

# 12 Weeks in Thailand

The Good Life on the Cheap.



by Johnny F.D., Fighter, Divemaster.

*"I just finished reading your book. It was really informative and inspiring. I admire you for what you've accomplished, and I appreciate you sharing your story. I have to admit, I've been wanting to go to Thailand for two years now.*

*I've been working 70 hours weeks to be able to do it. I was getting really nervous, getting cold feet, having my friends doubt my judgment, wanting to hold me back. It made me question my decision. I was ready to stay home, in the same boring, exhausting and unhappy life, until I read your book.*

*It gave me hope that maybe I could fulfill my dreams, or at least find out who I really am, if I give myself a chance to do so.*

*I don't really know much about what my life will bring. All I know is that you made me certain about taking the first step, and for that, I can't thank you enough. I just really wanted you to know that it means a lot that you shared your experience.*

*Best wishes,  
Mikael from Norway"*

*"If you want to know about living an incredible life in Southeast Asia, Johnny is THE man."*

*-Nic Gregoriades, Roger Gracie's 1<sup>st</sup> Black Belt,  
Founder of The Jiu-Jitsu Brotherhood*

*"Thanks for doing this! I am going to be training in Phuket for 3 months next year and I have been trying to work out how much I should budget. This has answered a lot of questions I had."*

*-Steve, Australia*

*"The book is great! Apart from the personal interesting and amusing stories of hookups and such, its really like a guide on Thailand, ideal for someone who's planning on going there to train and explore.*

*I'm planning my trip and it really helped me with preparations, outlining what stuff to bring, what to look for when there, what to buy, etc. I really like how you open up and give personal experiences, with which I think many can relate. It does give a certain boost to make that leap and finally go there and do what you dream about. Thanks!"*

*Dmitry*

## Who Exactly is Johnny F.D.?

"I'm an aspiring Pro Fighter, world traveler and vagabond."

"I write for a Muay Thai and MMA blog."

"I'm a professional Scuba Instructor and Divemaster and have taken hundreds of people 18 meters under the sea."

"I've once spoken as a guest lecturer at Harvard University on the topic of Travel and Developing Social Confidence."

"I'm truly living the 4-hour work week and am doing what I love."

Johnny packed a single suitcase in 2008 for a short three week trip to Thailand, his first time ever to the country. With a budget of \$3,000 US Dollars, he blew it all in three weeks on luxury hotel rooms, snorkeling trips to the islands, daily massages, seafood buffets, bungee jumping, tipping bar girls, thai cooking classes and discover scuba diving.

On the three hour boat ride back from the Racha Yai islands, a remote tropical island off the coast of Phuket, Johnny decided to quit his job, break his lease, end it with his girlfriend, sell both of his cars, and leave everything behind in America to start a new life in Thailand where he was finally happy and stress free. Here is the story, that you could very well be writing in the future as well. A true story about a guy's first trip to the legendary, Land of Smiles. A trip that forever changed his life and can possibly change yours as well.

Thank you to those who have given me the strength and courage to go after what I think will make me happy. To my mother for trying to raise me the best she knew how. To my father for taking the path of a hard working immigrant to give his children a better life and for giving me the freedom to make my own choices. To my sister Christina, for never judging me and always showing me love.

I want to thank Timothy Ferris, the author of the 4-hour workweek, without your book, I never would have had the tools or confidence to move to Thailand on a whim. To my cousins Larry and Jacob for taking me on that first trip, the one that started it all. Michael Galvin for your valuable suggestions on gyms.

And thank you to my blog readers, without you, I'd have no one to write this book for. I know that if a book like this had existed, I would have quit my job and moved to Thailand long ago and not wasted so much time and money along the way.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

It took me almost thirty years and traveling half way around the globe to find out what really makes me happy. To figure out who am I, and what am I passionate about?

The heart of it came to me while sitting on top of the ocean, over the clear tropical waters off the coast of Phuket. I had just learned to breathe underwater for my first time, but more importantly how to really be alive. I know it sounds like a lot, but it happened, and I didn't expect it. I was actually quite happy right before I came to Thailand, I had it all, the beautiful blonde girlfriend, a convertible sports car, and access to the hottest nightclubs in Los Angeles. But it turns out, none of that shit really made me happy, it was all a facade.

