

# Lost in Thailand .... a series of some observations and photos

by [Mike Schultz](#)

## 1/20/23 - In The Beginning

Totally settled in here at a guesthouse on the beach with all amenities 300 dollars a month. Luxury for me. The second hand Richert bicycle I bought from an overweight Dutchman for 100 dollars needed work but it may serve well. [See lower right panel for Mike's self described "*My trusty, rusty, crappy Richart junk bike. How I miss my bamboo.*"]

I've been going out on group rides with Jomtien Cycling Club 3-4 times a week. Brutal! We leave town in darkness 6:15 am sharp and make our way into the surrounding hills. The obstacles are quite surprising, packs of wandering feral dogs, water buffaloes, mendicant monks, tuk-tuks, street vendors, maybe an elephant or two

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Today is Chinese New Year which is a big thing here in Thailand. Free food for foreigners all day. I'll try not to drink too much beer. Big ride tomorrow morning with another group, upcountry to Silver lake. This is a whole new level of cycling. An adrenaline rush from start to finish. Hope I survive.



Mike's Thai" Bike he acquired used shortly after arriving in Thailand (January 2023)  
*"My trusty, rusty, crappy Richart junk bike. How I miss my bamboo."*

Good luck to all in Sussex and keep riding,

## Mike in Thailand

.....Read more from Mike below.....

1/26/23 –



### **Two Weeks In The Saddle (Bicycle Skills, Strength And Cardio), At My "Retro Gym" (Cross Training) On The Beach (Mostly Working On My Suntan)**

Well the group I'm riding with is an interesting mix of nationalities, Swedes, Norwegians, Dutch, English, Thais...who knows who else will join up for a ride. Most don't stay long. We did a metric century this week and if that doesn't kill their spirit the hill climbs will. They are steep, like the dune on the Beer Trail ride but 20 times longer. I've joined the few masochists that do this regularly and they are killing me. We chug up to the top of the hill with its golden temple, rest a minute then scream down the hill at terrifying speed dodging temple dogs, cats, and pigeons. Then up again on another approach five times. They told me they only rest at the top for my sake challenging me to tough it out next time. Hah! We'll see. They have expensive light weight bikes. Mine is over 10 kilos, definitely not a climber.

Tomorrow we ride to lake Mabprachan. I did this one already. It's about 20 km out of town. We do 3 or 4 circuits around the lake, 10 clicks each. Then back to town. The trail around the lake is beautiful with few obstacles, smoothly paved in most parts. Where it's flat we maintain about 30 kph. Thailand traffic moves on the left side of the road and I'm still getting used to that. Sometimes I feel like the group should slow down for safety sake. Usually, they do about 20 to 26 kph on the roadways.



Motorcycles outnumber cars here but you may meet any sort of vehicle imaginable, some extremely slow like 3 wheeled motorcycle powered carts selling street food.

So far everything has been good. When not riding with the group, I ride an hour or two solo. Always in the early morning before the sun is up too high and bright. After a quick breakfast, I go to the gym which has equipment straight from the 1950s era. An hour there then off to beach for a swim. I may not be the best cyclist when I get back but I will have the best tan.

So two weeks into this trip already and I'm completely accustomed to the time zone and climate. I moved yesterday from one cheap guesthouse to a slightly less cheap one, bigger room, better view of the sea. In one month I'll have to leave to renew my visa. Thailand now give 45 days on arrival. Cambodia (Anghor Wat) or Indonesia (Bali) are the best options. Upon returning to Thailand, I can get another 45 day visa.

Time for a stroll along the beach to catch another perfect sunset, have dinner 3 bucks, a beer 2 bucks, a massage 6 bucks. I'm really working too hard.

Sorry for the lack of photos but here are a few ideas for your next bicycle *[See Right Panel]*.

Ride on,

## **Mike in Thailand**

.....**Read more from Mike below**.....

### **1/27/23 - Finally - A Flat Ride Around the Lake (Getting To and From The Lake -NOT)**

Lake ride this morning was good, 26-30 kph, no wind. 75 klicks.

My after ride breakfast *[See Bottom of Right Panel]*.

The food is fantastic of course, tropical fruits, vegetables and seafood all locally produced, many in season now.

I'll try to send a detailed description of the rides each week.



Mabprachan Lake and its surrounding forests, parks and shores cover an area of 3,500 rai [5.6 million square meters/12,856 acres], with a shoreline that stretches some 10 kilometers long. The lake is said to hold an estimated 13,300,000 cubic meters [3,513,488 gallons] of water.

Photos are tough on a ride. They just don't stop.

I'll be back early April. Hah, you can have your cold weather.

### **1/28/23 - Update: Morning After The Ride ....Did I Tell You About My Breakfast?**

A nice bungalow can be rented on the lake - all amenities included - for 5000 baht or 152 USD.....a month! Sunrise is spectacular. Cool in the morning about 72F, all year. We started at 6am, around 70 km total.

