

I started teaching English in Thailand mere months after graduating from college, my first destination being the city of Phitsanulok. Six years later, in mid-2012, I decided to return to my first and thus far favorite country to teach in. I was frustrated with the job prospects in America (I've never fancied myself much of a door to door vacuum salesman), bored with the cookie cutter Californians with whom I was surrounded (the type of politically correct tools that consider referring to a Mexican as a Mexican to be a racial slur), and eager to resume teaching in a place that is both exotic and manageable. I searched the internet and somehow stumbled upon Super English's name, even though SE hadn't posted any jobs – I must have seen them mentioned on a message board. Either way, I was impressed by SE's comprehensive website. In an industry with so many fly by night, here-one-day-gone-the-next operations, SE's apparent lasting power and documented history piqued my interest. My next step was to research the town of SuratThani, and although I remember feeling unsure whether I'd enjoy living there, I decided to give it a shot. I contacted Super English inquiring about the possibility of filling the next available teaching position and the rest is history.

My previous experience in Thailand was quite a bit different than what Surat had in store for me. Phitsanulok is a town with very, very few foreigners, little in the way of interesting local activities (IMAO), and a very different surrounding biome. I made quite a few Thai friends and learned the basics of the language in no time. My teaching situation was different from the one I experienced in Surat, as I was working at a private academy and primarily with students my age or older. I often found myself bored with the limited daily routine, and one of my main hobbies was wandering the streets drunk.

Surat, on the other hand, is littered with foreign teachers / seasonal tourists and has a number of restaurants and other businesses catering to them. I must admit that almost all of my Surat friends and acquaintances are non-Thai and my language skills' recent development has been scoffable at best. This, of course, is a result of personal choices and can't be blamed on the city itself. The size and bustle of Surat is perfect for an individual of my tastes: there's enough to do and see without being overwhelmed by crowds, traffic, and all of the other nuisances that the big city life entails. I'm currently weighing the option of staying in Surat against that of leaving to experience a new region of the country, and I consider both options attractive.

My job working for Super English provided me a salary with which I was able to live very comfortably, a workweek similar to what one would expect in America (as opposed to split shifts, fragmented 'weekends', or odd hours of operation), and a steady, routine schedule. Another benefit is that both the company's owner and managers were on call practically 24/7 – if I had a question or issue, they were always available to talk to.

As far as the culture shock that accompanies a move to Thailand, I've found most of the complaints voiced by foreigners (myself included) to be the result of an overactive ego. People WILL stare at you, they WILL treat you differently (for better or worse, depending on the situation), you WILL find yourself confused and embarrassed from time to time, and your first month or so WILL be a whirlwind of adjustments ... so what? You did come to Thailand to experience something new, right? Then stop being a whiney wretch and take it for what it is! Overall, though, I see Thailand as an easy place to live. Thais tend to be friendly and helpful, the standard of living affordable on a teacher's salary is good, the weather is relatively mild (except for March – May), there aren't a

million and one laws or an overabundance of red tape, and it's reasonably safe – don't look for trouble and you're not likely to find it.

Education in Thailand is considerably different than in the US (and I assume most of the western world). The schools often seem less structured than I'm used to and it's important to keep a flexible state of mind in your approach to the workday. Unlike in America, the kids seem to enjoy coming to school and shoot each other far less frequently. While there doesn't seem to be as much emphasis placed on academics as, say, Korea or Japan, the atmosphere of the schools I've taught at is lively and buoyant. Making class fun is tantamount to test results, and while that might sound stressful or burdensome, it's actually a huge plus from the teacher's point of view – working is playing! As I mentioned earlier, of all the countries I've lived and taught in (Thailand, S. Korea, Cambodia, the USA, and Uruguay), Thailand is easily my favorite.