

FEB 2022

# ScandAsia



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Aker Solutions in Malaysia charged with forgery ..again?

**COMMUNITY:**

Kjell Bergqvist's life in Thailand

**INTERNATIONAL:**

Covid benefit: Traveling around while studying

## Danish gymnastics team took Thailand by storm



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# Lift All Travel Restrictions

Lift international traffic restriction. They do not work. They only contribute to the economic and social stress of people, businesses and nations.

By cutting the lifeline of tourism, these restrictions do more harm than good, especially in destinations reliant on international tourists for jobs, economic wellbeing and sustainable change, says UNWTO - the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.

UNWTO also notes, that in both developed and developing countries, recovery from the impacts of the pandemic is uneven and fragile and overall has led to a substantial reversal in progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"It is imperative we restart tourism and so kickstart recovery and get back on track towards meeting the SDGs while responding to Climate Imperatives," the UNWTO statement says

ScandAsia would like to join WHO and The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in their appeal for countries around the world to realize the ineffectiveness of blanket travel restrictions. We would also like to echo their recommendations against using vaccination status as the sole condition for welcoming tourists back.

The vaccines do not eliminate the risk of transmitting the COVID-19, they only continue to be effective in reducing the risk of severe disease and death. That is of course excellent but irrelevant to the issue of restricting traveling.

Unfortunately, even though WHO has made such a call, a large share of EU/Schengen Area countries have already announced that they will shorten the validity of vaccination passes starting from February 1. This means that they don't plan on lifting the requirement to present a vaccination certificate anytime soon.

But Asia doesn't have to follow the EU. Why not show the way?

As long as these restrictions are in place, they will be exploited by scrupulous hotels, hospitals and the medical industry to fleece the unfortunate travelers who fall into their trap.



**Gregers Moller**  
*Editor in Chief*

## ScandAsia

ScandAsia is a printed magazine and online media covering the people and businesses of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland living and working in China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

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# A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

From Bangkok Patana's Tumbling Tigers to international competitions, Roisin's drive to compete as a gymnast is sourced from three main values: balance, strength and inspiration, and she aspires to demonstrate these same values to younger athletes.

**Read about Roisin Sehmar's  
inspiring journey**



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# Embassy of Sweden in Manila kicks off 75<sup>th</sup>-anniversary campaign



Sweden's Foreign Minister Anne Linde speaking about the 75 years Swedish Philippines Anniversary.

The year 2022 marks 75 years of Sweden's diplomatic relations with the Philippines and in commemoration of this milestone, the Embassy of Sweden in Manila has prepared a year-long digital campaign.

The campaign is entitled 'Moving forward together' and starts with a message from Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

In her message, Ann Linde says Sweden and the Philippines have a lot in common.

"Both our nations have historically been strong supporters of the United Nations and multinational and regional corporations based on democratic views, human rights and rule-based international law," she says.

While talking about the challenges of the pandemic and Sweden's donation of covid-19 vaccines to the Philippines through COVAX, the Minister also notes that combat in climate change is a priority for both nations.

## Sweden welcomed the arrival of 1.8M AstraZeneca doses in the Philippines

Sweden's Ambassador Annika Thunborg, together with Country President of AstraZeneca Philippines Lotis Ramin and British Ambassador Laure Beauflis, recently welcomed the arrival of 1.8M AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine doses in the Philippines.

According to the Embassy of Sweden in Manila, this is the final batch of the 16.5M doses procured through the multilateral agreements among the national government, local government units, Swedish-British pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, and the private sector to help Filipinos through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Embassy also points out that on 14 January, the Swedish Government decided to donate an additional half-million COVID-19



Photo: Embassy of Sweden in Manila.

vaccine doses to COVAX. Sweden has thus far donated over 9 million doses and contributed more than SEK 2 billion to global vaccination efforts against COVID-19.



Wanna Isaksson and her Swedish husband Mikael with the exact number of their lottery prize.

## Thai-Swedish couple wins over SEK 40 million in Swedish lottery

The year 2022 is coming off to a good start, to say the least for Thai Wanna Isaksson and her Swedish husband Mikael after the couple recently won a total SEK 41,651,072 million lottery win in one of Sweden's largest lotteries, Postkodlotteriet.

To media SVT, Wanna Isaksson explains that she still can't believe it is real.

Wanna Isaksson grew up in eastern Thailand in a small village in poor conditions. She worked in a weaving factory and in a factory that assembled electrical parts and then continued to work in hotels as, among other things, a receptionist.

Through her hotel job, she met her husband Mikael and moved with him to Luleå in Sweden in 2004. Here she went to SFI (Swedish for

immigrants) and trained as an assistant nurse. But then she decided to start her own Asian food store where she and her husband works seven days a week.

Although Wanna is of course extremely happy about their win, she still plans on continuing to work in her Asian store. Before the win, Wanna had worries about the future because her pension savings were small but now she can relax as she says.

Wanna and Mikael plan to put money aside for when they get older and use some of the winnings on a renovation. In addition, she also plans on helping the locals in her home village in Thailand with, amongst other things, their funeral arrangements.

Wanna explains that many

people there cannot afford coffins for their relatives when they pass away. She plans to help the villagers with coffins in the future, just as she has already done.

"And linen to put in the coffin as well," Wanna says while adding that she also plans to donate some computers to the school in her home village.

# Ikea to raise prices worldwide due to supply chain problems

The Swedish furniture giant IKEA will raise prices by an average of 9 percent across its stores worldwide due to problems in the supply chain.

Sandra Jakob, the company's press contact in Sweden, says to TV2 that the price increase is necessary to combat higher costs in connection with freight and logistics as a result of the pandemic.

"Unfortunately, there has been a marked increase in costs across

the supply chain, including materials, freight, and logistics. As this is still the case, it is necessary to raise the prices of many of our products," Sandra Jakob says.

She adds that price increases are global, but that how much prices have been raised varies from country to country and from product to product.

IKEA has 454 stores operating in 60 countries. Besides the furniture giant's total of 38 stores in the Nor-

dic Region of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland, IKEA operates in Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, China, Indonesia, and most recently in the Philippines.

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## Roaming traffic reveals Swedish Thailand travelers



A new survey, based on Swedish mobile phone roaming traffic in 17 countries, has confirmed observations on the ground, that Swedes traveled in high numbers to Thailand over Christmas and New Year. Compared to

the Christmas and New Year 2020, the numbers increased over 2500 percent.

According to a press release, the Telephone Operator 3 survey shows that travel increased significantly to all seventeen countries

surveyed during the last weeks of 2021 and at the beginning of 2022. The Nordic Region together with Spain and Germany were amongst the Swedes' most preferred destinations. But Thailand saw by far the biggest increase with 2572 percent.

Speaking on the matter, Press Officer at 3 Lovisa van der Schoot says, "We see that Swedes continue to travel abroad. For example, the number of Swedes in Thailand during the last weeks of 2021 was several thousand percent more than during the same period in 2020. It is clear that there is a pent-up need and that many Swedes have travel fever right now."

# WORLD CHANGING



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# Norway removes quarantine requirements



The Norwegian Government removed from 26 January 2022 the requirement of travel quarantine. Travelers still need to get tested and complete registration upon arrival in Norway.

People who cannot produce a COVID-19 certificate showing that they are fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19, will still need to have documentation of a negative test taken before arrival.

# TV series about two politician's journey from Sweden to Vietnam

Going from the center of Swedish politics to a life beyond the spotlight is not an easy journey. That is the opinion of Jonas Sjöstedt, who left the leadership position in Sweden's Left Party for a new life in Vietnam where his wife works as an ambassador.

In a new SVT series that kicked off on 23rd January 2022, he and the former Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Moderate Party, Anna Kinberg Batra set off on a reflective train journey to Hanoi.

The SVT series "The train to Hanoi – life after the debate" is on paper about the politicians' journey to Hanoi, but in reality, the program is, according to Jonas Sjöstedt, about taking the step from politics to the everyday life that awaits afterward.