Diving became my first passion, which lead me to come back to Thailand for 12 more weeks, then I discovered Muay Thai and MMA which made me come back yet again for 12 more. It was a vicious cycle that could not be broken. Every time I could go back to the states, I would think about staying, life there really isn't bad...but then winter comes and even though it's not nearly as cold in California as it is in the rest of the world, I feel the need to escape.

On the sundeck of a dive ship, while eating what may have been the best tasting meal I've ever had, a simple dish of fried chicken and spaghetti, I met a man that forever changed my life. His name was René Christoffersen and he was my scuba diving instructor. The funny thing was, my cousin and I showed up that morning, both absolutely unprepared for what was in store for us. We didn't even think to bring a towel or swim trunks. We ended up walking around in wet underpants the whole day. Yet it ended up being one of the best days of our lives. Imagine that.

Scuba diving was so out of our realm of reality and I had no idea what to expect. The idea of getting wet hadn't even occurred to either of us.

To think, so little time has actually passed since taking that first flight, to selling all of my belongings and moving across the world, to throwing my first kick in Muay Thai, and attempting my first submission in MMA, all the way to taking my first fight. Thinking back, it all seemed so magical. But then again, if it was going to happen anywhere, it would happen in Thailand.

## 3 Months in Thailand



What my friends think I do



What my mom thinks I do



What my boss thinks I do



What society thinks I do



What I think I do



What I really do

memegenerator.net

### **My Story and why this book may change your life.**

I did what every kid was supposed to do. I got good grades in school, got accepted into a high ranking university, graduated with honors and landed an office job with one of the biggest corporations in America. I even almost married my college sweetheart.

I had always heard of Thailand. People that went all came back ecstatic. It's funny, no one ever comes back from Thailand saying, it was okay. Everyone raves about how amazing it was, I guess that's why they call it, Amazing Thailand.

Even though I knew I wanted to go one day, it seemed like something always came up, either the lack of time or money. Usually both. However this time, I was destined to finally go, but even destiny has it's challengers. About a month before my first trip to Thailand, a huge business opportunity came up and it would have been logical for me to cancel my trip. It was basically a promotion that would have come with more money and recognition within my industry.

To be honest, if it wasn't the fact that I had planned the trip months ago with my two cousins, I would have canceled. It was just bad timing to go and if it was just friends and not family, I probably would have postponed the trip, maybe even indefinitely. Blood really is thicker than water in that sense.

This blood, carried me across the ocean, where I finally made it to Thailand. We flew into Bangkok and proceeded to get a two hour massage, tipping way too much like typical Americans do. I think that we ended up getting a total of 30 massages in 21 days while we were there. Overkill, I know. After breakfast in the mornings we would be the first customers as they were opening, and while walking around, if we were ever bored, we'd just pop in and get a foot massage to kill some time.

It was a combination of mindless spending, knowing that we only had three weeks to enjoy ourselves before going back to reality, and the fact that everything was so damn cheap. For the cost of one massage in the U.S. we could get 10, so why wouldn't we get one everyday? It was this mentality that made us try to pack in as many things we could into a short amount of time. We flew down to Phuket to see the legendary white sand beaches and tropical blue water first hand. At our hotel, we were the only ones not on honeymoon. We then proceeded to sign up for every tour imaginable.

The first day, was a snorkeling trip to Koh Phi Phi, the island from Leonardo DiCaprio's movie "The Beach" was filmed. We then signed up for a day's worth of Elephant trekking, followed by a Thai Cooking Class, Bungy Jumping, something called Phuket Fantasy which was like a really strange Thai Disneyland type experience. Eventually we ended up signing up for our discover scuba diving class.

That was the beginning to everything. I've always heard about scuba diving from books and on TV, mainly Discovery Channel and BBC Wild, and in movies featuring James Bond. Also, I had absolutely no intention of doing it more than once. I even paid a guy 2,000 baht (\$66US) to take pictures of me underwater so I could have proof that I was down there.



This is a photo from the first time I ever went diving. It's funny that something I thought I would only do once, I've ended up doing close to 800 more times since.