Here's a link to a video to the area we rode (Bicycle Ride at Mabprachan Lake in Thailand with members of the Biker Grove Cycling Club. October 30. 2021): <https://youtu.be/bNguFycXvRE>

Ride on,

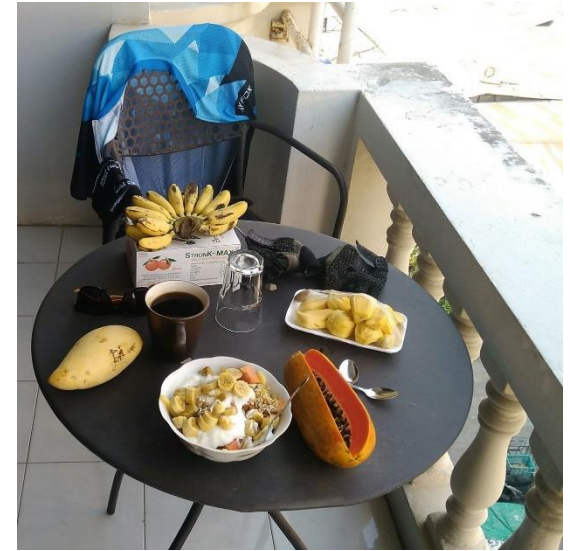
### **Mike in Thailand**

.....Read more from Mike below.....

### **1/30/23 - Cycling In The Land Of Smiles With A Weight Disadvantage**

We did a 80+ km ride Sunday, plenty of hills on the way but all manageable with the big chainring. Once again, we started at dawn, 6:15am here. A larger group than normal met at a local restaurant, Brits, Canadians, Dutch, Thai and one lone American from the flatland. The destination was Ban Chang in the neighboring province of Rayong. We passed through fields of casava, groves of oil palm and rubber trees, and thick jungle. Some of the roads were surprisingly quiet. It was so nice to relax after dodging motorbikes and street vendors. The air was unusually cool, perfect for the Westerners but the Thais wore body suits against the "cold".

This group takes longer breaks than SCBC. We stopped on a high overlook at the Phufa restaurant which caters to cyclists, plenty of bike racks and plenty of coffee. I haven't seen any beer drinking. Strange! They are more into sports drinks. Other small groups of cyclists arrived one after another until the place was quite full. Apparently there are many small groups in the area ranging from entry level to near pro. I saw some expensive bikes. No wonder they're killing me on my dime store bicycle.



It looks good but it's heavy as a stone. I'm sticking with it though. This is just training, torturous resistance training. Dang, it's exhausting!

So here's a few photos of the group. There's even a few lovely Thai ladies in remarkable fitness. The Thais invited me for brunch at a roadside Thai restaurant on the way back. Eat with the Thais and you'll pay one third the usual price. It's called double pricing. Complain as you will, foreigners always pay more. Hah, unless they speak Thai. So, 60 baht (2 bucks) for shimp fried rice, fried eggs and fresh fruit juice.

I didn't get back to my guesthouse until 11, later than normal. So exhausted, I could barely climb the four flights of stairs to my room. A day off is sorely needed.



Cycling in LOS (Land Of Smiles)

**Mike in Thailand**

.....Read more from Mike below.....

## 2/6/23 - One Month In The Rear View Mirror And The Heat Is On

I'm approaching the end of my first month in Thailand. The cool mornings and breezy afternoons are coming to an end. Slowly we're sliding into the hot season. That means 80F will become upper 90's and beyond. By April the temperatures will be into the 100s. I wish I could say "no sweat", but I'm losing gallons on these long rides into the countryside. Electrolyte drinks are a necessity.

The rides have fallen into a pattern. Tuesdays are for the hard core. Only Rinus from Holland and Richard from the UK seem to enjoy this form of punishment. We head straight to Pratumnak hill and climb this highest point at least 5 times. It's getting slightly easier each time but still they outdistance me going up and streak away from me on the downhills. At this point my main concern is survival. Going down these steep, winding hills at break neck speed may be a rush for these guys but I just want to go home in one piece. My hands are numb from squeezing the brakes. It's all excellent training though, a type unavailable in Sussex County.

Fridays are another form of training. Speed work around the 10k track on Lake Mabprachan. I didn't make it there this week. No more than 2k outside of town in total darkness I hit a pothole, a deep one that almost knocked me over. I opted to walk it back into town and let the group continue on. I knew this had to happen eventually but with a bike shop nearby why try to fix a tire in the dark. I dropped the bike off, went back to my room and picked it up later that morning, no waiting, 6 bucks for a new tube and no labor cost.

Sundays attract the largest group. It's always a long, scenic ride. This week's ride was to Radar hill. We passed two beautiful lakes, each with dedicated bikes lanes encircling at the edge. Once again, there was plenty of hill climbing. The countryside was a mix of jungle, mango orchards, casava farms and rubber plantations. We passed Buddha mountain, a huge outcropping of rock with a Buddha image just as huge marked on the side. First stop was a small coffee hut, see photos. This was about 30k into the ride. One of our group had too much to drink the previous night and begged for a brief respite. Super good coffee and the free bananas were just picked as we sat there. The varieties of bananas here are astounding. Well, our drinking friend had enough at this point and signed off as we headed off for our destination. Radar hill has some interesting climbs, steep in parts and generally long. On one descent I hit 50 kph and was still the last one off the hill. This is the fastest speed I've attained but the cheapo bike was stable, a smooth road for a change helped.

