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Thailand 1998

Everywhere we went huge banners welcomed “THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY!” We were in Thailand at the invitation of Kampon Tansacha, the very talented director of Nong Nooch Tropical Garden. A caravan of six red buses led by a police escort carried IPS members during our September Biennial. The buses were part of being treated “ROYALLY”—a comment heard from many people.

Our busy week began on Thursday, September 10, with the Board of Directors’ Meeting, followed on Friday by registration of 190 attendees from 39 countries and a welcome dinner at the Rama Gardens Hotel near the Bangkok airport. It was the largest Biennial ever.

On Saturday at 8 am, the hour we left on every morning, we began our first tour which consisted of three parts—the huge Chatuchak Markets where we viewed fresh vegetables and an unusual array of tropical fruits and garden plants and two private gardens of mature palms. The home of retired Police Colonel, Charlie Peganen, held a splendid collection of palms and cycads. Among them were beautiful specimens of *Nypa*, *Copernicia macroglossa*, *C. baileyana*, *Satakenia liukiensis*, *Livistona muelleri*, *L. rotundifolia*, *Cyrtostachys*, *Ptychosperma*, *Licuala*, and *Rhapis subtilis*.

Our third visit that day was to the Prasart Museum and garden, a private collection of special Thai antiques housed in a variety of small replicas of Thai houses and temples and in a setting of beautiful palms including *Corypha*, *Borassodendron*, *Kerriodoxa*, *Johannesteijsmannia*, *Ptychosperma schefferi*, *Siphokentia beguinii*, *Heterospatha*, several unusual forms of *Dypsis lutescens*, and many more.

On Sunday we traveled to Khao Yai National Park, the first national park in Thailand, designated in 1962, and consisting of 2000 sq. kilometres. The Director General of the Division of Forestry, Dr. Plodprasop Suratsuvadee, flew to the park by helicopter to greet us. Thanks to Kampon Tansacha, the director is also a palm lover. After a box lunch, the party was divided into two groups for treks into the forest. Shortly after we entered the forest, a monsoon downpour overtook us but our competent hosts (Nong

Nooch staff members) immediately appeared with armfuls of red umbrellas which saved many from a drenching. A bouncing row of red umbrellas negotiating a swaying suspension bridge with *Daemonorops smidiana* hanging from the trees beside and large, lovely leaves of *Livistona* sp. down the river is a sight many of us will never forget. Despite the rain several palms were visible from the bus, including *Myrialepis paradoxa*, *Areca triandra*, *Plectocomia barthiana*, *Calamus* sp. and *Licula poonsakii*. Still wet when we arrived at the Juldis Khao Yai Resort Hotel, we were greeted with hot tea and coffee and even a gift of dry slippers.

Monday was a travel day to Pattaya close to our major destination of Nong Nooch Tropical Garden—the garden that drew us to Thailand. We were bused to Nong Nooch about 5:00 pm for the treat of our lives (see p. 210, 211 for two views of the garden). It is almost impossible to express our awe at the beauty and expanse of the magnificent gardens terraced by huge boulders, the seemingly endless rows of elegantly grown palms, and the beauty and breadth of the plant nursery.

For the next two days we were guided around the Nong Nooch Tropical Garden—a complex of over 500 acres with an entertainment center as well as meeting rooms, guest facilities, and restaurants. The gardens are spectacular and will only become more so in years to come.

During the week, between sumptuous feasts of Thai delicacies and the overwhelming experience of viewing more palms than we had ever before seen in one place, we listened to speakers and enjoyed their beautiful slides. A list of the talks can be found in the inserts on the Biennial in January and April *Principes*.

This Biennial will never be duplicated. We have been entertained by Thai dancers, wrestlers, and elephant shows, elegantly fed and transported, received gifts of seeds, liquid refreshments, and ice cream at frequent intervals, and even provided with a nurse who traveled with us. We are now spoiled beyond belief. As one attendee (Ed Saloner) said, “the palm world will never be the same.”

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