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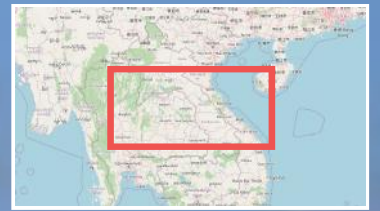
**Ollantaytambo Peru
Walking Back in Time**

**The Sumidero
Canyon in Chiapas**

**Skopje, an underrated
European capital
worth discovering**

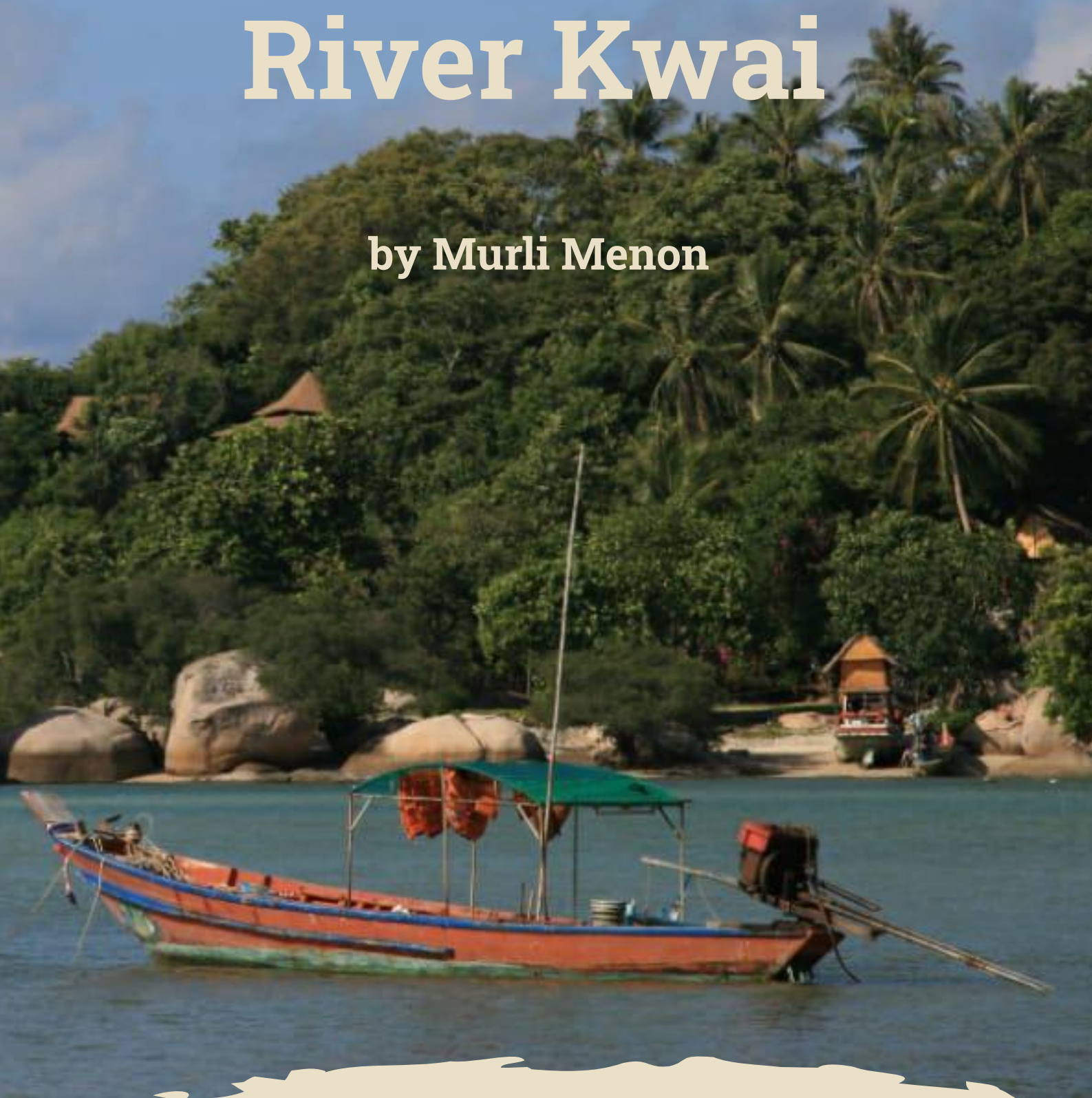
**19th Issue
Free online edition**

THAILAND



A Boat Cruise to River Kwai

by Murli Menon





I returned to the cool confines of the Amari Atrium Hotel in Bangkok after an eventful day trip to Kanchanaburi. The city of Kanchanaburi is a three-hour drive from Bangkok, so it is advisable to start early to avoid Bangkok's rush hour traffic. In Kanchanaburi, bikes can be rented from local shops, guesthouses, and hotels located along Mae Nam Khwae Road. Visitors can capture the atmosphere of the city on their way to see the Bridge over the River Kwai (Khwae in Thai), the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, and the waterfront area. The Khwae Yai River flows through Kanchanaburi and a riverboat cruise is a deeply meditative experience!

I rented a hand-paddled canoe and paddled gently down the river. Kanchanaburi is a quiet city and the residents don't seem to be in much of a hurry. The boatman gently guides the boat across the river, using the current to propel the canoe forward. The canoe gently makes its way along the shoreline and soon enters a wooded area filled with forests of bamboo and teak trees.

After about fifteen minutes, I left the city of Kanchanaburi behind and found myself in the thick rain forest. Here you can catch a glimpse of several yellow-billed hornbills perched on the branches of a teak tree. The curved bamboo forests create a natural canopy through which the boat sails, simulating a canoe ride through caves. I moved through the woods at a snail's pace, taking my time to enjoy the beauty of the waterfalls that can be seen in the distance.

Seeing life in slow motion aptly describes my morning cruise on the River Kwai in Kanchanaburi. The trip lasted a few hours, but its memory will last a lifetime. The biting cold and a dip in the icy waterfall in the early hours of the morning made it even more memorable. To combat the cold, I drank a warm herbal tea made from ginger and basil. This unique combination stimulates the immune system and contributes to being more energetic and active.



