So Pah cooking great food. The terrace and garden have a view on the Kok River and the meals are always "arroy mack, mack" (delicious, very, very).

Pee So Pah and faithful dog "**Salée**" can always be found around this beautiful terrace and garden.

There is also a small guesthouse. Within this beautiful setting, one does not need much, many visitors simply hang a hammock from the trees.



A word of caution:
Farewells are often be tearful around here!

Telephone Pee So Pah:

087-657-8588



Secrets in the Jungle

Handcrafted by Atittaya

Atittaya grew-up weaving with her family in Isaan. North-eastern Thailand (Isaan) has a long history of weaving and within each family/village the tasks are managed by various groups; spinning the thread, cultivating plants for special colors, weaving, etc. Here in the jungle-outpost Atittaya did not have such an infrastructure, however, she wanted to weave and therefore created all that was needed using the resources that she found around her. The beautiful textiles that Atittaya weaves are now sold throughout the ChiangRai region. Following is some of the information that is provided with her products.



The mangosteen season around here always starts with a reminder from Atittaya, "please keep the fruit skins (peels) for me".

Why? she uses them to color her threads for the Handcrafted by Atittaya fabric. Atittaya's family have been weaving material for generations and they have always used natural products for the colors.

Then what? When she has the "color-brew" ready (various cooking time for the different ingredients), she lets the white cotton threads soak in it to obtain the desired color. Then these large spools of cotton are washed in the river (remember the colors are natural) and the thread is "firmed" using rice-broth. Once they have been dried, they must then be spun onto storage bobbins, so that they are available for use at later dates.

As Atittaya is coloring the cotton-threads, she is also giving thought to what she will weave from these colors. Her weaving loom is on her terrace and usually she has a piece in progress.



Weaving-loom? Atittaya built it using the bamboo that she found in the jungle-mountains where she lives! Atittaya grew up using the family-loom in Isaan (more than one day away from where she now lives), therefore, *IF* she wanted to weave here in the Kok River Valley, first she had to build the loom.

Artists around the world know that "much of the work is in the *unsung hymns*". It requires foresight, strength, and much more, to bring all the elements together for your vision to become reality. There are many long days of work before Atittaya can craft on her weaving-loom, her comment "**many of the threads pass through my fingers 10 times before they become fabric**" tells us much.

In Harmony with Nature, Atittaya weaves, at the same time, she might be tending her two

children, cooking up a bamboo-curry, and yet Atittaya's work is known as some of the most beautiful in Thailand - and the qualities of love and care make her fabric unique to most of the world.

Many people have asked for more information about Atittaya. Hopefully this will help provide a small insight into the environment, knowledge, and work that goes into each item that Atittaya creates – and maybe along with a **Handcrafted by Atittaya** product, some of the resourceful thoughts of Atittaya will also find their way into your hands. E-mail: naturespod@gmail.com
Telephone: + 66 (0) 87 303 9085, Chiang Rai, Thailand
<http://www.ati.rephoto.biz/>

Obviously Atittaya loves to weave. Today, she has made a small fire to help dry the threads (difficult to pull when they are wet) and she also decided to cook a pot of rice for the children's return from school.



Secrets in the Jungle

Khun Kru Aeow (teacher Aeow)

Kindergarten at Pra Sert community school

We are lucky – we have a wonderful teacher !

“Khun Kru Aeow mee jai dee.”

(Teacher Aeow has a kind heart)

Khun Kru Aeow has already helped ten classes of children (ages 3 to 6) to prepare for their first year in the elementary school. We try to be good students – she cares and helps us in many ways.

Our family also tries to help Khun Kru Aeow because we know that she often uses her own money to pay for things that we need in school. Khun Kru Aeow provides much inspiration, along with the education.

Students of Khun Kru Aeow

Kindergarten at Pra Sert community school

Additional facts:

The National School Dept provides revenue for the Pra Sert elementary school classes, grades, 1 to 6.

This kindergarten is financed by a local administration. Their budget provides:

- an empty room (children sit on the floor)
- lunch, 13.- baht per child (CHF 0,50)
- Khun Kru Aeow salary is around 8,000.-baht per month (CHF 260.-)
- 150.- baht per year to cover all costs for each student

One year school is 300 days = 0.50 baht per day (less than CHF .02 centime each day).

An example of costs: paper, pencils, colors, small medical supplies, telephone calls to parents, extra mats for children on cold winter days – and all the other things that children need

Because Khun Kru Aeow has a “**jai dee**” (kind heart), every day she uses money from her salary to cover small cost of her students.

In an effort to prepare the children for the larger world:

- Khun Kru Aeow believes it is important to take the children on a small “outing” each year. The local administration does not provide any financial help. Therefore, she finds someone with a pickup truck that is willing to load the back full of children and a couple of parents. Khun Kru Aeow pays all the bills for the day (gas, meals, etc.) out of her salary.
- Khun Kru Aeow works with the parents as much as possible to help with repairs to the classroom, etc. . However, most of the children come from poor hill-tribe families which find it difficult to provide any additional support. All needed supplies are paid for by Khun Kru Aeow.
- Khun Kru Aeow always works at the school a few hours beyond normal closing and most often she also cares for a few students during that time – knowing that parents might be busy working in the fields and cannot take the children home.

An average day at the school for Khun Kru Aeow is always more than 10 hours !

Khun Kru Aeow is a pillar in the community that merits additional support. Parents in the community of PraSert can guide you to the school room door of Khun Kru Aeow. For more information:

sheba.asia@gmail.com



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Akha Hill House

This is it – the only **authentic Hill-tribe guesthouse** that is entirely managed by the Akha Hill tribe that live here.

Apae Amor was born in this small community; he learned to speak English at an early age; he then became a tour-guide leader and was awarded the “Thailand Tourist Guide Award” in 2006 & 2008.

Somewhere in those years, Apae started to bring guests to his village and understood the kind of genuine experience that they were looking for. Through the visitors, there was a small revenue for the village to add a few more guest rooms and today this Akha Hill Village is privileged destination (albeit still small) for those that know about it.

Perched on a high mountain-top (altitude 1500 meters), this village, guest rooms, open-air restaurant are overlooking a majestic valley surrounded by tea plantations, rice paddies, waterfalls and native jungle. Apae and team also provide customized-treks in the jungle; finding and cooking food from the jungle, building banana leaf houses, and more.

Many visitors and been enticed to stay and make this their “wellness-spa” - peace and tranquility seem to radiate from every corner of the Akha Hill House.



www.akhahill.com
Apae Amor telephone:
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