## **If you hate your job and dream about coming to Thailand.**

I didn't even realize I hated my job until I met Rene. I thought I was just stressed and needed a vacation. I had read the 4-hour workweek on the plane ride over, but never thought for a second of actually moving to another country, especially not Thailand.

I'm sure Rene got asked these questions all of the time and was sick of answering them. But luckily, I was persistent. If only a book like this existed back then, he could have just pointed me to the website and told me to read it.

“Read 12 Weeks in Thailand, then decide for yourself.” He could have said.

I found a piece of paper and a pen, and disappeared to the front of the ship writing out a list of pros and cons of moving to Thailand and a list of everything holding me back from doing so. I factored in the cost of living, visas, health insurance, everything I could think of. An hour later, I ran back up to Rene who was happily drinking an ice cold beer on the top deck, ecstatic to show him my list and tell him that I've made my decision to move to Thailand. He wasn't as excited as I imagined he'd be, in hindsight I doubt he believed me, as I'm sure exactly 20% of his students say the same thing and none of them actually go through with it. Well, I guess I was the exception. I wrote the following letter to my business partner and roommate at the time, setting it all in stone, planting the seed that would sprout into a forest, one that couldn't be undone.

Here's the actual letter that I wrote, setting it all in motion.

Written: Oct 22, 2008

Subject: Private Letter to JT (important and confidential),

(The letter in its entirety is in the full version of this book, however it is a bit too personal to share in the free preview. But it's basically a letter to my business partner/roommate telling him that I want to move to Thailand and get away from the stress of Los Angeles. It also goes through how we will split the furniture, break the lease on our house, and handle the financials.)

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End of Letter.



This photo was taken during that first trip to Thailand before I wrote the letter. I never thought I would share that letter with anyone, especially not the world, but it was such a vital part of my decision to move to Thailand that this book would not have been complete without it.

I know the majority of you aren't planning on moving here long term, you're just trying to plan a 2 to 12 week vacation where you train Muay Thai or even just explore the country. Ironically that was my exact mentality as well when I first came.

If anything if you already love Muay Thai, MMA, or Scuba Diving, then you are way ahead of me when I first came. I grew up never having a passion. I had a few hobbies here and there, but nothing I really loved. In fact, I always felt left out whenever the subject of sports was brought up or came on TV. Basketball, Football, Soccer, Boxing, Baseball, Volleyball, Racing, nothing interested me. It wasn't until I discovered Muay Thai did I start loving fighting sports and the UFC. Little did I know, my two new found passions would shape the rest of my life.

I originally came for the purpose of furthering my scuba training. Rene had mentioned after my open water class that I was a natural and should think about becoming a Dive Master. At the time I was naïve enough to think it was a privilege, almost the same as meeting Adele and having her tell you that you're a natural and you should become a Music Artist. Little did I know at that time that anyone with \$1,000US and 3 months could become a DM. I'll go more into detail in chapter four regarding working as a divemaster in Thailand.

It was one of the best years of my life, I loved learning, diving, and best of all getting paid for it. In search of better diving, led me to Koh Lanta, which is a big island south west of Phuket. It was there, at Lanta Muay Thai, a small local thai gym that I first got into muay

thai, and eventually had my first real fight. A fight that I both lost and gained so much from experiencing. If only I knew then the contents of this book back then, I would have won that fight, but then again, everything happens for a reason.

Here's my actual to do list that I wrote up for what I needed to complete before leaving for Thailand:

### **Thailand To Do List**

Talk to JT about work

Talk to Kee about lease

Sell Miata

Sell Lexus

Breakup with Laura

Open ING Direct or HSBC Bank Account

Sell/Give away extra stuff I don't need

Ship clothes and extra stuff to San Francisco

Cancel stuff

Cancel Netflix

Pay off Utilities – Electricity, Gas, AT&T Internet

Buy Thailand Plane Ticket

Pack for Thailand

Get Tourist Visa

Fax OCTFCU to stop taking money from my WAMU Account

**I wish I could do what you're doing Johnny: my friends often say.**

“Thailand looks beautiful.” “Work sucks, I'm so sick of this shit.” “I hate my job. I can't wait to go to Thailand.” These are phrases I hear all of the time from my friends back in the U.S.

When I ask them why they don't just come now, the reasons are always either, it's not a good time. Or they need to save up some money.

