

My experience landing in Surat is probably different than most. While most teachers usually come in a group all hired to begin in May, I arrived in August to replace a teacher who left for a family emergency. So, I missed the training and I missed the experience of all being new to a place together. I felt a little worried about coming in when friendships and patterns had already been established, but I soon realized worrying was not necessary.

I was hired with enough time to visit the Thai Embassy in Florida for a Non-Immigrant B Visa, rather than coming to Thailand and then going to Malaysia shortly after for the Visa. Peter and the Super Staff made it very easy for me. I was told what I would need to gather myself, and they readied the rest and sent it my way. I took all the documents to the Embassy, and BOOM, Non-B Visa in my passport, ready to go.

Peter picked me up from the Surat Thani airport and took me to the flagship Super English office where I immediately fell in love with Mam and Aom. If they aren't the sweetest girls in Surat Thani, I'd be very surprised. They made me feel very welcome and excited to be here. I even got my first lesson on the bum gun; some very valuable information for a newcomer! I also immediately loved being in a city with such a big river going through it.

I had a place already set up since I knew a current Super English teacher, Jade, from the University of Florida. He picked me up, took me home for a nap, and told me I would meet everyone later on that night over some beer and spicy Isaan food. "Under the Bridge," as we have come to call it, is delicious, even though I've found some Isaan food I prefer on Wat Pho Road.

So that night at "Under the Bridge," I was really flattered by the amount of teachers there to welcome me. It must have been nearly everyone there. I remember a very long table, many smiling faces, and lots of shouting going around about how many orders of BBQ pork and how many orders of Som Tom we would need. Someone handed me a beer, a Leo I believe, and I sat back and admired my new friends Thai skills. I was really tired, but I never forgot "pet nit noy" from then on.

Two days sleeping off jet lag and it was off to Thidamaepra for me. The teacher I was replacing was already gone, but she had a temporary replacement who was there for me to shadow. I watched him teach all four of the classes I would be taking. I also watched at least three other teachers to pick up on any techniques or methods that would suit me. Everyone was more than happy to have me observe, or to talk about games, classroom management, worksheets, school lunch, you name it. I had more than enough information to process in two days, but I felt good. I felt prepared.

From then on until now, I can't tell you where the time has gone. I can see it in the new teeth my students are growing, in the slight increase in height, and definitely in their English proficiency, but I still feel like I just got here. Maybe because there's so much to see and do here, I could never really be bored. Maybe it's because the routine makes the time fly, where Mondays feel like Wednesdays and Wednesdays feel like Fridays.

Coming here, I had very little teaching experience, and I wasn't really sure how

much I would be able to grow as a teacher. I can see now, to my immense pleasure, that I have grown into a thoughtful, creative, and caring teacher. Sound as it may, I amaze myself with some of my lesson plans. “How did I do that?” I would say. “Wow, I am really able to apply myself here,” I would come to realize. It's a fantastic feeling and I have Peter, Super English and Thidamaepra to thank for an educational, fun and productive time spent in Thailand.

My advice to anyone coming to start in Surat Thani with Super English, enjoy it! I've been here for nearly two years and I am very sad to be leaving soon. You are coming to a city big enough to find the stuff you want, and small enough to have a more genuine Thai experience. There is natural beauty all around you and delicious, cheap food everywhere. Most importantly, with Super English, you have a support system, almost like a family. You have been given an opportunity to grow as a teacher and as a person.



My lifelong-Super-English-made-friend, Fiona, and I enjoying red wine at the Thanksgiving Party.



Wear your polo on Wednesdays! Myself, Emma, Jenna, and Julie in the New Thida IEP Office.



Jade, Fiona, and I on a trip to Sipadan, Malaysia on the October 2013 break.