

## KMUTT Exchange Experience – Reina Li

My experience at KMUTT for a research internship has been very diverse. I was able to experience many things I would not have been able to in Canada, my home country. What makes Thailand a distinct experience for me was the work, the lifestyle, the travel, and the food. All in all, it was a good time and I'm glad I had the opportunity to live in Thailand for a few months.

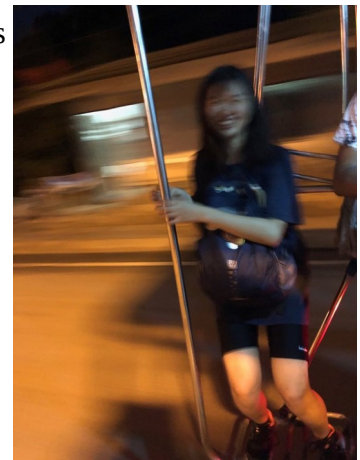
The organization of work was very interesting. I hadn't really known what I to expect, but I thought there would be assignments and lab work. However, a lot of the work was reading studies and research and coming up with ideas. This was my first research position, and as a first year student, I was unsure of what I was meant to be doing. I also ended up switching projects a few times; I was first a part of the FinQuanti team, a fintech startup, then switched to the Smart Home team, and finally switched to my own project, which was emotion recognition using EEG and/or other physiological data. Eventually, though, I started being able to pace my work a bit and took it as an opportunity to learn as much as I could. I read papers about diverse topics, such as emotions, EEG, signal processing, machine learning, ethics, and biases. Unfortunately, now I am even more conflicted on what major I should choose at my own school because I realized there are so many topics and so much depth in each of them. So, while I found it difficult to adjust to the work, I did gain a lot from my position at KMUTT.

What really intrigued me was how different the lifestyle here in Thailand is compared to my home country or anywhere else I have lived. People here seem to be a lot more lax and life is more slow-paced than at home. The nightlife is also much more vibrant and active, with restaurants and food stalls that open until 2 or 3 AM. Getting around was a completely different ordeal than at home; there are at least six or seven different modes of transportation and almost all of them are very confusing for foreigners; the public bus, especially. From Cosmo Resident (the place I stayed) to “downtown” Bangkok, the bus ride would take upwards of two hours in good traffic. Instead of fare machines, the fare, which varies based on distance, is collected by a worker on the bus. There are also AC and non-



*Old train in Hua Hin*

walked. The mini truck would have been probably the most convenient form of transportation if not for the fact that the routes are very obscure. It's easy to flag down the mini truck anywhere on its route and to get off, simply press the button on the ceiling. Overall, I've tried almost all the forms of transportation except the tuk tuk and the motorbikes, which are honestly quite frightening.



*Riding the songthaew*

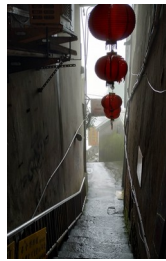
AC buses, to make things even more confusing. I mostly took the non-AC bus around, on which I witnessed very interesting things that enriched my time in Thailand. For example, sometimes the bus would stop by a food stall and the fare collector would lean out of the window and purchase food for the driver. There are also times when the bus has lights and loud music at night.

To get to work, I usually took the mini trucks or

A very nice point of Thailand is that it's really easy and cheap to travel around the area. Prior to arriving at Thailand, I traveled around to China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Malaysia. The food was amazing at all of these places and each had their own distinctions. Upon arriving in Thailand, we were



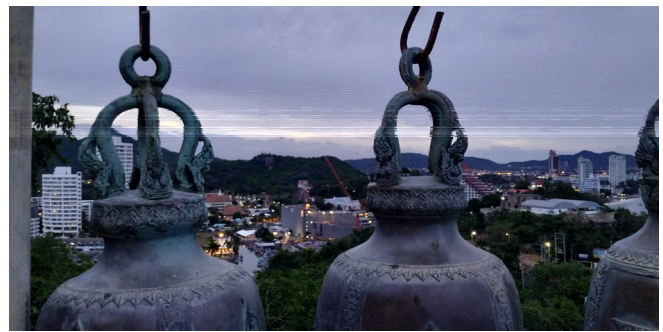
*Ruins of temples etc. in Ayutthaya, the old Capital of Thailand*