But here's the thing, it's never a good time to come. It's like Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle in a sense where it's impossible to have both an abundance of time and money at any given time. You will always be lacking one or the other. So when is the perfect time to come to Thailand? See chapter two.

I have a friend, Simon that hated his job and wanted to move and live out of the country, he was smart, he started saving and selling off his stuff. He had a plan to work for another year then live in Asia for the next two. But then one day he buys a motorcycle. I knew that was the beginning of the end to his dream. He found a hobby in the U.S. that he could now pour his energy, focus and savings into. Long story short, he never did end up moving to Asia, as most people don't. Whenever people have money burning a hole in their pocket, they find a way to spend it, it's human nature.

Another friend Chris, had a dream to move to Brazil to study Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu for six months. He hated his job, and still does, four years later. He said he had bills to pay and needed to save up money, but in the mean time, he's now four years older, has even more responsibilities and his chances of moving and fulfilling that dream become even more distant every day that passes.

## Chapter 2:

### **The Perfect time to come to Thailand.**

*The more time passes, the more things to come up and keep you from coming at all, making the perfect time to come, yesterday.*

When I went back to the states to plan my trip I gave myself six months to save money, sell off my things and make the move. But with everyday that passed, every person I spoke to, I had ten new reasons not to go. It really angered me as I knew in the bottom of my heart that this was a wise move and it would make me happy, but every single person I told about my trip would shoot me down and give me reasons why I shouldn't go. This list included people that really had no say in my life, even they gave me a hard time. One of my best friends for years pulled me aside and suggested I go on antidepressants or at least go see a shrink. Luckily I was strong enough to ignore his advice. Other friends, would try to scare me by talking about the dangers, or bring up things that really didn't matter right now but would still worry me.

It seemed like everyone was against me, every single person had ten reasons why I shouldn't go, and this was only for a three month trip at the time! It wasn't even my family that was giving me a hard time, I hadn't even told them yet, it was random acquaintances that I told just to be polite. What makes me sad is I'm sure, all of them were secretly hoping for me to fail, for me to either heed their advice and stay, or better yet go to Thailand and come back with my tail between my legs, saying it didn't work out or wasn't what I expected. Maybe then, they would have felt better about their own lives. Thinking back, those same people that told me not to come four years ago, are their lives better off now than before?

Of my best friends from college had many chances to come and I know for a fact that he would have absolutely loved it here. He would have been happy as hell, as he loves Muay Thai even more than I do. But he had excuses, his parents need him to help out at their business once in a while, he has responsibilities. The funny thing is, he thinks he's somehow unique in his situation. But he's not, he just never broke the chains of his overbearing parents. Looking at what he's actually accomplished in the past four years, he had a business that did okay and he gained some valuable experience from that. He got to finally move to San Francisco where he's always wanted to live and got to live in the heart of Los Angeles as well. He had a girlfriend for a while, and even though it didn't work out, it was a good experience for him. Now he's working on another business which hopefully will be successful. He finally bought his dream car that he wanted since college, but I can tell it doesn't truly makes him happy as it's just a material thing. But when it comes down to it, he's now four years older, in worse shape, single, and life is literally passing him by.

If he had taken the savings he had when started or when he sold his share in his first business and came to Thailand, he would today be in the best shape of his life, have a girlfriend, and do what he loves doing, I know it. I have a feeling that he would have started a different business while he was out here, maybe something related to Muay Thai which he loves. I also would have had one of my best friends here with me and together we would have been unstoppable.

My entire life I've always heard people older than me tell me how important time and my youth is, and I've always ignored them, just like I'm sure 22 year olds do now when I tell them the same thing. But now that I'm 31, I absolutely know what they are talking about. Our time and our youth is truly precious and it flies by faster and faster every year. Whatever your age is right now, make the most of it and don't waste another year hoping, dreaming or putting off what you really want to do.

I don't know what your personal situation is, but I want you to think back on the last four years of your life and honestly ask yourself if you truly spent it wisely. Compared to yourself 4 years ago:

1. Are you in better shape?
2. Are you married to someone you passionately love?
3. Did you learn another language?
4. Did you live in another culture?
5. Do you have less debt and bills or do you have more?
6. Do you have more money in your savings account?
7. Did you build a company or a career that is your passion?
8. Did you master any skills or hobbies?

