

Kong Lor and the Lao cave party

Kong Lor's claim to fame is that it boasts the world's longest navigable cave at 7.5 km from mouth to mouth which was created by the Nam Hinboun River which tunneled its way through the surrounding limestone karsts peaks. On the occasion that I visited it was also setting for a big Lao party complete with Lao bands, gambling, caravel games, VIPs, and a lot of Beerlao. As best as I could determine it was the 5th anniversary of the cave as a tourist attraction, reason enough to throw a big party bringing people from all the surrounding towns as well as a few dignitaries. The cave itself was nice. Zipping through the darkness in a motor boat with only the headlamps of the boatmen lighting up the aqua water and stone walls, has its appeal. The cave formations were not as spectacular as other caves, it's certainly no Carlsbad Caverns. I emerged from my tour of the cave and was immediately motioned to join a group of Lao kids who were sitting on a rock in front of the cave and drinking beer; a foreshadowing of things to come. I had no sooner left the kids on the rock when I ran into my guesthouse owner and a bunch of her friends and family. From then on it was more beer and food for the rest of the night.

A quick aside on the beer drinking etiquette in Lao (for those readers considering a visit). When Lao people drink there is only one cup, whether this was originally due to a lack of sufficient numbers of place settings I'm not sure, but even when there is an ample supply cups available they almost always only use one. One person acts as the pourer and rotating to the left of the pourer each takes a turn drinking a glass of beer from the same cup if you're lucky (Lao Lao if you're not). Of course Lao Lao (home brewed rice whisky if you've forgotten) is more likely to sterilize the germs from the pervious



Landscape near Kong Lor.



North mouth to Kong Lor cave.

drinkers so maybe it's a push. It's also very common to put ice in the beer something that would be sacrilegious back in the states but quite a refreshing alternative to drinking 90 degree beer when there is no refrigerator around.

But now back to the story, just like anywhere else an abundance of beer and music leads to dancing. Fortunately for me, Lao guys might dance worse than white guys, so I wasn't put to shame when I kept getting repeatedly dragged out on the dance floor. As the only Falang (white guy) around I was in high demand. Apparently it doesn't take much more than youth and light skin to impress Lao girls because I couldn't have been my dancing that kept me getting dragged out there.



Kong Lor cave.



Owner of my guesthouse.



Entering into Kong Lor cave.



The guys I had a beer with upon leaving the cave.



Dancing



More dancing



Dancing on stage.