We took one more break on the way back at a lakeside resort. You can't bring all the fluids you need on these rides, stops for drinks are critical. After a 20 minute rest, we headed back into town, one rider after another peeling off to head to their home. No one has a car. We pick up riders en route and watch them split off on the way back. These people are true cyclists. Cycling has rapidly developed here



The core of Jomtien Cycling Club



Typical food and drink stand in the jungle



The bikes on the Thai style rack

with both the expats and the Thais. Road bikes are quickly replacing mountain bikes. I've seen some amazing riders both male and female. There must be a dozen cycling clubs in this province alone.

As for clubs, no fee to be paid, no waivers to be signed, just meet, go and have a good time. We use a messaging app called Line to communicate. Some clubs rely on Strava.

I don't think I'm with an elite group but they are well conditioned and know the territory. I've seen some other small groups that looked faster and younger with some very expensive bikes.

I haven't bonked yet. I only feel like bonking. Sweated until I was soaked this morning on the hill climbs. Heat and humidity are the challenge now.

Tomorrow the week begins again with more hill climbs. I'm beginning to like it. Once at the top, the view is spectacular. Hills are painful for sure but wow what a workout!



Smiling owners of the stand

Ride on,

**Mike in Thailand**

.....Read more from Mike below.....

**2/12/23 - Ending The Week With 4 Rides.....And A shameless Plug For My Wooden Bikes**

I joined the group 4 times this week and the number of participants is dropping fast. It may be the heat and humidity but some members are simply out of town for various reasons, mostly visa related. One cannot stay here indefinitely, there are complicated rules governing the length of one's stay.

**Tuesday** included just me and the two hill climbers. These two guys seek out hills and the longer and steeper the climb the more they like it. This is not popular with the rest of the group who politely avoid joining in. For me it's not easy climbing but it is getting easier. At least I'm getting to the top without fear of a cardiac arrest. The views are always worth the effort. The descent is exhilarating. Once at the bottom it's up again five more times.



Jittawan and Canada Dave

**Wednesday** was a long distance ride with only three other people. No one knew this route except the Canadian, who I previously thought was a normal guy. The route turned out to be a long struggle with highway traffic, dodging motorbikes and breathing diesel fumes. With so many beautiful country roads around here, I couldn't fathom why this guy knowingly chose this route. Richard from the UK was so pissed he didn't stop for the break but rode on. The only redeeming feature of the ride was that we passed the elephant camp where I happily yielded the right of way to two huge pachyderms. It was also nice to have Jittawan on this ride. She is forever cheerful and always a fun person to ride with. Ahh, see photo.



**Friday** was another low participation day. Rinus and I nearly left the starting point when a stranger dressed like Captain America came out of the shadows. This was Phil from Roanoke Virginia, a burly, somewhat rotund American. Oh boy, what's this guy all about, can he keep up, will our training be ruined? Hey, appearances can be deceiving. Phil was strong and had the advantage of younger age, a mere 42. I think Rinus is 62 and I just collided with 70. That's why I'm afraid to stop pedaling. The ride was terrific. Phil burned up the hills and in no way slowed us down, a pleasant surprise to meet him. He plans on staying in Thailand for a full year, recording for his YouTube posts on his bicycling trips in Thailand. I gladly plugged my bamboo bicycles for his audience.

Pachyderm

**Sunday** was hardly a group ride. Only me and Rinus. So we just went all over and made up the ride as we went. This included a long hill climb to nowhere, a long stretch of unpaved road with soft sand and a steep hill climb to an abandoned Buddhist temple, no monks, no temple dogs but a fantastic view of the countryside. These hills pop up all over Thailand and every one of them is crowned with a temple. Some are only accessible by a long stairway of hundreds of steps. This one had a narrow road of 15% grade, out of the saddle at fall over speed.



On the left is Phil (A/K/A Captain America) from Roanoke Virginia. He's keeping a podcast of his cycling adventures in Thailand.



View from abandoned temple

<https://youtube.com/@weaselsinthebushes>

He shipped his Cannondale from home at some expense. Funny guy. We ride a good bit together here. Video of his bike shipment.

<https://youtu.be/wPvO0T2dY-s>



Another group I've met here is the Juicy Girls Gang. Don't laugh. They dropped Phil who is faster than me. I'm not letting them humiliate me just yet. Some of the videos are quite good and show off the Thai landscape much better than my lackluster photos. Notice the expensive bikes and kits. They are commercially sponsored. My goal is to ride with them next year...if I live that long. <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100032848941786&mibextid=ZbWKwL>

We stopped at Rinus's place on the way back. He has two units in a condominium complex, huge pool, security, gym, great location, the works. One unit is for sale at a mere 1.6 million baht. I know I could find one much cheaper but I told him I would post this information to SCBC. He thinks all Americans are rich. Hey, that's only 50,000 USD.

**Ride on,**

**Mike in Thailand**

.....Read more from Mike below.....

### **2/20/23 - Starting My Second Month Riding In Thailand**

I'm well into my second month here with daily solo rides and 3-4 group rides a week. My solo rides are more for site seeing than training. Without the group dynamic I'm quite content with a slow pace and frequent stops. The main benefit of being here for a cyclist is perfect weather. It's rained only twice and then in the middle of the afternoon. No rides have been cancelled. Recently, the heat hasn't been too bad either, even a bit cool in the pre-dawn hour when we start our rides.

