

One Year Testimonial

by Devin Geddings

How I got here:

My interest in teaching ESL initially was directed towards South Korea. I craved the adventure and culture, as well as the more than adequate compensation South Korea offers. I hadn't looked into SE Asia and thought most ESL positions were something you financially 'broke even' on. I thought student loans and other debt didn't afford me the luxury of working in a worldwide destination such as southern Thailand. I thought wrong. In Surat Thani with Super English I was able to work a full time week with about 24 teaching hours, while still being able to save a fair bit each month.

Surat Thani:

Surat Thani is an average Thai city, and it is so important to note that before arrival. Look at Google Earth, read other Super English articles, and realize you may experience multiple slight discomforts that you don't even think about having to deal with back home. That being said, suck it up and do it! The good FAR outweighs the bad, and experiencing authentic Thai life is priceless, and you'll benefit by prioritizing it in your experience. For example, my boyfriend worked on Koh Tao (a nearby island) during my first semester in Surat Thani. He ended up moving to Surat to teach for the second semester and one of his main motivations was to get this authentic experience. He left a tropical paradise teeming with western comforts to purposefully be forced to exit his comfort zone and experience the 'real' Thailand. He has not regretted it one bit. Also, my position at Thidameapra provided ample vacation opportunities to explore these SE Asia destinations, and you can drown yourself in western comforts should you wish on these holidays. Besides the extended vacations, you're able to go to amazing beaches and islands on your average weekend.

This is not to say Surat doesn't have anything remotely western, because it does. As far as restaurants there's Pizza Company, Pizza Hut, Milano's Italian food, Gun Et Te (for the popular chicken and fish burgers), and a few others. There's also Central Plaza, an enormous mall that has western shops and food, as well as good movies in English every now and again. This year I've seen a few English movies and gorged myself with popcorn and coke. When you come out of the theater, it takes some adjustment to remember you're in Thailand!

Thida:

"Old" Thida is a really interesting and different place to work. Fun seems to be the priority. It can be chaotic, loud, and festive, and depending on the day that can be a good or bad thing. You MUST be flexible and ready for change. The students have wonderful demeanors and just want to have fun. They hardly ever whine like kids back home, which is nice.

I was incredibly lucky to have some of the best Thai teachers. Their attendance to class was almost spotless, and they would help me translate things if needed. Generally they're just there for discipline and class management, but they helped in more ways. One teacher in particular would actually go around and help them with assignments. Some teachers had issues with their Thai teachers rarely showing up or not being very helpful when they did, so I am grateful.

Super English:

To earn some extra money, I took on evening classes at Super English as well. I was definitely grateful for this opportunity. Teaching at SE is an entirely different experience, as your class numbers go down from 55 to around 8. Don't worry though, they're just as enthusiastic in small numbers! I'm glad I've been doing these classes, and would suggest it to anyone thinking of pursuing ESL teaching beyond Super in Surat. It's important to have the experience at a small language school and master how to manage and be an effective teacher in different settings. I can't lie, controlling this bunch and establishing a system that actually works was difficult...more difficult than Thida. I have recently found that middle ground and a system that enables them to have fun, and Teacher Devin (me) to not go crazy.

Summary:

Overall, coming to teach in Surat is one of the best, if not THE best decision I have ever made. I thoroughly enjoyed my time here, the job allowed me to challenge myself and grow in ways I could never have back home, and learning how to deal outside of your comfort zone and with a language barrier is invaluable. I'll certainly look back on my time with SE in Surat with fond memories. SE is a company that supports camaraderie between its employees, and a place where someone (Peter included) is always available to talk out any issues. I'm not sure what's in store for me next, but the experience has certainly turned me on to other ESL opportunities as I aim to explore other parts of the world.