Jonas Sjöstedt was the chairman of the Left Party from 2012 until 2020. He is married to Swedish diplomat Ann Måwe, who was part of the Swedish delegation to the



United Nations and who in 2019 became Sweden's Ambassador to Vietnam. In 2020, Jonas Sjöstedt left Swedish politics for an undisturbed life in Vietnam with the family, and in an interview that same year he said he planned on studying Vietnamese and start writing.

As party leaders, Jonas Sjöstedt and Anna Kinberg Batra did not have much in common, but during the

journey to Hanoi they found common ground, Jonas Sjöstedt says.

"We have different ways of looking at politics and the world. But the journey of stepping down and doing something else and how that feels, she understands. She has done the same thing, albeit in a different way. She has also experienced how it feels when the phone stops ringing," he explains.

# Aker Solutions in Malaysia again charged with forgery

A director at the Norwegian engineering company Aker Solutions' office in Malaysia is accused of forging documents allegedly to secure a renewed contract with the state energy company Petronas. Many contracts from state-owned companies in Malaysia are reserved for local companies.

This is the second time an employee of Aker Solutions' Malaysia office has been charged. The last time was in June 2021, and at that

time the case was dropped. This new charge comes just one month after the previous case was dropped. In a statement, Akner Solutions writes:

"The director rejects the accusation, and Aker Solutions fully supports the director."

"Aker Solutions also considers this accusation to be unfounded, and an abuse of the judiciary, as it comes shortly after a similar case was rejected," the company writes.



# Johan Castberg production vessel leaves Singapore



Norwegian energy company Equinor's Johan Castberg production vessel has left Sembcorp Marine yard in Singapore.

The 313 meters long and 55 meters wide ship will not sail by itself to Norway but be carried on the Boskalis' Boka Vanguard heavy-lift vessel on the 12,500 nautical mile-long journey to Norway.

The production vessel will be used at the Johan Castberg field development project which is located in the Barents sea, about 240 km north-west of Hammerfest, offshore Norway. The first oil from the project is expected this year, while production from the field is expected to be 200,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day.

# Norwegian Ambassador Morten Paulsen visited Sabah



Norway's Ambassador to Malaysia Morten Paulsen visited in January the Malaysian state Sabah on the northern portion of Borneo. During the visit, the Ambassador together with Mr. Arnfinn Unum from Scatec and the Norwegian Honorary Consul Anders Møller had a fruitful meeting with Invest Sabah particularly exploring possibilities for renewable energy, the Norwegian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur said. The Ambassador also had the pleasure to attend Sabah International Business Summit #SIBES2022. The theme of the summit was "Unlocking Sabah's potential, unleashing business opportunities".

# Frantzén's Kitchen Hong Kong is closing

The modern Nordic restaurant Frantzén's Kitchen Hong Kong is closing its door after five years in the city.

The award-winning restaurant is part of the international Frantzén's Group of restaurants which was founded by 3-Michelin Star Chef Björn Frantzén in 2008. Since then, the Frantzén Group has established a collection of award-winning restaurants and bars both nationally and internationally as well as initiated several projects to support quality assurance in the food industry throughout Sweden.

The group has a total of 6 stars in Guide Michelin, with premium experience Frantzén and Zén awarded



*Jim Löfdahl (right) will take over Frantzén's premises in Hong Kong and open Restaurant Embla in in February 2022.*

with three Michelin stars.

Frantzén's Kitchen Hong Kong was the Group's first venture outside Sweden. Since its opening in 2016, the restaurant has won several awards and ranked as one of the best restaurants in the city.

In an update, announcing the closing of Frantzén's Kitchen Hong Kong, the Group says:

"After 5 years of service in one of our favorite cities in the world, the time has come to say goodbye to Frantzén Kitchen in Hong Kong, for now. The premises will be taken over by Jim Löfdahl who has been a big part of our success, and begin a new chapter."



## Vietnamese farm workers victims of extensive exploitation in Finland

The greenhouse business is expanding rapidly in the city of Närpes in Western Finland, but a recent investigation indicates that it is partly at the expense of vulnerable Vietnamese workers.

Media HBL writes in a recent article that dozens of Vietnamese workers are believed to have fallen victim to mass exploitation in a case where both a local Vietnamese couple and two local greenhouse entrepreneurs are among the suspects.

Although the case is still under investigation, HBL writes that the case reportedly involves a systematic and long-term import of Vietnamese labor to, amongst other places, certain large greenhouses in Närpes. A local mediator in Vietnam is said to have taken between 10,000 and 20,000 euros per person to get the workers to Finland. Once there, the workers received help in obtaining the necessary permits and were in

principle put to work immediately after under improper conditions.

Among those who arrived were singles, couples, and families with children and the police relates the case to human trafficking and exploitation.

Only four victims have so far dared to talk to the police but Crime Commissioner Pekka Hätönen, who heads the human trafficking group at the Helsinki Police Department, says they suspect that it was dozens of people over the years.

The local Vietnamese couple who are the suspected key figures in the case were recently detained by the police. But because the Vietnamese community in Närpes is considered to be very closed it is difficult to get anyone to open up about the working conditions.

The now detained couple's business is established and reportedly widely known in the area and



rumors are also circulating that besides importing cheap labor, they are also involved in cannabis sales and prostitution.

The police are aware of these rumors, but have not been able to gather credible witnesses who have been able to verify the information, HBL writes.

The case is expected to go to court in two months.



Sweden's Security Police chief Charlotte von Essen.

## Sweden warns of attacks on navigation satellites



Sweden's Security Police chief Charlotte von Essen warns, that should there be an international conflict in space it may well begin with the disruption of socially important functions by attacking a space system, such as a navigation satellite system. And for those who want to communicate with their satellites and download data, Sweden has a strategic location.

According to Charlotte von Essen, China and Russia are the two nations which have been singled out as the biggest intelligence threats to Sweden, and those two nations are

also named as having high ambitions for their space activities.

China has included space as one of the areas where the country wants to be a leader by 2049 at the latest.

"For China and Russia, space is important from both a military and civilian perspective. The countries are also very interested in acquiring knowledge about Swedish research that contributes to the development of space. More people with activities that can be connected to space need to create increased awareness of this," the Security Police chief says.

The increased interest in space and the investments made from several states are important for Sweden's security and need to be seen from a total defense perspective. At the end of November 2021, the Space Act Inquiry proposed that the Security Police be given a partially new assignment. This includes consultation on decisions on permits in matters concerning Sweden's security.

"The Space Law Inquiry's proposal is well based on looking at Sweden's security from a broader perspective. On the other hand, the Security Police sees that there is a need to go further when it comes to the question of receiving signals from space. The reason is that satellites with dual uses can be used for intelligence gathering. It is good that the inquiry states that this issue needs to be investigated further," says Charlotte von Essen.

Sweden is currently establishing a combined cyber security office with expert staff from a handful of Swedish authorities ranging from the armed forces to civil protection agencies.

# Barefoot Banana launched two Finnish books in Thai

On 21 January, Barefoot Banana, the independent and child-focused publishing house, launched two books about the iconic Finnish sleepwalking goat Herra Hakkarainen's adventures in Thai.

Herra Hakkarainen, also known as Mr. Clutterbuck in English, was created by Finland's most celebrated children's author Mauri Kunnas and has been named Khun Poup-pup in Thailand.

Flying into Thailand on a Finnair flight, Khun Poup-pup was welcomed by Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Finland in Thailand, Mr. Miika Tomi, and a team from Barefoot Banana.



Source: Embassy of Finland.

# Hong Kong bans transit flights



Passengers from more than 150 countries including Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Finland have since 16 January been banned from entering transit at Hong Kong Airport.

"Transfer/transit services for passengers via Hong Kong airport will be suspended from 16 January until 15 February for any person who has stayed in Group A designated places for the past 21 days," the statement says.

A week earlier, the airport banned incoming flights from Australia, Canada, France, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Britain, and the United States, including transit.





# Danish gymnastics team took Thailand by storm



Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.

The National Danish Performance Team put their message out loud and clear during their visit to Thailand this January 2022.

“We move the world!”

