

St. Sometimes



“I’m growing older but not up, my metabolic rate is pleasantly stuck. Let those winds of time go over my head. I’d rather die while I’m living than live while I’m dead.”

- Jimmy Buffett

SUMMER IN KOH TAO, THAILAND

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Dinner Beach Style 2

A Short Trip to Koh Samui 2

Paradise Island 3

Stay off the Motorbikes 3

The “Real” Koh Tao most don’t see 3

Pictures 5

My family sure isn’t happy with me. I decided to spend another summer diving in the Gulf of Thailand instead of going home to the states. Koh Tao was calling me for diving and it happens to be on the way to my next home, Cambodia. Phnom Penh is less than an hour away by flight.

I had every intention of coming back here to teach diving. It didn’t happen. The island is just too relaxing and...the diving has been slow. The certifications are lean and I didn’t want to take work away from my friends.

That sounds better. Actually, I am just lazy and burned out

from Hell. I usually go on two or three dives a day, help out on the boat, lead a few times at dive sites, and dive with my new underwater camera. Last year I learned how to teach underwater digital photography. Now I just have to learn how to take quality shots with my own camera. It takes a lot of practice and a quality DM leading a dive. That way I don’t have to worry about the other divers and I can focus on using my camera. –no pun intended.

The water is about 32C/90F, the viz is around 10meters, and Thai fishing pants dry out quite fast after a dive. Unless I am with students, the wetsuit never makes it onto the boat! I hope my family understands how much I love diving!



No wetsuit. It’s too warm, like a bathtub.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The longer you stay in Koh Tao, the more strange stories you hear!
- Relaxation, learning to dive, reading a book, full moon parties, partying all night - all things to do in Koh Tao
- The Thai Baht is currently 34 to the dollar. A beer is 60-100bt, meals 100-120bt, dives 2000bt, DM training 30,000bt

PLANET SCUBA - SMALL & PROFESSIONAL

Don’t go to the big dive shops you see on the net for Koh Tao. (Bans, Crystal, Easy Divers) They do a lot of certifications but they are machines. They tend to have groups of at least 6 or more. They have a lot of DMt’s working. It can be pushy.

My advice is a small, yet professional dive shop that is accredited by PADI - Planet Scuba. Yes, I am biased. But I wouldn’t work for a company I don’t believe in! Would you?



Smaller but professional dive shop!



DINNER ON THE BEACH BEFORE THE THAI BOXING



Just one of the many evenings with friends on Sairee Beach.

A handful of us were hanging out on the beach and decided to check out a new restaurant.

(left) This was a beautiful night to sit beachside with a drink in hand. You can learn a lot about a smaller island if you surround yourself with local divers. The fish entrees are all freshly caught, the drinks are relatively cheap, and the sunsets are breathtaking.

Barry, a fellow instructor, bought us each tickets to the Mu Thai boxing match that was being held a little later up

the road. What a great time. I have never seen an actual match. For those of you that don't know about this style of boxing, the basic difference is the use of arms and legs.

The wildest part of the matches was the whole environment. We sat there with beers in hand, listening to an Aussie call the fight in English simultaneously with a Thai announcer. On top of that was some weird, traditional Thai music. What an attack on the senses. Sensory overload.

A SHORT TRIP TO KOH SAMUI

“Imagine a six foot four South African (speaks fluent Thai) and his four foot tall wife! “ Brian and his wife M, are two of the best reasons to visit

**Koh Tao!
Thank you
Brian and M!**

Brian Knight is the operating manager of the dive shop I always dive with. Not only does he manage Planet Scuba (dive shop), Safety Stop (restaurant & English Pub), Dive Emporium (dive equipment retailer), and the Sea Lodge Hotel & Spa, he and M are fantastic friends. There is rarely an evening when we don't have a few laughs and share a few drinks. Imagine a

six foot four South African (speaks fluent Thai) and his four foot tall wife! “ Brian and his wife M, are two of the best reasons to visit Koh Tao!

I got to know Brian during the summer of 2006. My friend Jimmy Fingers was the PADI course director for Brian and Planet Scuba. I accidentally ran into Jimmy at the Safety Stop Pub. It's really a small world! Jimmy happens to be one of the course directors that certified me as a PADI instructor in Honduras back in 2004!

Since Jimmy Fingers was working for Brian, it was just natural to have a chance to get to know Brian. All of us hit it off then and we have had even more fun this summer.

M has braces. She has to travel to the larger island of Koh Samui to see her orthodontist once a month. That translates into a to/from ferry trip and an overnight. That further trans-

lated into a chance for Mario and I to accompany them and take a little break from the small island life.