You may not have heard of Kanchanaburi, but you probably know of the nearby bridge over the River Kwai. Many Allied POWs perished during World War II building the infamous Death Railway. The bridge itself is very simple; today it is still occasionally used by local train traffic.

While about bridges, Kanchanaburi also boasts the longest wooden bridge in Thailand in Sangkhlaburi district, Kanchanaburi Province across the Mekong, you can see the Mon villages. Also, take a stroll through the immaculately maintained Allied War Cemetery, where you'll find the graves of over 8,000 POWs who died working on the bridge and railway for the Imperial Japanese Army. It is a very moving experience. Kanchanaburi can be seen as a day trip from Bangkok. Given the mountainous terrain and the determination of the imperial army to complete the task in less than eighteen months (its engineers had estimated that it would take five years), it is not surprising that some 100,000 people died building the 415 km stretch that required deep mountain cuts, and hand excavation. Very little of the original track remains, and visitors now come to pay their respects at the Allied War Cemetery.



Seeing life in slow motion aptly describes my morning cruise on the River Kwai



Murli Menon
ZeNLP
ZeNLP- learning through stories

How to get there:

By car:

From Bangkok Airport, drive on Highway No. 338 from Bangkok to Nakhon Chai Si Province, then change to Highway No. 4 to Kanchanaburi.

By bus:

Air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned buses depart from Bangkok's South Bus Terminal every 15 minutes from 4 a.m. to 5 p.m. m. until 8 p.m. m. The trip takes about 3 hours.

By train:

Ordinary trains leave Bangkok's Thon Buri Railway Station (Bangkok Noi Station) daily. Only 3rd class seats are available. The journey takes approximately 3 hours.



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