*By Gregers Moller*

The National Danish Performance Team arrived in Thailand already on the 23rd of December, but went straight into hiding in a small hotel in Jomtien. Flying in from Uruguay, the 28 gymnasts and their five leaders had to quarantine for a week there - a week that ended with a New Year's Eve Party. A good one, they laugh!

Next morning, the 1st of January they managed to roll their huge red suitcases over to a waiting bus, before they went silent for the next many hours. That evening they checked into a hotel in Khon Kaen. That was Day 1 of the year 2022.

Next morning the first changes to their tour of Isaan waited. The workshop at Khon Kaen University with Physical Education students and highschool students from neighboring schools was canceled. Covid concerns. An alternative activity for the afternoon was hastily arranged: In a corner of the most well-known night market in Khon Kaen, the team was allowed to practice.





Danish Ambassador Jon Thorgaard was hosting an incredibly well assorted breakfast at his residence for the team. For once, the team was not dressed in their regular training outfit. Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.



The show at Asiatique was opened by Danish Ambassador Jon Thorgaard (left). The dream location was right in front of a copy of the sail ship that started Denmark's largest business cooperation with Thailand ever, the East Asiatic Company. Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.



Thai-Danish milk in Khon Kaen was fast to set up a booth giving free milk samples when they heard the Danish gymnastics team was in town. Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.

Among the people that watched the training was the young female owner of the market who asked if the team could make a real evening performance one of the coming days. But the schedule was tight, so it was not possible.

The next morning, a show in front of Central Plaza in Udonthani an hours drive further north had been arranged by the local Danish social media influencer Kjeld Holm. The show was a surprise to shoppers because

there had been very little time to promote the event. But it was the first of several public shows of Danish gymnastics - both rhythmic and jumping and a good warmup.

Surprisingly, a workshop at Udonthani Rajabhat the next day with 90 kids from nearby highschoools was not canceled. The workshop was watched, but not joined, by 20 teachers and staff from the local Department of Physical Education - all seriously worried if they had made a mistake in allowing this to go on. But it seemed that the



Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.

overwhelming enthusiasm of the kids, whose energy had been bottled up for the past 18 months, kept them from stopping the fun. Instead they called for a break and announced a ban on sharing any photos from the event on social media. Admirably pragmatic.

During the workshop, the young Danes visited in batches of 10 the Udonthani Immigration Police station together with Kjeld Holm where they got a 1-month long extension of their stay in Thailand before returning to the kids.

The next workshop was supposed to take place in Sakon Nakhon, the home town of Raindrop Foundation, but was canceled. Covid concerns. That left the schedule open for a few adjustments. A phone call later, the plan was changed to instead stage a show on the last day of their tour of Isaan at that Ton Tann Market in Khon Kaen, where they had been training four days before.

But the visit to Nongkhai to see the impressive Mekong River was still on the next morning. And so was the visit in the afternoon to the Raindrop Foundation Centre outside of Sakon Nakhon. The last hour before arriving at the Raindrop Centre, editor Gregers Moller from ScandAsia told the adventurous life story of the founder, the former Thai Senator Pensak Howitz who was also at one time the wife of Denmark's Ambassador to Thailand. At the center, Gregers Moller showed around and explained about the plans to establish a Danish Gymnastics College on the premises to introduce gymnastics and set up teams at the local schools around the province.



“  
*The visit to Nongkhai to see the impressive Mekong River was still on the next morning. And so was the visit in the afternoon to the Raindrop Foundation Centre outside of Sakon Nakhon.*  
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*After a smashing show at Ton Taan Market the team was finally out of their seemingly endless energy and settled in for a long night on the bus, rolling through the night to Bangkok*

”

That evening over dinner, the Director General of the Provincial Administration heard about the plans and spontaneously invited the team - after their next ten days in Bangkok - to come up and stay for free at a sports school that he had established where they could have a training camp and at the same time do workshops with the students. He would send a bus to pick them up in Bangkok and a truck for the equipment.

The next day started with sightseeing in Sakon Nakhon, a boat ride on the vast lake of the city and finally a visit to the school, where they had been invited to come and stay. Then they left for Khon Kaen.

After a smashing show at Ton Taan Market the team was finally out of their seemingly endless energy and settled in for a long night on the bus, rolling through the night to Bangkok, where they were expected for breakfast at Mermaid Hotel. Here they were after breakfast picked up two by two by members of the Danish and Thai-Danish community who had volunteered to be their hosts for the weekend.

The deal was that the host families should return them on Sunday morning to the Danish Embassy, where Ambassador Jon Thorgaard would be waiting with a great and very Danish breakfast. But last minute, the host families' participation had to be canceled. Covid concerns. For the same reason, the Gymnastics Association of Thailand had also canceled their event together with the young Danes later that same Sunday, one of the three planned major shows in Bangkok.



Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.

The cancellation was a disappointment but also an opportunity to do something more spectacular: That afternoon, the young Danes instead staged an impressive show in the last sunlight of the day on the quay of Asiatique, the old warehouses of the Danish East Asiatic Company. The Danish Ambassador Jon Thorgaard opened the show together with the Team Leader Bie Andersen. Moored by the quay was a replica of the Thoon Kramom, the ship that the EAC founder HN Andersen had sailed to England with a cargo of teak that became the start of the company.

It was a special moment for both the Thais and the Danes present when the Danish gymnasts opened the show by carrying in the flags of both nations. They then first played the Thai national anthem before singing together loud and clear the Danish "Der er et yndigt land". Wow!

The next day was the first workshop in Bangkok, held at Bangkok Pattana International School while staying in style at Mermaid Hotel. This was a great success but unfortunately a similar event two days later at another school was canceled. Covid concerns. The next couple of days were instead open for some training at the conveniently located Swedish fitness studio Fitness 24seven at Nana and a bit of sightseeing in Bangkok.



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**Bangkok Patana School**  
*The British International School in Thailand*  
*Established 1957*

**NIST** INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

**HOTEL MERMAID**  
BANGKOK



Bie Andersen, the Team Leader of the National Danish Performance Team with the Chiropractor of the team, Andreas Gjengedal.  
 Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.



The last two weeks of January, the Danes went into a training camp in Sakon Nakhon at a dedicated sports school established by the director of the provincial administration.  
 Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.



Traveling the world with a message to encourage people to move more makes good friends for life.  
 Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.



In Udonthani, a show was last minute put up in front of Central Plaza.  
 Photo: Bettina Illemann Larsen, DGI Verdensholdet.

Day by day, the big Gala Show of the Thailand Tour, scheduled for Thursday 13th of January, came closer and closer. Everybody seemed to expect a cancellation because of Covid concerns. But it didn't happen. Last minute, a feverish attempt to market the event brought in a few Thai gymnastics enthusiasts, but eventually a small crowd of less than seventy people watched the fabulous show in the stadium with seats for thousands. The opening was presided over as planned by the Director General of the Physical Education Department Dr. Niwas Lim-suknirunt and the Danish Ambassador Mr. Jon Thorgaard.

Next big event was a different story. The department store ICONSIAM were proudly hosting the Danish performance team on Saturday afternoon shortly before their regular water fountain show in front of the Chao Phya river. VIP seats had been prepared for all the supporters of the team during their visit to Thailand and most of the host families had picked this day to see the performance of their young guests. They were joined by hundreds of Thais who had seen the show advertised on social media by ICONSIAM.

That was the culmination of well over two weeks of

a hectic display of the best from the Danish cultural tradition of sports as a broad, social activity. And still there was more. NIST International School in Bangkok had on Sunday invited the team to conduct a workshop with their students and top it off with a mini-show with extracts from the big shows the days before. Another great day!

The next two weeks, the Danes and their leaders accepted the invitation to hold their training camp at the Rom Sai Witthaya school in Sakon Nakhon. Here, they were accommodated six by six in dormitory rooms with brand new mattresses and duvets laid out on the floor. And on the second day they held the first workshop with the students and staged a mini-show for the Director General who had come out to see for himself that all was going well.

What will happen next, after 30 January, is at the time of writing not clear. Covid concerns keeps playing around with any attempt to make a plan. Team Leader Bie Andersen puts it like this:

"People keep asking me if we have a Plan B. But the truth is, we ran out of characters in the alphabet a long time ago!"

