



Party in Pattaya - The Good, The Bad and The Ugly!

Mike Smith went to party in Pattaya and found it both awesome and awful, reminding him of *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly!*

MOST PEOPLE go to Pattaya for the beaches and nightlife, or for a weekend break because of its close proximity to Bangkok. Pattaya Beach, near Walking Street is incredibly narrow, the umbrellas and deck chairs are very close together and it is rather ugly, but you can get a good view over the ocean at Pattaya Beer Garden. Stroll past Central Festival and the beach improves considerably. In addition, you can get a soothing massage, a cold beer and tasty hawker food while watching the world go by. Or, if you prefer, if you want to be more active try some of the water sports such as jet skiing, banana boat riding or paragliding.

Day Trip to Koh Larn

For better beaches head to Koh Larn, sometimes known as Coral Island, either using a local ferry, a chartered speedboat or take a leisurely tour package which includes lunch, as our group did. The water is very shallow at Tien Beach at Koh Larn so we transferred to a small longtail boat to get close to the beach and then waded ashore through the lovely warm water past the snorkelers. En route we passed an attractive lighthouse, had great views of Pattaya City and Jomtien and also had the option to soar like an eagle - paragliding.



Paragliders



Tiffany's Show



Walking Street

I skipped the paragliding, but admired the professionalism and the productivity of the crew at the floating paraglide station. During peak periods there are less than 30 seconds before one participant lands and the next takes off, pulled behind a speed boat for a bird's eye view followed by a refreshing dunk in the sea.

The lunch of fried fish, vegetables, curry, fruit and rice at the simple beach restaurant was surprisingly good. After which I wandered around taking photos; others played in the water or rented a deck chair and beach umbrella to escape from the sun. Koh Larn made it into my good list even though the sand was a little gravelly in places for my liking.

Tiffany's Show

After all that fun in the sun it was time to hit the famous nightlife. Where else to start but Tiffany's Show to see the glamorous ladyboys put on a good, clean, family cabaret performance? The costumes and stage are dramatic but frankly I found the show a little outdated and dragged after the first twenty minutes. It needs a major revamp if it is to survive the next 40 years; not just a few songs in Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese to cater to the latest tourists arrivals.

After the show we walked to the nearby Soho Village Plaza for supper. I loved the place. We ate outdoors at very affordable prices. The fresh fish, crab, prawns, satay, curry and fruit were superb.

The area has numerous large massage establishments. The neon signs advertising massage are bright and leave no doubt about what is on offer. There are plenty of options some of which are clearly different but I avoided the temptations! Please note "a sandwich" isn't food when it comes to a massage in Pattaya!!

One thing I wasn't familiar with was the cocktail car which is effectively a "pop up bar" parked at a suitable point in the road. Ideal for a quick drink in the heat.

Walking Street.

Don't even bother visiting Walking Street in the day time. It's dead and dirty; beyond bad! In the evening it's lively and dirty and Good, Bad or Ugly depending on your point of view. It is definitely not a place to take the kids. The whole street comprises dozens of sports bars, go go bars, massage parlours and restaurants with scantily clad girls trying to get you to enter and spend your money. It is however, the most famous place in Pattaya so perhaps you should go go and take a peek. A plus is that shopping at the open air stalls is even cheaper than in Bangkok and there is a good selection of tee shirts, souvenirs and novelty toys. Of course I had to sample a couple of pubs and bars to research this article! Utopia Rock House Bar has good live music with the band belting out hits from the 70's, pool tables and premier league football on TV plus palatable bar food.

The Airport A-Go Go club was the busiest on Walking Street and had plenty of young ladies dressed as airline hostesses. Angel Witch was the most interesting with its well-choreographed erotic, live theatre. There were plenty of tourist police around so in general Walking Street seemed very sleazy but safe but who knows what tales the girls could tell?

Teddy Bears' Picnic!

After typical Pattaya entertainment the previous night I can't believe I agreed to go to the Teddy Bear Museum the next morning and furthermore admit that I actually liked it. It's a strange place with minimal information but a huge assortment of teddy bears of all designs and sizes spread out in differently themed sections. Think Chinese pandas, Japanese Gardens and Star Wars for example. The photo opportunities are limitless particularly if you go



early before the tour groups arrive. Great for kids but fun for everyone.

The Sanctuary of Truth

The Sanctuary of Truth is rated the number one thing to do in Pattaya on TripAdvisor. It is a huge, well-constructed, privately developed wooden temple, over one hundred meters high, containing some beautiful ornate carvings based on Hindu and Buddhist images. The cultural show is rather slapstick and the horse and elephant rides are simply money earners but it is a pleasant retreat near the sea. I'm surprised it is ranked the number one attraction particularly as it is not easily accessible. You need to rent transport to get there and for anyone who isn't physically fit there are a lot of steep steps!

I didn't want to leave Pattaya without going back to a beach. Jomtien is only a ten minute drive from Pattaya so I went there for a change. The beach is long and wide and was deserted in the early afternoon. I walked for miles. It seemed slightly higher class than Pattaya City ie less seedy bars, less pressure from hawkers and better quality sand. A hot spicy Tom Yam Soup at a local restaurant before heading back to check out my hotel was a great way to end the trip.

In summary Pattaya has a place in Thailand's tourist scene primarily because of its proximity to Bangkok. It could consider taking some lessons from Vang Vieng in Laos and start to slowly re-invent itself by starting to clean up its act to get families back. Having said that, it is a fun city but on balance I prefer Phuket and Koh Samui for a longer break as there are more things to see and do. **AJ**

