

News from our network: Summer Edition

Editorial

I am very excited about this special 'Travel' edition of *Writers Connect*. Whether you explore new places in person or prefer to experience them along with the writer in a book, travel can be an escape, an adventure or a form of relaxation. While you sunbathe, or perhaps while you hide from the sun this summer, you can learn why Victoria Milner thinks Burma is such a special place, laugh at DC Green's literally hair-raising adventure in Indonesia, learn about life as a travel writer in Amy McPherson's piece and ponder Sunil Badami's thoughts on travel and nostalgia for home and for the past. You might find good ideas on places to visit on your next trip or you may be enticed into writing about travel yourself.

I have just returned from my most adventurous trip to date. Coaxed into visiting South-East Asia by an adventure-loving sister-in-law, I was surprised to discover the joys of the type of travel that requires malaria pills, very modest clothing and vats of sunscreen (and burn cream). On past travels I have been warned to hold onto my handbag around thieves; in Borneo I had to watch out for curious orang-utans or proboscis monkeys. In Thailand we were warned to keep our distance from street dogs who could be aggressive or diseased, sometimes with rabies.



Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary, Borneo

Koh Lanta, an island two hours away from Krabi, Thailand, is a haven in a country where dogs and cats are largely neglected, starving and often dying on the streets. Lanta Animal Welfare sterilises and vaccinates animals on the island and tries to find homes for dogs and cats. Many animals are adopted by Europeans or North Americans, as their quarantine laws are not as strict as Australia's. On a tour we took around the centre, a street dog who had been brought in after having boiling oil poured on her stared anxiously at us from her enclosure. The volunteer showing us around said with surprise, "She usually barks if you get this close." On our way out, we saw a couple bringing in a well-groomed poodle for veterinary treatment, as the centre offers veterinary treatment to all the animals on the island for a donation. The poodle looked like it belonged in a different universe from the puppy we had just seen with parvo virus and the patchy, nervous cats in the recovery area. It was clear that animals could be just as segregated by fortune, class or luck as people.



Dogs for adoption at Lanta Animal Welfare, Koh Lanta, Thailand

Visitors to the centre are asked if they want to walk the long-term-resident dogs, who make it hard to say no when they bark and wag their tails. You can also walk the dogs that live at Time for Lime, the beach-front bungalows which entice visitors in a number of ways: the restaurant, which makes authentic Thai meals and addictive lemongrass margaritas, the on-site Thai cooking classes, and the friendly presence of the resident cats and dogs lazing in the sun near the guest hammocks. With most of Time for Lime's funds going to Lanta Animal Welfare, it is hard to say no to another green curry or margarita.



Beautiful Klong Dao Beach, out the front of Time for Lime

The dog walking was an unforgettable experience. The dogs bounded along Klong Dao Beach, helping those of us holding the leashes along the rocks like horses pulling a carriage. We took an instant liking to Tripod, a three-legged dog who dug furiously at the sand so that he could lie on his belly in the cold hole. He frolicked with the dogs around the waves, cuddled up to the humans who stroked his fur, and allowed the other limping dog to groom him. Whatever had happened to Tripod previously at the hands of humans, he was one of the most friendly, loving and sweet dogs I had ever come across.



Tripod getting groomed

Borneo is another must for an animal-lover. At Selingan Island we crouched in the sand under the stars as a green turtle laid her eggs. Later that night, we watched baby turtles from the hatchery being released into the ocean. For a trip so full of action, early flights and ignored road rules, I found myself more able to relax and take in the beauty, spirituality and kindness we encountered than on any trip before.

I hope all of you had a wonderful break over Christmas and are having a very happy start to 2013. For those of you back at work, take it easy and maybe start planning your next holiday after reading this issue.

We welcome all of our new Writers Network members and hope you enjoy *Writers Connect*! Please send us your submissions for upcoming issues (rosalind.bellamy@alumni.uts.edu.au) and share news, opportunities and events by email or on the UTS Writers' Alumni Facebook group.

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Guest Editor of *Writers Connect*