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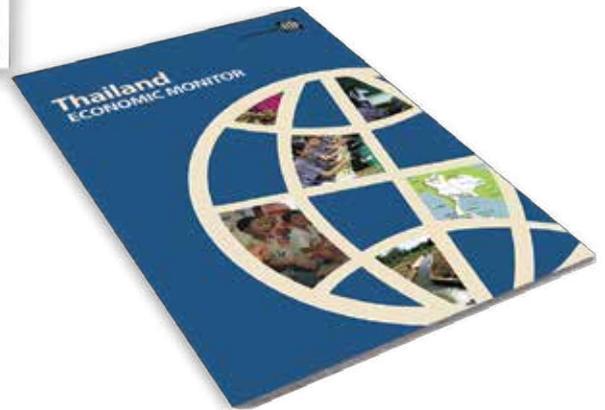
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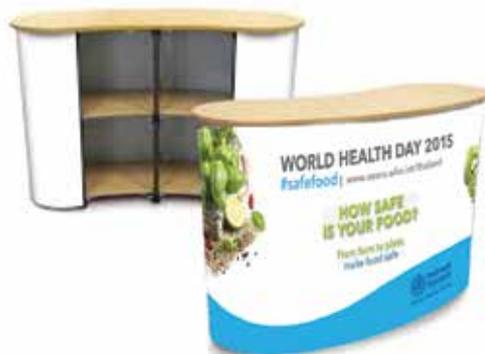
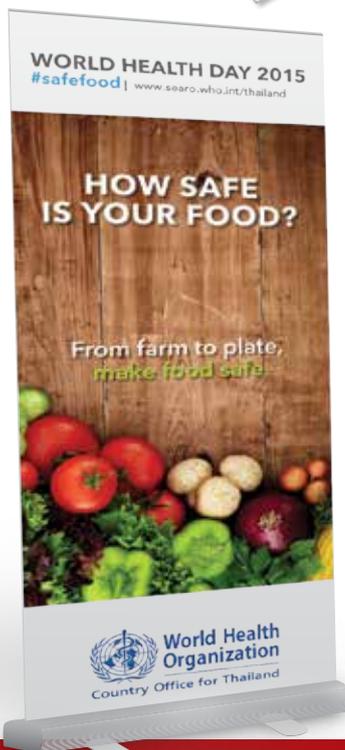
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*Gustav and his friend Art visiting a temple in Chiang Mai – Photo: Lasse Sandholdt*

# Covid benefit: Travel around while studying

During the Covid pandemic, many exchange students at Thai universities have been travelling the country while attending school. One of the students who has set out on such a journey is Gustav Marøy from Oslo in Norway.



Gustav in the bus from Chiang Rai to Chiang Mai  
Photo: Lasse Sandholdt

By Lasse Sandholdt

**G**ustav Marøy from Oslo in Norway has used the Covid pandemic to swap the university classrooms, where he was supposed to study during his stay in Thailand, with random hostel rooms and outback cafés all around Thailand from where he logs in to his classroom.

I went to visit him to see how life is as a backpacking university student.

## A unique opportunity

Gustav is normally a student at the School of Management at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Last year he chose to apply for an exchange semester in Bangkok. Learning about economic issues in a Thai context seemed interesting to Gustav, but as he explains, it was also the thought of exploring Thailand who appealed to him. Together with his two Dutch friends Stefan and Art from his home university, he has been travelling all around Thailand all the while studying Thonburi University in Bangkok.

Gustav however didn't know that his classes were going to be online at the time when he applied.

"We applied about a year ago and at that time Thailand was doing pretty well Covid wise. So, I thought it was just going to be normal school where we had our hub in Bangkok," Gustav says.

While he was back in Oslo to get his final vaccination jabs in order to enter the Phuket Sandbox program, he started writing with his two fellow students who were also going to study in Thailand. Realizing that their entire semester was probably going to be performed through a computer screen they started discussing their possibilities and the idea of combining studies with a tour of Thailand began to take shape.

Gustav met up with his fellow students in Phuket where they also met a similar group of German exchange students. Together they travelled to Krabi after which they split with the German group and drove to Ko Lanta. Since then, their trip has taken them to Khao Sok National Park, Huahin and from there to Bangkok, where the group stayed for two weeks. In Bangkok they went for a brief visit to see the actual campus of their university but that is the only time that they actually touched base with their place of study.

## On the move

I caught up with the group in Chiang Rai in the northern part of Thailand where they had been living since, they left Bangkok. The three-man group has over time grown better at planning how to combine travelling with their school in a way that it all checks out.

"We usually have a little talk a couple of days before we go to a new place about what we want to do, when can do it and then we have to sort it out with our availability in the days to come," Gustav says.

The trick, he explains, is to figure out how to make most time for exploring without missing the vital parts of their studies.

"We don't have many classes in common. So, our timetables are very different, but we are getting good at figuring out what classes we have to attend and what we can catch up on later," Gustav explains.

In this respect a big advantage is that a lot of the classes gets recorded so that it is possible for the group to watch it at later time when they are not out and about.





Gustav doing his class from the hotel café – Photo: Lasse Sandholdt

Even though some classes have to be attended live, it doesn't necessarily have to put a stop for a day trip. The Thai internet accessibility has become so good that most time you would be able to swing in the scooter at any country road café and connect with your class from there.

"We can do the classes almost everywhere. There is Wi-Fi so many places and the cellular data in all of Thailand is very good so the conditions for travelling like this is actually really nice,"

A day after I arrived the group once more moved. This time with bus to Chiang Mai. The trip started at 9 AM so that they could arrive in Chiang Mai before their first class started. The bus is one of the few places where having a class is a little too complicated.

## Prioritizing

However smooth combining travel and studying has seemed to Gustav and buddies he also admit that the backpacking lifestyle they lead around the school has an effect on how he priorities his studies.

"I priorities the courses I find interesting and the other once I make sure that I just do well enough to get through. All three of us just have to pass our courses and then we've completed the exchange semester and our grades beyond doesn't really count," Gustav explains.

At some times school must come first for the group and so it does. On the second day in Chang Mai Gustav had to stay behind to attend his studies while his two other mates went to "Wat Phra That Doi Suthep" temple in the mountains of Chiang Mai.

The way of combining studies with travelling seems to be a tendency in Thailand at the moment. In Chiang Mai Gustav and his friends was to reunite with the group of German exchange students that they travelled with earlier. Likewise, the group have on multiple occasions crossed paths with other exchange students group who were on their way for other destinations.

## Future studies

For Gustav the semester has been a very positive experience. He would like to have the online study form as an option in the future, but he also recognizes that there are some important aspects who gets lost in classes when all studying in conducted online.

"It would have been interesting to meet more of our classmates and professors in person," Gustav says and adds.

"Discussions in our group work would be more dynamic and productive than now when we do it online. Many students have their camera turn off because they are shy, and they only turn it on briefly if they are directly asked a question," Gustav says.

The remainder of Gustav's semester will most likely be online as well as the exams who will takes place through a screen.

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*Kjell Bergqvist in one of his roles as Evert Bäckström in a Swedish TV-series  
Photo: Facebook*

# Swedish actor Kjell Bergqvist's second home is in Thailand

Kjell Bergqvist and his family have for some years now been spending the cold winter months in the little Huay Yang fishermen's village in Thailand. The decision to live in Thailand meant the end of Kjell's theatre career but it also meant the start of something new.

*By Lasse Sandholdt*

A couple of years ago the famous Swedish actor Kjell Bergqvist decided to replace the freezing winter of Sweden with the heat of Thailand. The actor, who is known for movies like "Den bedste sommer" (The best summer) and "Bryllupsfotografen" (The wedding photographer), is now residing in Thailand during the winter months. It is however not just leisure that is on the agenda for the now 68-year-old actor. He is in fact involved in a couple of Thai charity projects that he is very fond of.

"The most important thing for me has always been to work with nice people in exciting projects... and get paid well, so that I can be free and travel later on," Kjell Bergqvist says laughing in his interview with Nöje.