This week was typical with the hill climbs on **Tuesday**, speed work at the track on Lake Mabprachan and a long, grueling ride into the country on Sunday. According to my fellow cyclists, I have improved quite a bit. They are too kind perhaps. I'm not sure if they are slowing down or I'm catching up. The gap is shorter on the hill climbs, that's certain. Occasionally, there is no gap if I really put some ass into it. Damn, those hills are painful. Ahh, heavy old bike, one beer too many last night, didn't sleep well. What's the formula for riding like Progarcar? No excuses, train harder.

The speed work at the lake went well. There's one big hill on the circuit and I surprised the crap out of them by pulling ahead at the top. They didn't let that happen again. Cyclists are a competitive bunch everywhere. As we finished off our last lap on the 10 km circuit, I tried again to pull ahead and thought I had them beat but alas, I kicked too soon, way too soon. My legs turned to jelly a half kilometer from the coffee shop and they gleefully passed me by. No defeat, at least I'm challenging



View of Pattaya at dawn from bottom of hill

them now and they'll know not to dismiss me. They have plateaued, I'm still climbing and learning new tricks.

The long ride on **Sunday** was tough going on the way out. Sometimes, a rider just feels tired and every hill looks like Mt. Everest. Maybe, a rest is called for. I go to the gym everyday and walk miles everyday without fail. A rest is forthcoming for sure.

Fortunately, a banana, three oatmeal cookies and a cup of Americano at Phufa Coffee house put some starch in my shorts. The ride back to town went much better. There was one long flat stretch where we held 35 kph for miles. It was like being in Sussex county again, but no hills and no elephants.

That wraps up the week. The last ride was over 90 kilometers. So, I'm doing about 200 k a week. Not bad for a newbie.

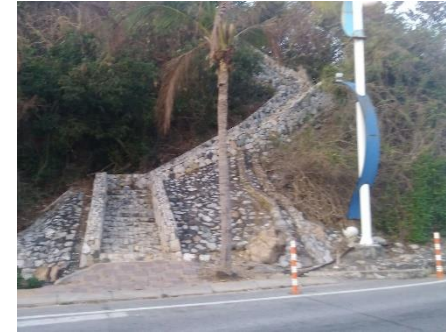
So about that rest I mentioned. **My 45 day entry visa will expire Friday. I will check out of the Bamboo guesthouse, store my bike at the gym and fly to Indonesia, Bali more specifically.** Once there, I'll travel to Ubud, Pemuteran Bay, Menjangan island and Sanur, a vacation within a vacation. I've booked 4 nights at Hai Homestay in Ubud, 45 dollars total. From there, I'll cross the island by bus to the north western shore for some free diving at a marine sanctuary on Menjangan island. Free diving is like scuba diving without tanks. I got certified up to the advanced level in Honduras and Thailand years back. Hope I can still breath hold for 5 minutes. Will the cycling help? Eleven days there then back to Jomtien and the cycle club.

Attached are a few photos (see right panel) from Pattaya Hill, the hill climb torture test.

**Take care all,**

**Mike in Thailand**

.....Read more from Mike below.....



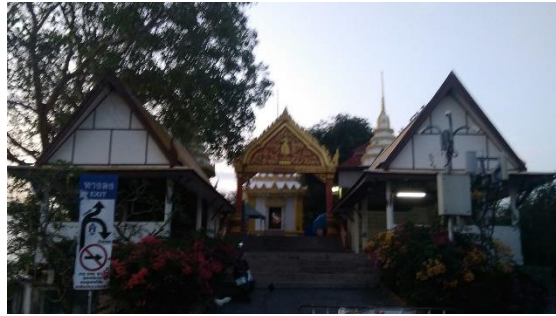
Staircase to the top



Starting the second climb



View from the top overlooking bay and Pattaya at dawn.



Entrance to temple at the summit



Friendly soi dogs. Street dogs, there are millions. Some not so friendly. Hammer down.

## 2/26/23 - Short Ride Week In Thailand - Taking My "Mandatory" Recovery In Indonesia

**Tuesday ride-** Phil from Roanoke decided to join the hill climbs, so there were 4 of us meeting at 6:15 in darkness while the street dogs slept. Very few riders appreciate the benefits of climbing. It could be the quickest way of improving your overall condition. These are out of the saddle rides on the steep up hill and brake burners on the downhill. Phil burned the first hill but I think he regretted it with four more to go. It was his first ride to this area. Best to stay with the group if you're unfamiliar with the course.

Here are a few photos (see right panel and below) from Pratamnak hill, the hill climb torture test.

**Wednesday ride-** Only Richard and I met for this one and so we decided to make it long and scenic. We were on the bikes nearly until noon and did over 90 km but with frequent stops. Plenty of photo opportunities.

I had to forego the Friday and Sunday rides because of the expiring 45 day visa and travel plans. My Friday escape went off as planned, not the best flight and an awful schedule. I arrived in Bali airport at 1am.

That's the end of the ride reports until I get back to Thailand.