Koh Samui was not fun, but hanging out with Brian and M certainly was. We had a roast pig dinner at the South African restaurant, Pickles, went shopping with Brian for hotel light bulbs, and tried out some of the red light district together.

Everywhere I spend a good amount of time, I make a few lifelong friends. I'll make a point of keeping in touch with **Mrs. Knight and his wife.**

(No, that is not a typo. It's an inside joke with Brian and M in case they ever read this!)

Congratulations on your recent wedding Brian and M!

[For more pictures of the crazy South African, check out:](#)

[Facebook.com](#) (there is a [Panet Scuba member area](#))



Brian Knight (South Africa) , M Knight (Thailand)

PARADISE IF YOU WANT IT!

Koh Tao has been an expat hangout for a long time. Where there are expats, there are expensive hotels and restaurants. By expensive, I mean expensive compared to the backpacker prices.

There is no Hilton (mom!), but the Jamahkiri Resort & Spa is beyond that. This resort sits on a mountain top overlooking a pristine, aqua blue bay. It is true elegance with a Boutique full of women ready to provide you with a Thai Massage-of the clean variety.

Some of the diving resorts have full packages that are unbelievable! Complete with small group dives, air-conditioned bungalows on the beach, sea food buffets at night on the beach, and drivers to take you around the inhabited parts of the island.

My friends and I have looked around most of the inhabited parts of Koh Tao but we haven't ventured onto a water taxi for the full island tour. A lot of the island is ONLY accessible via water taxi. These hide-a-

way resorts cater to divers that want the secluded stay. The diving gets a little pricey, by island standards, but they access dive sites most of the dive shops hesitate to go to (due to travel time and weather), because the dive sites are right near these secluded resorts.

Restaurants are bountiful and the full range. If you don't want to spend a dollar on a local Thai lunch, you can opt for French, Italian, Moroccan, Japanese, English (Yuck), or American cuisine.



Sairee Beach is the beautiful white sand beach with water sports, beach bars, and seaside restaurants that Buffett always sings about.

STAY OFF THE MOTORBIKE RENTALS!

As you walk around the island, it's hard to miss all of the bandages and injured tourists. Why? Because there are just too many vehicles on the roads now and many people simply don't know how to ride a scooter.

The clinics are open 24hrs a day because all of the drunk tourists decided to ride their

bikes home. Sandy corners, tree roots, pickup truck taxis, and stray dogs are all likely candidates for a quick emergency braking episode. Most of the time there is injury to the rider and the bike.

If you DO have an "accident", the optimal choice might be getting one of your local contacts to return the bike for you

and make up some story. Locals get a local price while a tourist will get a 500% markup. Even a scratch will fetch a small price and the little lady-boy that rented it to you will go over the bike with a keen eye.

My advice is to walk. There are not many places on the island that will cost only a little sandal leather!

" Don't rent a bike. Walk instead!

Sandy corners, tree roots, pickup truck taxis, and stray dogs are all likely candidates for a quick, emergency braking episode."

KOH TAO, THE "REAL" KOH TAO

This island is very poor. Locals don't make much money. Thais work the boats, serve every day in the restaurants, and live off what the Western or Eastern tourists spend daily.

I recommend eating from the pancake stand. You will be reminded of it for a few days,

but the lemon sugar pancake is the best! (It's good, late night, drunk food. - too bad there wasn't one at college bars!)

Thais will arrange anything you need. If it is a shirt made, a pair of knockoff sunglasses, DVDs, Music, a quick fix for your computer, or some freshly

caught fish for a beach BBQ, they will provide you with it. Leave all of the diving equipment to the expats. There are over 60 dive shops on the island for diving life. Leave the island life to the locals. Staying for a short time? Eat local, ride local taxis, see a boxing match, and learn some Thai!



This is where our maid, P, from the hotel, does our laundry. She is awesome! Clean clothes for a few baht!



Interested in a great dive shop?
Visit Planet Scuba on the internet
at: www.planet-scuba.net/kohtao

Visit me at:

<http://itre.us/sts somewhere>

Your business tag line here.



I have seen a lot of hermit crabs this summer. Taking a quality photo of these little creatures is not easy! They are not shy, just small.



White eyed morays are on every dive.

Note: a lot of people ask me how Koh Tao compares to other places I have dived. Most of the places I have dived are linked to a lot of dive schools. Like the other places, the corals are dying, the viz is worsened by boat fuel, and there are lots of divers. I still love it.



(Right) Shoals of small barracuda can be found around the buoys at several of the main dive sites.



(Above) Min, the captain's son is always on the boat helping.



(Above) The spotted blue stingray is often seen here under corals. I usually guarantee one a dive.



(Right) The scorpion fish is a real prize to find on a dive. They are truly hard to see. If you find one, be careful. Touching one would ensure a trip to the hospital.