Today Kjell and his family are spending the cold winter months in the little Huay Yang fishermen's village in Thailand. The decision to live in Thailand meant the end of Kjell's theatre career but it also meant the start of something new.

"I feel very privileged to have it like this. Few people are so privileged that they can live like this. I am super thankful that I have this opportunity," Kjell says.

Kjell is not just spending all his time in a deckchair on the Thai beaches. Much of his time is spent working on different charity projects, his friend Lars "Babsan" Wilhelmsson told the Swedish media Expressen in 2019.

"Last time I was down there we gave 20 hearing aids for a school for deaf students. They cost about SEK 10-15 thousand a piece. He (Kjell) is just handing them out and he is also giving out scholarships. He is incredible," Lars Wilhelmsson said.

In a recent interview with the magazine "Senioren", Kjell Bergqvist explains his view on life in regards to his decision to end his theatre career and instead start doing volunteer work.

"I like to be free. I have no dream roles that I would like to play. I am just happy that I have been able to act such a varied set of roles during my career," the actor says, and goes on to talk about a swimming school for Thai children. A charity project that he has been operating for a couple of years.

"It feels very heartwarming to do because every day seven Thai children drown. We have a pool on our property where a swimming teacher is offering swimming lessons. We have also bought a moveable pool so we also can offer the classes in other places. We serve ice cream to attract those kids who are not sure if they want to do it or if they dare," Kjell explains.

“

*I feel very privileged to have it like this. Few people are so privileged that they can live like this. I am super thankful that I have this opportunity*

”



# Stockholm best traffic city world-wide



Stockholm takes gold place in the Oliver Wyman Forum's ranking of the world's big cities based on mobility. The forum highlights in particular Stockholm's public transport and infrastructure.

“**S**tockholm has jumped from bronze to gold in one year when it comes to mobility,” notes Kristoffer Tamsons (M), Regional Minister for Transport of Region Stockholm and Chairman of SL - Storstockholms Lokaltrafik. Kristoffer Tamsons is particularly pleased that it is public transport that lifting Stockholm to number one on this index.

“Our ranking is proof of our success when combining hard work to safeguard public transport during tough times with a forward-looking spirit in automation, digitization and electrification,” he adds.

The Oliver Wyman Forum produces annually a mobility index of how 60 large cities around the world are ranked as traffic cities. The index is produced in collaboration with the University of California, Berkeley. Stockholm was this time ranked number one based on a number of different factors, such as how well developed the cities' public and private mobility networks are and how they have adopted new technology.

This year's index contains two new developments. The Index has introduced a Sustainable Mobility sub-index, which evaluates how well cities are promoting green methods of transportation and ensuring their infrastructure is resilient to the risks of climate change. This ranking draws on existing metrics and one new indicator on cycling infrastructure. We also are expanding our coverage to include 10 additional cities: Atlanta, Cape Town, Jeddah, Munich, Nairobi, Oslo, Quito, Santiago, Vancouver, and Washington, D.C.

“Scandinavian cities are the clear pacesetters in sustainable mobility,” the Index writes in a summary of its findings.

“Oslo, often called the electric vehicle (EV) capital of the world, leads the sub-index while Helsinki and Stockholm rank in the top five. The Swedish capital has seen during the last year an increase in the number of people choosing to cycle and has continued to invest in EV charging stations and micromobility infrastructure.”



*Scandinavian cities are the clear pacesetters in sustainable mobility. Oslo, often called the electric vehicle (EV) capital of the world, leads the sub-index while Helsinki and Stockholm rank in the top five.*



“Other European cities and several Asian metropolises also score well on sustainable mobility. They boast strong multimodal networks and robust transit systems that contribute to lower car ownership rates; take potential natural disasters into account when developing new infrastructure, and invest actively in EV charging.”

### Bicycling the Covid-winner

One feature shared by many of the top performers is a trend to extend and make permanent their cycling infrastructure, much of it erected hastily during the pandemic. Berlin has expanded access to bike sharing while Boston, London, and Milan increased the number of cycling lanes. Authorities in Paris recently announced they would add 180 kilometers of cycling lanes and quadruple the number of bike parking spots, to 240,000, by 2026.

The cities that struggled most this year saw declining public transit ridership amid a shift to private vehicles or strict lockdowns during COVID-19, without any concomitant uptake in active mobility or electrification.

For several, this was compounded by the decline of local businesses, especially those in travel and tourism. The consequent decline in revenue at many mobility companies has made it harder for them to invest in innovation.

### Asia’s top cities

Singapore ranked overall 3rd in the Index while most other cities were below the world average. Here is the ranking among the Asian cities included in the Index:

- Singapore ..... 3
- Hong Kong ..... 8
- Tokyo ..... 16
- Beijing ..... 27
- Kuala Lumpur ..... 38
- Bangkok ..... 46
- Jakarta ..... 47
- Delhi ..... 48
- Manila ..... 56

Source: Oliver Wyman





*Anna Østerlund and Amalie Hansen celebrated New Year on the beach in Koh Phangan – Photo: Lasse Sandholdt*

# A world apart – New Year’s Eve 2021 celebrations in Thailand and Denmark

ScandAsia talked with Danes who celebrated New Year in Thailand and Danes who celebrated the event in Denmark and the difference in the way they celebrated.



*We have a lot of friends in Denmark who are celebrating New Year's at home five or six people together. They are telling us that the Covid situation is very bad in Denmark right now and that we shouldn't go home at this time*



By Lasse Sandholdt

**W**e have entered a new year, 2022. A year that many hope will mean the end of the Covid crisis. The disease is however still has a lot of influence on how we live our daily lives. Recent New Year's celebrations around the world showed that Covid was still a factor that countries had to deal with. But it also showed a big difference in what role Covid played at different New Year's celebrations worldwide.

### New Year's in Thailand

In Thailand, the government has slowly retracted some of the extensive restrictions that they implemented after the major outbreak hit the country following the Songkran celebration in April 2021.

For the 2021 New Year's celebration, Thailand had chosen a somewhat liberal approach by allowing major countdown events to take place under strict compliance with the Public Health Ministry's guidelines. Thailand events went as far as extending the hours normally allowed for alcohol sales and on New Year's Eve, vendors were allowed to serve drinks until 1 am on 1 January.

One of the places in Thailand that are revered for its New Year's party is the island of Koh Phangan. Famously known for its Fullmoon parties, which take place monthly on the beach of Haad Rin, the island's New Year Countdown Party is known for its bright neon colors, DJ concerts, and spectacular fireworks. It is also known for the big turn up of visitors from all around the world.



Niels Flensburg celebrated New Year with a small group of eight friends in Aarhus. Photo: Lasse Sandholdt



Thailand allowed big countdown events like this on Koh Phangan – Photo: Lasse Sandholdt

Among the guests who attended this New Year Countdown party in Koh Phangan were Anna Østerlund (22) and Amalie Hansen (23) both from Aarhus in Denmark.

The two friends arrived in Thailand on 7 October and it had been their plan from the beginning to spend New Year's Eve on the Fullmoon party beach in Koh Phangan.

"We knew we were going to go here for Christmas and New Year. Koh Phangan is just the place to be at this time," Anna says.

The pair feels very fortunate that Thailand has allowed for a relatively unrestricted party. They know that New Year's celebrations elsewhere have been more limited due to Covid.

"We have a lot of friends in Denmark who are celebrating New Year's at home five or six people together. They are telling us that the Covid situation is very bad in Denmark right now and that we shouldn't go home at this time," Amalie says and adds:

"So, we know that we are lucky to get to experience this".

Although the girls attended the party, they were not completely untouched by Covid worries.

"We are definitely worried about the risk of getting Covid. We know that they don't test as much down here and that the numbers are therefore probably worse than the statistics show. But we are both fully vaccinated and are at a point now where we think, well if we get Covid, shit happens" Anna says.