Richard, Rinus and Phil after the hill climb ride



Sunrise over Lake Wat Yang on Wednesday's ride

I'm in Bali now with no plans to ride. This place is indescribable especially Ubud where I'm now staying. I'm in town center at a homestay that looks like a Hindu temple. I've seen a few cyclists but you would have to have nerves of steel to ride here. I'm sure it would be nice outside of town since this is one of the most beautiful places on earth, lush, tropical and now rainy. The motorbike traffic and poor, wet roads would make it extremely dangerous for cyclists. Three days here then off to Tulamben for some free diving. Coral reefs just off the beach with 70 meter dropoffs. I booked 5 days at a hotel on the beach for 20 bucks a night. Bintang beer is two bucks. Food is a little higher than I'm used to since Bali is an island. Dinner could cost 100,000 rupiahs or 8 dollars. I cashed a Ben Franklin today and became an instant millionaire.

Ride reports will continue after March 7. I joined the infamous PTT Chayaphruk group recently. True maniacs on two wheels. Time for some humiliation.

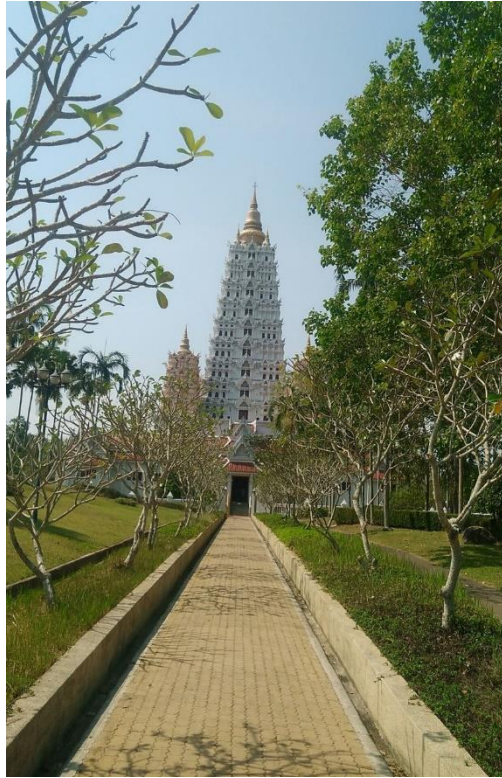


Karst and hills to where we ultimately rode.

**Cheers,**

**Mike in Bali, Indonesia**

**.....Read more from Mike Soon.....**



Temple .....like so many in Thailand



My new Indonesian friend, Bintang

**3/8/23 - Left Paradise (a/k/a Bali, Indonesia) and Back to Bicycling Paradise (a/k/a Jomtien, Thailand)**

Sorry for the quick bait and switch subject line.

**Paradise (a/k/a Bali, Indonesia)**

I saw very few cyclists in perhaps the most fantastically beautiful land in the world. Not all things are perfect in paradise. The roads are treacherous with potholes, trenches, and non existent shoulders. Nevertheless, there were a few hardy souls willing to take on the challenge. I was not one of them. As far as cycling tours, I was told of one where the cyclists were ferried to the top of a mountain and then allowed to descend for 20 km. This was a mountain bike tour that required little pedaling but a lot of brake handling. Exhilarating, no doubt.

So it seems that Bali is not a destination for cycling enthusiasts which is why I focused on diving. The diving in Tulamben was remarkable. I did what I like to call free free diving (my only equipment was a mask). With beautiful reefs and steep dropoffs just a few meters from the beach, there was no need



Rice terrace Ubud

for the services of the many dive companies. First day in Tulamben I queried the locals and soon pinpointed the best dive spots. Dive in and within minutes you're in a tropical aquarium!

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### **Bicycling Paradise (a/k/a Jomtien, Thailand)**

After 11 days in Bali, I returned to Thailand which gave me an additional 45 day visa on arrival, no questions asked. Thailand like all tourist destinations is struggling to fill the hotels. One interesting point I'd like to make is that a large proportion of tourists are coming from Russia and a large proportion of them are young men, some with their wives and children. This is noticeable in every country I've visited. The Russian exodus is on.

So from the wet, rainy southern hemisphere to the dry northern hemisphere was only four hours. My trusty, rusty Richart junk bike was waiting for me at the gym. I've contacted my cycling friends here to let them know I'm ready to roll. First ride will be speed work at the lake which usually totals about 70-80 km. By speed, I mean we cover the flats at 30 kph plus. Hah, you need to go metric my recalcitrant American friends. The king's foot is not a good metric. Phil, my friend from Roanoke, should have some updates on the other bike clubs in this area. He went out Sunday with the fast group of the PTT Chayaphruk club. I haven't heard from him since. Did he drop again this time? Can't wait to find out.

Here's a few photos from Bali, a truly wonderful place with truly friendly people.

Back in the saddle in Jomtien,

**Mike**



Hindu street ceremony in Ubud



Traffic in Ubud and why I prefer to walk

.....Read more from Mike below.....



