

Fiona Mokry

I hate when people ask me why I decided to move to Thailand to teach because I don't have a good answer. I was hired by Super English on a Sunday evening and had quit my job, sold all my belongings, pawned my car off on a friend and was on a plane five days later. I didn't know much (anything) about Thailand as I didn't have any time to prepare. I barely knew where Surat Thani was, but I didn't care. I just wanted to get out of San Diego and leave behind the mind-numbing, soul-sucking social work jobs that had defined my professional career for the last five years. It was a decision made on impulse and I couldn't be happier with the result.

Surat is an authentic, medium-sized, Thai city located on a river. It's not a place people come to visit because on the surface it doesn't seem to have much to offer in terms of activities and entertainment compared to the likes of Phuket or Koh Phangan. That being said, I grew to really love Surat. Navigating the city was a challenge at first, but I was able to find some great places to eat and drink the more I explored. In my opinion, Surat has the best food I have ever eaten in Thailand. It's cheap, delicious and lots of places are open late. Another great thing about Surat is that it's super easy to hop on a bus or a boat and get out of town for the weekend, which is something I did a lot. Surat's location is convenient if you are looking for a quick escape out of town to a more touristic location. If you're a bargain shopper you'll love this place as well; there are tons of markets and thrift stores to scour for hidden gems if you have the patience for it.

The teaching aspect of Thailand was the craziest part of my whole experience. Old Thida is a loud, chaotic place with tons of hilarious Thai quirks (every Wednesday morning the entire school gathers in the courtyard and breaks it down to Pitbull and J. Lo before heading off to first period). The kids at Old Thida are pretty great though...super energetic, curious, and sweet. The classes can get a bit wild sometimes, but that's to be expected when faced with 55 ten year olds. I'd be lying if I said it wasn't frustrating at times, but overall being a teacher here has been a lot of fun. By the time I was half way through my second semester I felt 100 times more confident in my teaching abilities than I had when I first started. As I finish out my third semester, I have to admit the level of fulfillment I now get from teaching is higher than I ever expected it would be. I never thought I would enjoy it as much as I do, but it's something that is going to be more difficult to leave behind than I had originally anticipated.

One thing that could have improved my experience here would have been a more tangible idea of what I would be walking into on Day 1. The several days of training we received at Super English beforehand were undeniably helpful (game ideas, classroom management tips, lesson planning), but actually observing a veteran teacher in action would have been the most beneficial for me. It would have given me a much clearer picture of how a class should flow and student-teacher dynamics. Although I eventually figured these things out on my own, it would have been a quicker learning curve had I seen it done prior to entering the classroom.

On the flip side, the Super English managers and staff were always available and encouraged us to come to them if we needed help with anything, related or unrelated work. Another positive thing about Super English is the opportunity to teach private and/or after school classes. If you are looking to make some extra money while in Thailand this is a great way to do it. Everyone who expressed interest in doing so was

accommodated, including myself, and I was grateful for the chance to make some extra travel money. 😊

Overall, my experience in Thailand has been awesome and there is nothing I would have done differently. I gained a year and a half of professional experience working aboard, learned the ins and outs of a new culture and met some great people along the way. Coming to Thailand opened the door to many other opportunities for life after teaching and I am grateful for the chance to continue to live and work aboard.