## New Year's in Denmark

The situation is very different in Denmark where the country chose to close down the nightlife on 19 December. This means that restaurants and cafés had to close between 11 pm and 5 am and in addition, alcohol sale has been banned between 10 pm and 5 am. These restrictions came with strong encouragements from government officials and health experts to limit private New Year's gatherings to an absolute minimum.

In Aarhus, Niels Flensburg was celebrating New Year with a small group of eight friends. Niels is actually positive about this type of party. Hear his thoughts on New Year 2021 in this video.

In general, however, Niels is somewhat frustrated with the restrictions.

"Of course, I am tired of the restrictions. I do comedy and the restrictions make it very hard for me to do my job. But there is just nothing to do about it. We just have to wait," Niels says.

Asked whether he believes that the Danish people will comply with the government guidelines for New Year's Eve celebrations, he is skeptical.

"The bars are of course closed, so you can't go there. But the people who are invited to big private parties will probably go there. I don't think you can do much about that," Niels says.

# Finnish Jani Niskanen is cave diving in China

Perhaps China is not the first country that comes to mind when you think about diving in Asia but the country's underwater caves are amongst the most beautiful in the world.

Jani Niskanen, until recently the Consulate Service Officer at the Finnish Embassy in Beijing, is an avid diving enthusiast and he recently went to explore China's underwater world. In a blog post on Finland's Foreign Ministry's blog under obsessions from China, he writes about his experience in the underwater world of South China Karst, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007.

According to Jani Niskanen there is much to discover in China

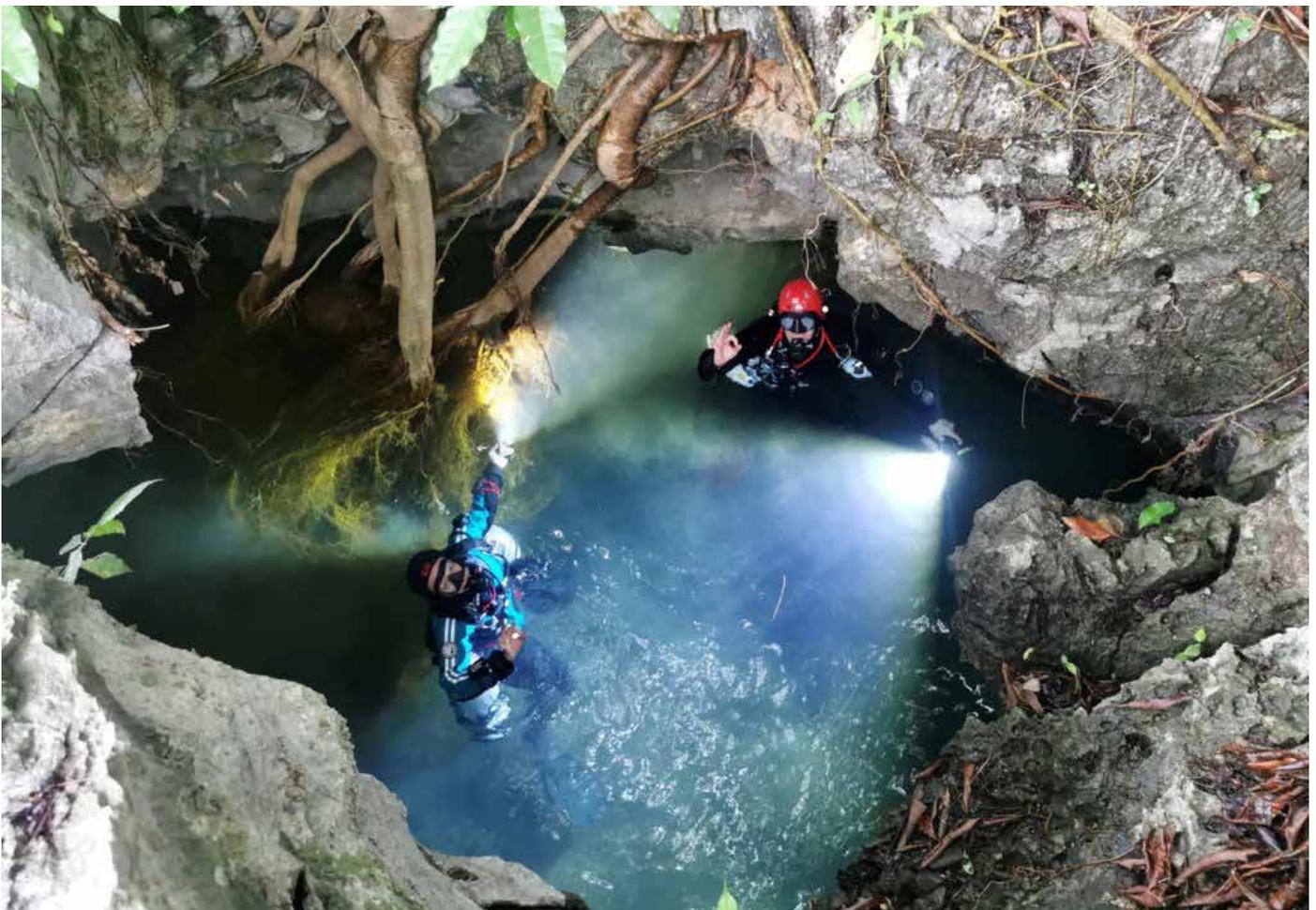
and only when you travel within the country, you realize just how big it is.

Scuba diving is a growing hobby in China. Before covid-19 restrictions, most Chinese divers traveled to tropical destinations in Southeast Asia to dive, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand. Now that restrictions are in place, divers have begun to focus on diving locally and diving clubs and movements have begun to organize trips within the country. China is a huge country with a lot to dive into. In addition to the caves of Dushan in China, you can dive on the coral reefs in the tropical warm waters of Hainan Island or admire the underwater Great Wall of China just off the outskirts of Beijing.

What attracts divers to Duan, which is located in rural southern China close to the Vietnamese border, are the rivers and caves below the magnificent landscape, Jani Niskanen writes. The underwater cave formations in the area are among the most beautiful in the world and according to one estimate, there are over 10,000 miles of underground rivers in the province.

Read more about diving in China and Jani Niskanen's experience diving in some of the country's underground rivers here:

<https://blogit.ulkomministerio.fi/kiina/vedenalainen-kiina/>



Cave divers ready to explore. It is Jani Niskanen with the red helmet. Photo: Brenda



*Valencia is more than just a city famous for its Paella, it is also the healthiest city in the world when measured by the factors that money.co.uk selected.*

# The most healthy city in the world to live in?

Most cities on the index of most healthy city to live in are in Europe. The highest placed city in Asia is Singapore which comes in on a 25th place. The next city is ChiangMai on 26 the place. There are no more all the way down to the bottom of the list of 40 cities world wide. Sorry Asia!



## The 20 healthiest cities to live in the world

#1 Valencia SPAIN	#2 Madrid SPAIN	#3 Lisbon PORTUGAL	#4 Vienna AUSTRIA
#5 Canberra AUSTRALIA	#6 Tel Aviv ISRAEL	#7 Tokyo JAPAN	#8 The Hague NETHERLANDS
#9 Ljubljana SLOVENIA	#10 Zurich SWITZERLAND	#11 Adelaide AUSTRALIA	#12 Haifa ISRAEL
#13 Porto PORTUGAL	#14 Reykjavik ICELAND	#15 Timisoara ROMANIA	#16 Cluj-Napoca ROMANIA
#17 Helsinki FINLAND	#18 Bursa TURKEY	#19 Brisbane AUSTRALIA	#20 Copenhagen DENMARK

\*Based on obesity rates, pollution rates, food prices, life expectancy and sunlight hours.  
MONEY.CO.UK/HEALTHIEST-PLACES-TO-LIVE



The Japanese cuisine serves smaller portion sizes and a more protein dense diet. The people of Japan also show a greater respect towards their food, allowing time to prepare, cook and eat, contrasting from the westernised fast food culture.

Is there a healthier place to live than where you are currently living? If you knew where it is, would you move there?

Probably not. When it comes down to it, a lot of other factors will of course decide that. But now that you are playing with the idea - which one would be the healthiest city to live in if you could choose just based on that?