Sunrise view from my 20 dollar a night hotel



Favorite dive spot at sunset in Tulamben



Cormorants on the dive boat in Sanur

### 3/14/23 - Recovery Hangover After Being Off The Bike For 16 days

Despite my efforts in Bali to maintain some semblance of fitness, the return to group cycling was painful. After only sixteen days of touring Bali without my bike, my peddling muscles went south as well. It wasn't until the following day after a 75 km ride up country that I realized how far south I went. Damn, I wish that guesthouse had a lift. So, that's my warning to my SCBC friends. If you've slacked off over the winter, that first ride is going to hurt. But only temporarily, each successive ride will be easier and maybe that long rest will do you good. After 3 group rides and 2 solos in 5 days, I'm feeling better than ever.

I'm in the final days of my Thai cycling experience and my plans are to continue with the current group at Jomtien Cycling Club. I feel I have made some fast friends in that group who have helped me greatly over the past two months. This is a group with empathy and great experience who knows what it's like to have bad days. Why do I get all the flats? In the first week here, they commented that I was good at 24 km/h but that I tended to drop off at 27. Now, they're hitting 30-35 and can't drop me until we climb a steep hill. So, the persistence and training have paid off. Who knows what a nice bike would do for me? The Richarts wrecker is not a good climber but it is a good trainer. Add resistance to your training and save the aero, lightweight bike for important rides. Keep your eyes open for a 40 pound 10 speed Schwinn Sportster from the 1980's at a local garage sale. It'll be the best 10 bucks you'll ever spend.

- I'll leave that hurdle for next year. Every rider I've talked to says they don't cut any slack and you have better be prepared for a drop. Are they dopes that are young or young that are doped? I know

### Sidebar On A Faster Group

*Phil (a/k/a Captain America) has been steadily trying to ride with the younger, faster group. He doesn't seem to mind getting dropped. His weight is a big impediment especially on the hills.*

*For an idea of how fast they ride, they posted this on Sunday:*

*(<https://youtu.be/rCtSwRS9d-k>). Readouts on degree of slope, wattage, and speed. Breakneck!*

*Maybe I'll ride with them next year if I can bring a bike along. Depends on the airline.*

from the gym culture here that performance enhancing drugs are easily available. Walk into any pharmacy in Thailand and one can obtain over the counter a drug that would require a prescription in the States and certain pharmacies are known to have muscle building hormones and steroids. There is such a thing as getting too serious about an activity. Keep it real!

So, instead of going that route, I may just invest a little money to upgrade my kit. A tight fitting jersey, cycling gloves instead of weightlifting gloves and a good pair of cycling glasses or goggles would help tremendously. A better helmet will have to wait, so I'll continue using my skateboarding helmet until my return to Sussex. You are witnessing a transformation but don't be surprised to see me riding the beer trail in my flip flops this year. Some things cannot be compromised.

Lasting in Thailand,

**Mike**

.....Read more from Mike below.....

### **3/21/23 - Back To Riding With The Regulars**

For over a week after my return from Bali, the air was thick with smoke. Farmers traditionally burn the stubble in their rice and sugar cane fields at this time. It's a practice that is widespread all over SE Asia. Sunsets that normally disappear gloriously under the horizon instead disappear red and angry behind the murky gray hovering above the horizon. Many of the local cyclists cancelled their rides. Many continue to cancel even after the smoke has cleared because now is the hot season. The temperature is creeping upward each day toward April, the hottest month.

Nevertheless, no one in our group has flagged or faltered. We did our climbs on Pratumnak hill, gasping much more than usual. A stop at the top each time was necessary to pull in some oxygen and cough out the smoke. Visibility was so diminished that none of the nearby islands could be seen for most of the week.

By Friday, the air began to clear. Our best cyclists assembled at Timbo's restaurant at 6:15 and we picked up two others who were waiting along the way. It's only 15 kilometers to the lake with the cycling track but we have to pass by several packs of stray dogs. Some times they just let us pass and other times we have to employ one of several strategies. Speed up and hope we can out pace them, kick them in the snout or bark back at them as if we are rabid. I usually bark wildly while accelerating to my max. Fortunately, they are not well fed. A diet of white rice and chicken bones does not make for a greyhound. We dropped 'em hard. The track work went well for me. I hit two

### **Thai Coffee Refreshment Stop**





goals: cresting the long hill at over 20 km/h into a video they made on that ride with speed, watts, and degree of incline displayed. They fly on the flats but flatten out on the climbs like mere mortals. Fast but no cigar. Put a thirty years old on a 5,000 dollar bike and of course they will be fast.

The big challenge that day was the distance and the heat. We did about 95 km in 32 C temperatures. We passed through packs of mad dogs, herds of cattle and goats and remarkably beautiful countryside. Water bottles were emptied quickly and two long stops were needed to refuel. The sun never relented. It will get hotter and hotter until Songkran which is the water festival mid-April. 40 C is not unusual. That's over 100 F. Enjoy the lovely, cool Spring of Delaware on the coast.

Sweating in Thailand,

### Mike

See Right Panel: Riders at Phufa Coffee house in Ban Chang Rayong and their super bikes (see below). Can you find Phil of Roanoke a/k/a Captain America?

.....Read more from Mike below.....





