

Around The Traps

By TT Hun

It has been quite a good high season so far this year by all accounts. Some of the major hotels are not reporting figures as high as pre-tsunami but guesthouses are generally full and have been for quite some time.

Then again they don't have the same number of rooms to fill but there are other reasons as well. As new investors come to Phuket and buy into the small to medium sized guesthouse market they are bringing new ideas with them. Some of the room makeovers are quite impressive and for a fraction of the cost of the major hotels these rooms are much more comfortable and offer more facilities.

The name 'boutique hotel' is what they are being called and with less overheads and a cosier ambience they have found their niche and growing in popularity around the island.

We all know that getting hold of and retaining good staff is quite an arduous task here. Not only is there education standards to think of there is also a cultural difference particularly when dealing in the tourist trade.

One owner of a small restaurant employed a young lass to look after the breakfast trade and then found out she had no idea how to make a Western breakfast.

He taught her how to make the simple things like and English and American brekky and yes she said she understood. On the second day she came to him and asked how to make scrambled eggs. He duly showed her again and off she went. On the third day she asked the same thing again. He showed her again and off she went.

On the fourth day after he had had a particularly heavy night he heard a knock on the office door. He really didn't want to know and yelled out "If this is about how to make scrambled eggs again, you're fired". 'Oh no' was the reply, 'I know how to make those, but how do you make corn flakes'.

When a couple walked into a local 4-star hotel for a meal, they expected a fine meal and attentive service. They ordered from the

lavishly presented menu and asked for a wine list. Again this was a lavish production and they scanned down the list and chose a nice wine to compliment their meal.

The waiter brought the bottle to the table, opened it and left. This should have got the alarm bells ringing, but apparently not. He was called back and asked if they were going to get an ice bucket. He went off and retrieved an ice bucket. He was about to take off again when he was asked if they were going to get any ice with the ice bucket.

The couple could see that that idea hadn't entered the equation at that time. The waiter scurried off and came back with some ice and put it in the bucket. Again, that was all he had intended to do. The couple was getting a little miffed at this stage and suggested to the waiter that the wine actually goes in the ice bucket.

The waiter hadn't thought about this concept either but dutifully complied by pouring the bottle of wine into the ice bucket, much to the horror of the seated couple. That was the last straw, they demanded to see the manager, who promptly apologized for the lack of service. When asked why he had let an obviously untrained waiter to work in such an up market restaurant the manager's reply was "he came with references". From whom?

You may have read recently of a bunch of evildoers dubbed the 'Ranong 12' who were pulled off a bus on their way to do a visa run to Burma. It has created quite a stir in the local population of visa runners as they can't be casual about when they do their runs anymore.

Technically the authorities were correct and it has always been stated quite clearly that you will only be fined 200 baht per day if you overstay your visa, but if you do get caught before you head out then you are in the manure, so to speak.

The 12 were taken to Bangkok and were due to be deported, but after some intervention by some higher authorities were then bussed back to Ranong to do the 30-minute boat ride across to Burma.

When they arrived back at the Ranong immigration office they were duly stamped

in and told 'Welcome to Thailand'.

But the best comment we heard as a reason for the roadblock in the first place was that the authorities had reason to believe that these nasty evildoers were smuggling drugs back into the country via their visa runs. If that were the case why would you pull up a bus taking people OUT of the country.

It has just been announced that the overstay fee is to rise to 500 Baht from the 15th March 2006 which should be a little more incentive to do your visa run on time. The maximum overstay fee stays the same at 20,000 Baht.

A local barkeep couldn't help noticing one of his regulars staring at a gorgeous young lady who had arrived at his bar with her boyfriend in tow.

He was hoping that the regular would cease staring as he didn't want any conflict with the boyfriend who was of some considerable size and not one to be messed with. To his relief the regular did stop staring and went on consuming his drink.

A little while later the couple had finished their drinks and left the premises. The barkeep was tending to matters at the back of the bar and didn't notice the couple leave. When he returned to the front of the bar he noticed that not only had the couple left but the stool the young lass had been sitting on had mysteriously disappeared as well.

Not only that but his regular was also nowhere to be seen. He looked around and asked his bartender where everyone was. She pointed up the road and our barkeep saw the regular walking up the street with the bar stool over his shoulder.

What now!, he thought, as this particular regular had been known to pull some weird stunts in the past. He didn't even bother to pursue the man because he just didn't want to know.

Sure enough, the next day the regular turned up back at the bar and carrying the said bar stool. What had he been doing with it the past evening? No-one else really wanted to know either.

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