*Jiufen Old Town, Taiwan*



*The cafe apartments Ho Chi Minh*



*View from Khao Takiab of Hua Hin*



*Pearl Tower, Shanghai*



*Khao Takiab, Hua Hin*

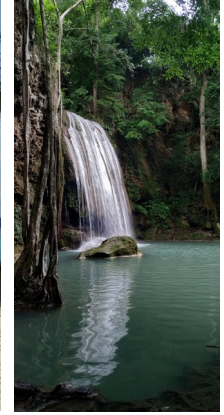
also able to travel around near Bangkok with our professor. My first real trip was to Phuket, where I went to beaches, speedboat tours, night markets and had a really fun time. Our professor also took us to Ayutthaya, the old capital of Thailand which is now primarily ruins, as well as Erawan waterfall, which was extremely refreshing. I was also able to visit Hua Hin, a very nice small town on the Gulf of Thailand, with beaches, night markets, cheap and high quality fruit, and a strong arts and crafts culture. Oh, and a lot of monkeys. I took the train from Hua Hin to Bangkok (Thonburi) which was definitely a great experience, and also extremely cheap. I'm glad I was able to visit neighbouring countries and cities during my time here and that it was really convenient and cheap to do so.



*Malacca, Malaysia*



*Coral Island (near Phuket)*



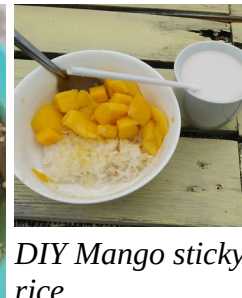
*Erawan Waterfalls*



*Tiger Prawn*



*Pork offal soup*



*DIY Mango sticky rice*



*Ginger soup with sesame dumplings*



*Chicken feet curry*



*Crispy pork pad thai*



*Shabu shabu*



*Rice noodle rolls in pepper soup*



*Chicken and rice*



Finally, the food here is what really made Thailand an amazing time. The food culture is so strong and is very different from in Canada. In Thailand, food is sold at both sit-down restaurants, food stalls, and a mixture of both: a food stall with seating. Hence, food is everywhere. At first, it was really difficult to order food because of the lack of English and the lack of pictures. I got used to it eventually and was able to try a lot of new dishes. While the savoury dishes are really good (I really enjoy sour foods), the snacks and desserts were my favourite. The fried snacks that can be found everywhere on the streets are often really good and the desserts are always refreshing and flavourful. The fruit here is also very fresh, sweet, and



*Mangosteen*

cheap. I'm a really big fan of the mangosteen. If I were to recommend snacks to someone, I would recommend just trying a bit of everything. As for meals, the all you can eat is really cheap and relatively good quality here. There are also a lot of well-known dishes such as pad thai, tom yum, som tam, green curry, coconut curry, fried chicken, and khao man gai which are really good.

There are also a huge variety of

soups and stir fried dishes. The rice here is also really flavourful and aromatic. In fact, most of the rice I buy in Canada is actually imported from Thailand. I really enjoyed going to food stalls and ordering new dishes that looked good. The local markets were hot-spots of good food and everything is much cheaper than in Canada as well. I wasn't as big of a fan of the really touristy markets, but they were still interesting and had some gems. My favourite night market, probably, is one that our professor took us to, located by a highway and very difficult to access by public transport, called Liab Duan night market which was very local and had very good food. I know for sure that I will really miss the food here when I go back to Canada and it's really what made the whole experience extremely worth the 3 months I stayed here.



*Poached chicken in rice noodle soup*



*River prawn and meat buffet*

My time in Thailand has been both busy and relaxing and was a really good way to spend the summer. I'm glad I came and there's a lot here that I'll miss when I return to Canada. I had a really fun time, and while there were some inconveniences, like the fact that I felt unsure of my work as well as the transportation situation, the research, the interesting observations of lifestyle, the fun travel and sightseeing, and most of all the amazing food, made this whole experience very well worth it.