### **3/8/23 - Looking for the Perfect Margaritaville (Since 2001)**

The past week was typical, hill climbs Tuesday, speed work at the lakeside cycle track Thursday and a countryside ride on Sunday. The heat is withering, by noon it is incendiary. Fortunately we are usually off the road early but Sunday nearly did me in. We made multiple stops for some form of hydration and that just stretched out the ride. By noon, I was limping back to Jomtien beach wondering how to avoid heat stroke. Any small patch of shade looked like paradise. Here I would like to thank the great bunch of guys and gals that I've been riding with, especially Rinus and Richard. Rinus knew I was hurting (too much drinking the previous night) and had me sit out the worst hill and get some food in my stomach while the group climbed the hill and circled back. I ordered a breakfast for myself at a small temple restaurant. The plate of chicken fried rice with fried eggs was so huge I split the plate three ways. So for 87 baht or \$2.50, three cyclists got breakfast and drinks. These are the pleasant surprises you find in Thailand, great food, low prices, friendly people. With two more stops for coffee, water and bananas we all got back to town safely. Thank you Rinus and Richard for checking over your shoulder so many times that day. The group dynamic is so important and these guys look out for one another 100%.

Like most things in Thailand, the bike clubs are extremely informal. I don't think any require an official membership. You find out that a group is riding from point A at a certain time and you show up ready to ride. A helmet and tire repair kit are the only requirements, no fee, no waiver, no rider limits. Most will use a messaging app to communicate. Large groups will split up into smaller groups according to the

rider's speed preference. If you drop from the fast group, you can catch a slower group. In this area around Jomtien beach there are several groups ranging from the very slow (less than 14 mph) to some fast groups over 22 mph. I suspect some of these faster groups attain average speeds closer to 25 mph. Any rider can find a comfortable niche and enjoy riding all year long with temperatures never below 70 F. The coolest months are January and February when it's quite comfortable for Westerners from the colder climates.

The objective of my reports from Thailand has been to illustrate options that I haven't heard considered in Sussex County Cycle Club. Too cold to ride from November to March? For the cost of one week at Aspen, Orlando or Las Vegas you can stay here for two months! The food is great, the people are friendly, medical tourism is big and the prices are low for everything. Phone service 3 dollars. One hour massage 6 dollars. Dental work excellent at a quarter of the cost, same for cosmetic surgery. I've been traveling throughout Central America, South America and SE Asia every winter since 2001 looking for the perfect Margaritaville. I found my shaker of salt here.

**See y'all soon,**

**Mike from Thailand**

.....**Read more from Mike Soon**.....

#### **4/3/23 - Last Weekly Report**

It was another typical three ride week so I won't bother with the details. So I'll focus on how riding here in a tropical country with experienced European cyclists has improved my game.

Hills will be hills. Coming from Sussex County and climbing real hills can be daunting. The only metric I have is that now these hills are climbable and that I can closely keep up with the all in the group. With some clever strategy I've even managed a few upsets. They hate it when an American beats them to the top. Upstart! But they love the challenge and will miss this upstart when I'm gone. Pratamnak hill remains the killer hill. I was never able to pull ahead on this steepest of all climbs. I was satisfied to be closely on the tail end of each climb and enjoy hearing the better climbers gasping for breath at the top.

The hill on Mabprachan lake however did provide a good metric. Initially, I struggled to maintain 14 kph and not tip over. On the final ride this week I maintained 20-24 kph (12.5-15 mph) on all three climbs and challenged the other riders to the top. On the flats here, we pushed 32-36 kph (20-22 mph) but after the group surpassed 36 kph on the home stretch I had to

**Toal Miles Ridden in Thailand  
on 2023 Trip**

concede defeat. Enough already, you win. The Europeans really take this sport seriously.

Sunday, we did the fun ride out to the countryside with Rinus planning a route that included the steepest hills in Chonburi province. This Dutchman is brutal. Many refused to ride this way but he did warn me and explained how to reach the top of Buddha hill without stopping. I have attached photos of this mountain top and the views. You won't see this in Sussex County!

Returning to home base with the temperature soaring, we maintained 32-36 kph on a long, straight stretch of Sukhumvit road. I am now not dropable until the speed goes beyond 36 kph. At that point, I start seeing the group pull away and after dropping back ten meters there's no catching up until we reach a coffee shop.

