

There have been many moments when I have wondered what would have happened if I never made the decision to come to Thailand. Even more, what if I never chose Surat as a location? I can't begin to express the relief I feel that I am here. Coming to Surat and working with Super English has been one of the greatest experiences of my life.

Back home in California, I had graduated college with an English degree wanting to teach, but only finding the stinging slap of rejection after rejection. No one was hiring and if they were, their priority was towards older teachers who had lost their jobs not to some twenty-something year old with a tiny pinch of experience. So I decided that instead of just staying in some sort of "waiting place" (as Dr. Seuss would say) and working some boring retail job, I would leave and follow my dream of travel. It's funny how following my dreams seemed more realistic than starting a career.

With Super English I was able to know exactly what I was walking into. I followed Super's blog and was able to learn about life in Surat from other teachers. I was able to prepare myself for what the lifestyle would be like and ready myself for what might be challenging for me. Luckily, with Super you are able to find a group of friends in the middle of this sort of eclectic, sort of third world but also modern world, extremely laid back (get used to that) country. When I first arrived, I was warmly welcomed by the managers at the time, Levi and Savannah. They showed me around, helped with figuring out food (I'm a baby about spices), took me shopping, had conversations with me by the pier, and even took me to a nearby town just for fun. That meant a lot. I could imagine it would be very difficult coming here and not knowing anyone. Luckily, I was able to adapt fairly well. If I had any questions or felt weird about anything they were always there to hear me out.

Also, I can honestly say that I have made some lifelong friends here. The great thing about living abroad (and with Super English specifically) is the time spent with these new people. You live with these people, you are around them every day, you caravan together, eat together, explore new places together. They are your family out here and even though it's such a short period of time this constant closeness makes you connect with them in a faster and more real way. Plus, Super throws monthly parties so you find people to party with and there is no quicker way to get to know someone when you're, let's say running around with buckets, dancing in the ocean and puking in the sand (not that that's happened to me...). But honestly, not all agencies emphasize such togetherness, some agencies have many teachers and I have been told by other teachers that they have never even met each other.

I am able to leave Thailand saying that I have had a magnificent experience and that I have never faced any problems with my agency. I was treated very well. Peter hired me for a new advanced program called MEP knowing that I had a very small amount of experience. It means a lot to have someone feel confident enough in your character to give you a chance to work for

a program that is developing in its first year. From the beginning Peter told me it would be difficult and more work than the regular or IEP classes. I am beyond lucky because working for MEP allowed me to have my own class of 28 students who I get to see every day for English, Math, Science and Health. It is more work but absolutely worth it. I cannot stress how much I love my job and I don't meet many people lucky enough to say that.

Working for MEP has been great in so many ways. By having such a small class I have been able to develop a close relationship with all my students and really know their personalities. I have one Thai teacher in my class who has helped me throughout the year. She's been lovely to work with, any idea I have had (game, project, writing assignments) she has supported and welcomed. I have been able to put my students' work around the classroom. I have been able to do small group projects. I have been able to bring in outside resources to further the students' knowledge (something that Super English encourages).

For English I have pushed my students beyond their textbook, always encouraging them to look around at their surroundings, to think about their everyday life and bring those observations to class. I still picture them on the first day, so shy and staring at me with that "new puppy" nervous gaze and always responding with a robotic way of speaking English. I wanted to put a crack in that speech pattern. No matter what my students wanted to talk to me about whether it be about space or mermaids, zombies, soccer, tennis, or the infamous Central plaza, I have welcomed it and encouraged them to continue speaking, to continue trying. Now, I have a hard time getting them to stop talking. I think I know all of their favorite cartoons, favorite food, hobbies, what their parents do for a living, where they've traveled to, on and on. Although their English isn't perfect there is definitely a noticeable difference.

Since Peter encourages creativity I have felt free to find my style as a teacher which was something extremely important for me to experiment with. And since I worked for MEP and had the freedom of expression with Super English I feel I have started learning about the type of teacher I want to be, really discovering my style. I cannot stress how valuable it is to work with an agency that gives you space and encourages you to have fun with your students. I love being able to bring in outside resources and giving these students more than just what they would have access to. We have read many children's E-books, learned many songs, wrote journals, created art projects related to our themes, worked outside of the classroom, watched videos, and have had a lot of conversations. I got to do a lot of classroom projects and experiments for science, which is not something many ESL teachers get to experience with their students.

The Super English team at MEP has been great to work with too. If I have ever needed some advice the super staff has always been more than willing to give me their ideas and thoughts about whatever I had mentioned. Together we created fun activities for MEP such as the MEP

camp and an all grades MEP Spelling Bee. It is nice to work with a group that can create success in a new program.

SuratThani, though described by many in travel books as gloomy or as a boring town, is quite the opposite. True, there is not much to do compared to Bangkok or Krabi but you get to have a real lifestyle here. It is a perfect place to make home. Surat is small and you will become familiar with it pretty quickly. Personally, I am a creature of habit. I like a simple life. I found my place here: my coffee shop, my yoga studio, weekend bar, friendly street dogs and street vendors, my favorite food. Here in Surat you get the opportunity to experience the real Thailand but you are still close enough to explore all the great tourist destinations of Thailand, every weekend if you wanted to, though it's nice to just stay home and enjoy the simple luxuries of Surat, plus Surat has the best food by far.

I've had a great time. I'd strongly encourage you, whoever you are, to come out here. I highly doubt you'd regret it. You are reading this after all in search of something.