For some of you, your life is better off because you stayed at home and worked towards what you are doing now. My sister for an example had a great, productive last four years with her house, business, children and husband.

However, I'm willing to bet that the majority of us, didn't really do all that much in the past four years. Sure we traveled a bit, but do 1 week vacations really count as seeing a country? We may have had a few relationships but if they didn't end up being the love of your life, wouldn't it have been more exciting as having a fling with someone totally not from your culture? The one thing I think about most every time I see someone in their youth is how good I would be at Muay Thai today if I had started at their age. Nothing, truly nothing is a substitution for time.

In the past four years since I first decided to come, I am in far better shape and overall more healthy, plus I can kick my 27 year old's ass. I didn't get married or meet the love of my life

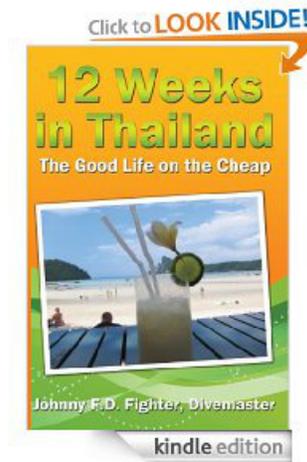
but I did learn what love feels like so I know what to look for now. I also had some really good long term relationships and also a bunch of really exciting flings which I'll talk about in Chapter 4. As far as languages go, my Mandarin, Chinese went from being really basic to being really fluent from teaching scuba diving in Mandarin for a year. I also learned some basic Thai during that time and a surprising decent amount of Spanish.

I ended up living in most of Thailand, in Malaysia, in the Caribbeans, spending a month in Guatemala and finally got to live my dream of living on a small remote tropical island. As far as money, it's a bit ironic but I'm technically richer now than I was four years ago as I paid off my student loans, car payments and have zero debt anywhere. Up until recently I always had at least \$5,000US in my savings account, which I thought was perfectly normal until I found out, even my "richest" friends back home really live paycheck to paycheck. As far as career goes, I've built something I truly love, a website that people actually read and look forward to visiting, and I finally wrote my first book. In that time I've mastered scuba diving, and became quite decent at Muay Thai. All in all, these past four years I've lived, learned and done more than I ever would have if I had stayed home. All while not racking up any debt, getting in better shape and making really good friends all around the world.

Even though most of you will plan to come for less than three months, I'm going to explain things with the idea that there's a possibility that you might come for longer. Mainly because for most people, leaving their job and home for three months seems like such a big deal, it might as well be three years. The second reason why I'm going to explain a lot of things with the mentality of longer trips is because many of you will end up either extending your trip while you're here, or planning another trip the minute you get home.

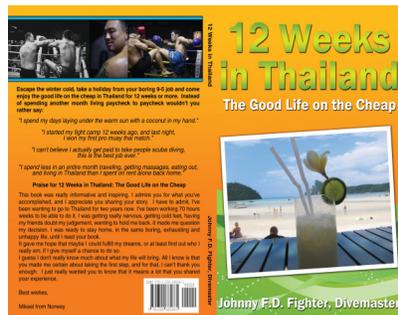
There are however, better seasons to come to Thailand than others. I was previously totally unaware and ended up moving to Koh Tao in the only month that the island is uninhabitable. I was in Phuket in October, the weather was beautiful, dry and sunny. It was like a perfect summer. I went home to sell all of my stuff and came back three weeks later, this time to Koh Tao. I had no idea that November is monsoon season there, which meant all the restaurants were shut and I had no where to eat. Within days the island's roads started flooding up to knee level and it was impossible to even walk some places. The funny thing is, I didn't regret it for a second. Just the fact that I had left my stressful life back in America and was living freely in Thailand, I loved it.

If you would like to continue reading “12 Weeks in Thailand: The Good Life on the Cheap” get it on sale for only \$9.99 on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) before the price goes back up to \$26.00!



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I sincerely hope that this book has inspired you to follow your passions like I have, or at least take the first step to find out what those are, whatever they end up being. Don't wait for time and money to be perfect, the perfect time to go after what you want is right now.

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Warm Regards,



Johnny F.D.



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