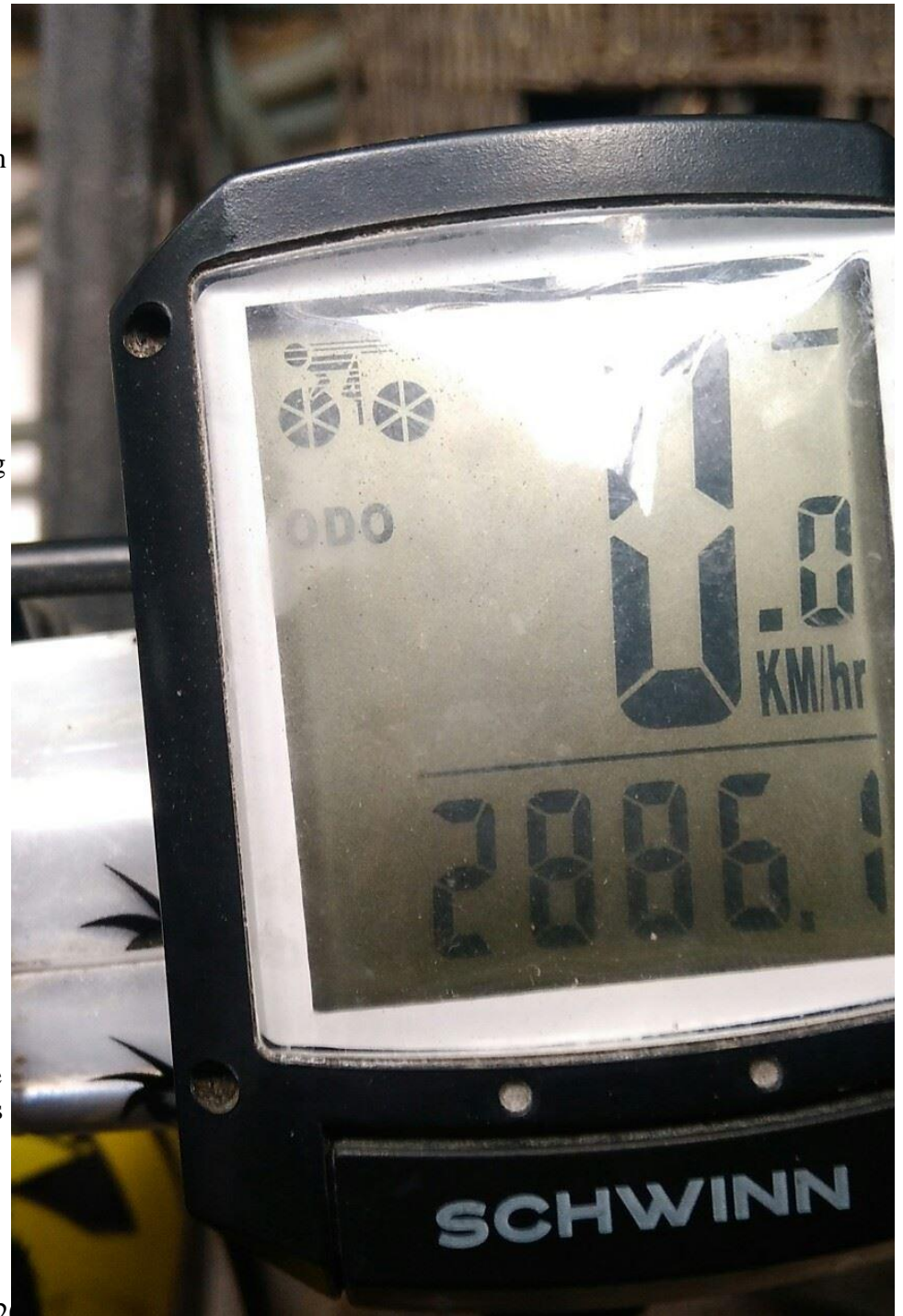
#### **Would a 5000 dollar aero road bike vs my 100 dollar 35 pound clunker help in this instance?**

According to some data I've gathered...decidedly Yes. As much as 15 to 25 percent more speed for the same wattage.

So the party is over. I've made some great friends here. Next year, I will come more prepared. My aero, lightweight bamboo racing bike is on the drawing board and I'll have the 25 percent advantage. That's the Yankee way. We don't copy, we innovate.

Finally, the Richter Seeker has been donated to Nawi, who works at the Hard Body Gym on Soi 3 Jomtien Beach. I never want to see it again. Oh, the pain!

In conclusion, the Jomtien Cycling Club has helped me tremendously. We never cancelled a ride. Despite my early apprehensions, I've had no illness and no injury. I'm confident I can out pace any soi dog and dodge any pothole. The bike suffered four flats but that clunker was tough and steady. I flew down hills at 60 kph (37 mph) without a shudder or a shimmy. Good bye ole Paint, my Rocinante!



Until next year,

Mike (No Longer) Lost in Thailand

(2886.1 KM = 1,793 miles)

@10 weeks = 179 +/- miles/meek

Should I Get a More Expensive Bike Next year?

This is where I got the data for the relative efficiencies of three price points: <https://youtu.be/EXflmGqJakA>

Using a single power meter and a predetermined loop, the vegan cyclist tested three bikes (\$100, \$1000, \$7000) using the same wattage throughout the ride and recorded the time intervals for various scenarios (climbs, descents, flats, total, etc). In the description, he provides the data collected. Biggest difference is on the climbs but in total I figured about a 15% gain for the \$1000 bike and nearly a 25% gain for the \$7000 bike over the Walmart special. Maybe Tom our accountant can check my math.



Nawi with her

Richter Seeker

(Gifted by Mike..."good bye ole Paint, my Rocinante!")

Views from Buddha Hill



**Mike returned safely to the area on April 5th and is back at The Beach and participating in Club Group Rides on his much preferred wood frame bikes!**

**Did you like Mike's Reports from Thailand? Let him know by saying something to him on a ride or by emailing him at: [razmtaz@gmail.com](mailto:razmtaz@gmail.com)**

*(See Right Panel)*

*Although not likely available on tap at our the local breweries and brew pubs, many Thai and Asian restaurants offer Chang Classic by the bottle. So order a pair and tap them in honor of Mike's achievements while being Lost in Thailand.*