The British website <https://www.money.co.uk/> decided to find this city. First they decided what seven factors they would look at. The study then analyzed global cities on these seven fundamental factors which contribute to a healthy lifestyle: Obesity levels, Life expectancy, Cost of healthy food, Pollution, Safety index, Sunlight hours.

So, here is the result of the analysis, written by the author Salman Haqqi, the Personal Finance Editor of [www.money.co.uk](http://www.money.co.uk).

## Spain is the healthiest country in the world

Spain is officially the healthiest country in the world, ranking number one on our index. In Spain, the people follow a Mediterranean diet consisting of healthy sources of omega-3, fats and protein, which studies have associated with a decreased risk of dementia, heart disease and cancer - placing the country in the top five for greater life expectancy.

A Mediterranean lifestyle follows these key principles: sociable meal times, a balanced diet and an emphasis on walking as a mode of transport, which helps to lower deaths caused by pollution. Sociable meal times have been found to decrease the risk of obesity and also promote a healthy mental wellbeing. Having a dedicated

time to connect with family and friends acts as a mood booster, produces endorphins and increases the overall wellbeing of the population.

The people of Spain live by the saying, “Trabajamos para vivir, no vivimos para trabajar” meaning “we work to live, not live to work”. Their cost of living is moderate. A two bedroom property costs on average £142,000.00, which is more affordable than most European countries.

## Japan is home to the world’s oldest living person

Maybe we could all take a page out of Japan’s book and eat a little less and walk a little more, as they have one of the highest life expectancies in the world! As well as their smaller portion sizes and protein dense diet, the people of Japan also show a greater respect towards their food, allowing time to prepare, cook and eat, contrasting from the westernised fast food culture. Cost of living is high in Japan, with the average two bedroom property costing £391,000, however the quality is usually equally matched with the price.

Japan is also well-known for its fast public transport, which produces low carbon emissions and thus Japan ranks as the 8th lowest country for deaths caused by pollution. With their preferred method of transport being walking, their daily activity is enough to keep them fit without the use of a gym, and awards them with one of the lowest rates of obesity in the world.

Perhaps if we all adopted these healthy habits, we too could live to be 117 years old like Japanese citizen Kane Tanaka (the oldest living person in the world).





*Edinburgh's healthcare system also ranks highly, coming in at 8th place in the world!*

## In the UK 64% of adults are overweight

Britain leads one of the more unhealthy lifestyles in comparison to other developed countries, placing the UK 20th in the healthiest countries index. Worryingly, the majority of adults in the UK are overweight; 67% of men and 60% of women. Britons are more likely to be obese due to a high food and alcohol consumption, as well as a lack of physical activity due to our culture. On average, an adult in Britain consumes 9.7 litres of pure alcohol a year, which is almost a litre over the OECD average.

The UK also places fourth lowest on yearly sunlight exposure out of 133 countries. According to the national sleep foundation, extended periods of time in artificial lighting can cause serious sleep deprivation which could impact our health dramatically. Vitamin D from the sun helps to regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body, and is vital in keeping our bones, teeth and muscles healthy and strong.

The cost of living in the UK is also seen as expensive, as an average two bedroom flat costs £254,000. Being one of the harder countries for people to become financially secure only encourages crime and homelessness which overall decreases the country's value of health.

## The US is one of the least healthy countries

The US has one of the highest obesity ratings, placing it 153 out of 166 countries on our obesity index. In such a fast-paced world, western culture has adapted to eating highly processed foods full of artificial chemicals, fats and sugars. These kinds of diets increase your risk to many health problems, such as type 2 diabetes, and also lower your average life expectancy.

The most prevalent difference between countries like Spain and Japan to the US is the relationship towards food. Many of the healthiest countries on our index have a greater respect toward food, and treat meal times as a chance to create a social and loving environment. This contrasts greatly to the fast paced nature of the US who buy food for a quick fix - like ready meals and fast food.

Unlike Spain, whose main focus is on their social life, the US prioritises their work life which can lead to unhealthy eating habits and a lack of physical activity. Evidently, it is these cultural differences that hugely determine whether a country leads a healthy or unhealthy lifestyle. What they do have in common however is affordable living, with the average two bedroom property in the US costing an affordable £119,000.

## Valencia is the healthiest city in the world

Valencia is more than just a city famous for its Paella, it is also the healthiest city in the world! This beautiful Spanish city places joint third on our index for greatest life expectancy due to an array of lifestyle factors.

Firstly, this city has the ideal climate. It's not too hot and not too dry, so there is plenty of greenery to provide clean air. Valencia also has lots of sunshine, so you can easily absorb that all-important vitamin D needed to keep your muscles strong. The sea breeze helps to blow away excess pollution in the air and their diet is also well balanced. Valencian paella is a great representation of their diet. Their famous dish has excellent nutritional value from fresh produce, is low in fats and high in omega-3 and protein from the fish.

Like many of the healthiest countries, this city also promotes an easy-going and relaxed lifestyle. It is re-



*The city of Helsinki in Finland is the 17th healthiest city in the world, and is miles ahead of the rest when it comes to protecting the environment and reducing air pollution.*

nowned for its musical and cultural heritage and encourages social interaction. Rather than being defined by their jobs like many other cities, the people of Valencia define themselves by making personal and meaningful connections with their friends and family, ultimately creating one of the healthiest communities in the world.

## Edinburgh is the highest ranking UK city but misses out on a top 40 place

Edinburgh is the only city in the UK that has managed to come close to a place on our index. This beautiful city had good scores across all lifestyle factors, ranking it 41st - just one position below the top 40.

As well as being the greenest city in the UK, Edinburgh's quality of air is also one of the cleanest in the world, ranking them in 37th place. Edinburgh prides itself on having more trees per head of the population than any other UK city, and has pledged to be a 'million tree city' by 2030, which will continue to reduce its pollution levels.

Edinburgh's healthcare system also ranks highly, coming in at 8th place in the world! The people of Edinburgh are incredibly lucky that they are all eligible for comprehensive free healthcare from the NHS, which is regarded as one of the best healthcare services in the world.

## Helsinki has the cleanest air in the world

The city of Helsinki in Finland is the 17th healthiest city in the world, and is miles ahead of the rest when it comes to protecting the environment and reducing air pollution. The city's strong environmental regulations limit the amount of harmful practises to the environment, and

create some of the cleanest air in the world. By 2035, Helsinki has pledged to be carbon neutral as well as legislating the end of using fossil fuels by 2029 - a massive step toward creating an even greener carbon footprint!

To achieve this goal, the city invests in renewable energy sources and designates forest reserves as a way to provide natural wood-based fuels, like hydropower and wind power. They also promote the use of electric vehicles and have the second best transport system in Europe, which all contributes to cutting down their carbon footprint and reducing the amount of pollution in the air.

Helsinki is also considered one of the safest cities to live in with a crime rate being nearly non-existent. One report even claims that if you were to lose a wallet in the city, 11 out of 12 times it'll be returned to you.

## Zurich, Switzerland is one of the safest cities in the world

The crime rate across the city is extremely low, placing Zurich in the top five lowest crime rate cities in the world! Due to good education and being a good welfare state, many people living here are able to live sustainably without the need for crime.

In fact, the city's overall lifestyle is considered to be one of the healthiest in the world, ranking 10th overall on our index. The city has the second highest life expectancy in the world after Japanese cities, which could be as a result of their commitment to reduce pollution from transport and promoting healthier alternatives. This city also places in the top 10 for cleanest air quality, reinforcing just how healthy Zurich is at all levels.



*A basic chicken soup - but look at the styling.*



*Frog legs in Kung Pao.*



*Sister Drunken Chicken Mee*

# 7 must try dishes in Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian food is a delicious mix of Chinese, Indian and Malay cuisines and the capital, Kuala Lumpur, is awash with hawker centres and street food vendors

Malaysia often gets overlooked in favour of its Southeast Asian neighbours like Thailand and Indonesia, but it's a vastly underrated destination. And if you enjoy good food, you definitely need to add it to your travel bucket list because Malaysia is a food lover's paradise. Malaysian food is a delicious mix of Chinese, Indian and Malay cuisines and the capital, Kuala Lumpur, is awash with hawker centres and street food vendors selling such a diverse range of dishes, you'll never get bored with eating out. Here are some of the highlights:

## Char Kuey Teow

This is one of the most popular noodle dishes in Malaysia, inspired by Chinese cuisine brought over by the country's immigrants. It's made with flat rice noodles, prawns, blood cockles, Chinese sausage, Chinese chives, pork lard, bean sprouts and sometimes egg, all stir-fried over a very high heat. And although it's most closely associated with Pen-

ang, in the north of Malaysia, it's still widespread in the hawker centres of Kuala Lumpur. Char Kuey Teow may not be the healthiest of dishes, due to its high fat content, but we all know fatty food tastes delicious and this is no exception! Southeast Asian comfort food at its best.

## Hokkien Char Mee

Also known as KL Hokkien mee, this is another noodle dish with Chinese origins, made with thick round noodles. There are three regional Malaysian varieties, including the KL/Peninsula/Klang Valley version. While all three are based around noodles and prawns, Hokkien char mee is made with dark soy sauce, specifically thick caramel soy, which gives it a much darker appearance. Like Char Kuey Teow, Hokkien Char Mee also includes pork fat – both as a substitute for oil and there in a crispy fried form to garnish the dish. As if all that pork wasn't enough, it sometimes also comes with sliced pork as well as the prawns.

## Frog Porridge

Ok bear with me here. I appreciate that for Western palates, the idea of frog porridge sounds revolting. That's because we associate porridge with the sweet, creamy stuff eaten for breakfast. But in Malaysia it's entirely different. Porridge here is a type of congee - a savoury rice gruel made with ginger, spring onions and sesame oil. The frogs in question are either cooked within the porridge or served on the side in a spicy Kung Pao sauce, which you then mix into the porridge (don't worry, it's just the legs, not whole frogs). Apparently it's a favourite dish to eat in Kuala Lumpur if you're feeling under the weather but it makes you feel healthier even if you don't have the sniffles.

## Drunken Chicken Soup

This is another dish that feels like it could be extremely good for you if you're a little run down. Drunken chicken also originates from China and is cooked with rice wine, ginger, spring onions and sesame oil. There are several variations on the theme but one of the most comforting is the noodle soup that's sold by Sister Drunken Chicken Mee in Kuala Lumpur. It's a little tricky to find if you're not in the know as it's actually located at the back of another restaurant called Beh Brothers. Here you can literally smell the wine wafting from the enormous bowls of noodle soup and this version also includes scrambled eggs for added deliciousness.

## Dumplings

This might sound fairly obvious but when it comes to dumplings, you really are spoiled for choice in Kuala Lumpur. Pretty much every hawker centre will have at least one dumpling stall, usually more. It's hard to resist these

brightly coloured morsels and the stalls are essentially a dumpling pick and mix, where you choose your selection directly from the steamer. Half of the fun comes from not knowing what you're going to end up with because there are rarely any signs to help you identify what's what. You might even end up with a surprise sweet one!

## Roast Chicken Wings

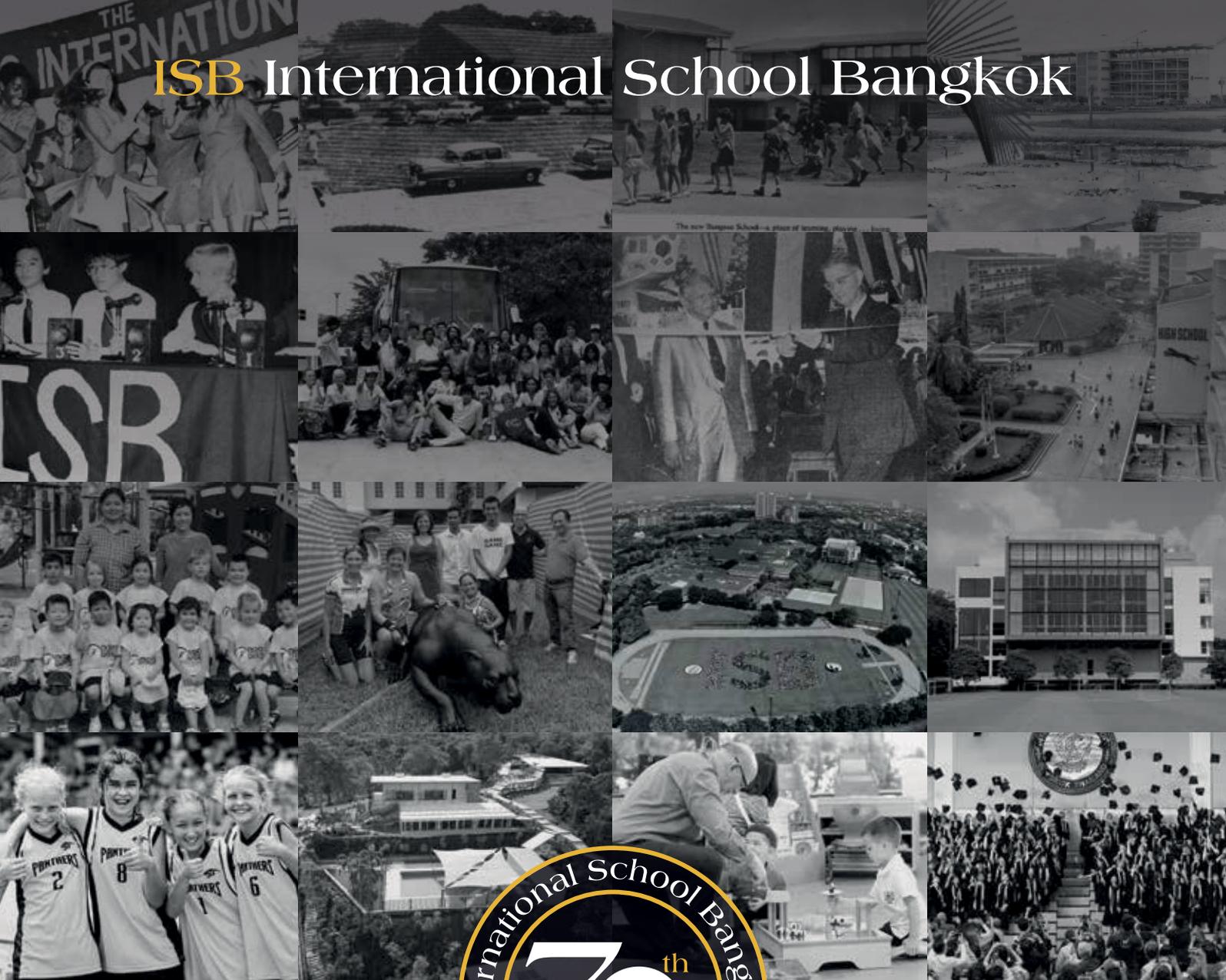
Admittedly, roast chicken wings might not be the first things that spring to mind when you think of Malaysian food but the ones sold by Wong Ah Wah are not to be missed. Wong Ah Wah is a sprawling restaurant, located on the street food hub of Jalan Alor, famous for its wings. Once you've tasted them, it's easy to see why. They're freshly roasted and piping hot so it's torture to not be able to dig into them straight away. It's almost worth risking burned fingers just to be able to tear through the perfectly crispy skin as soon as the wings arrive at the table. You'll end up covered in chicken grease but it's a small price to pay. This is a great example of just how delicious simple food can be when it's done really well.

## Ngau Lay So

Make sure you leave some room for dessert. Although dishes like cendol and salted egg yolk buns are justifiably popular across Malaysia, if you're in Kuala Lumpur then you should try one of these sweet Chinese doughnuts. Find them at a stall opposite KFC on Changkat Bukit Bintang that's run by an elderly couple who have been turning out Ngau Lay So, Yao Char Kuey and other varieties of savoury and sweet fried dough since 1984. There's no name but you'll easily spot the stall by the crowd of people queuing. Just make sure you arrive relatively early as once they're gone, they're gone!



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