



PHUKET

Peranakan



Story : Chairit Srirojrit

Illustrations : Chomphoonut Samart



Local Knowledge Book Series



Phuket Peranakan

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Preface

Thailand Knowledge Park (TK park) mission in society is to develop a love of reading and give people equal opportunities to experience modern learning centers which speak to their interests. TK park has been cooperating with local administrators in many regions of Thailand to build living libraries as a way to achieve its mission.

Bringing local knowledge to children, in a modern and fun way, is an important tool to inspire them to read and explore. The idea is to create books which reflect local wisdom, together with morality and ethics, for children aged 3 – 12.

The books in the Phuket and Krabi Set were developed by TK park, scholars, and local writers. Children and adults will get to know about Phuket and Krabi and be proud of the unique traditions found there. Moreover, the books also foster better understandings of and tolerant attitudes toward others from different cultures and societies.

TK park hopes the books will be another learning tool to help encourage Thai people to read more and maximize their learning. TK park aims to make the books fun and easy to read. Readers can enjoy them and appreciate their own hometowns, regions, and country.

Thailand Knowledge Park





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From Penang to Phuket Island

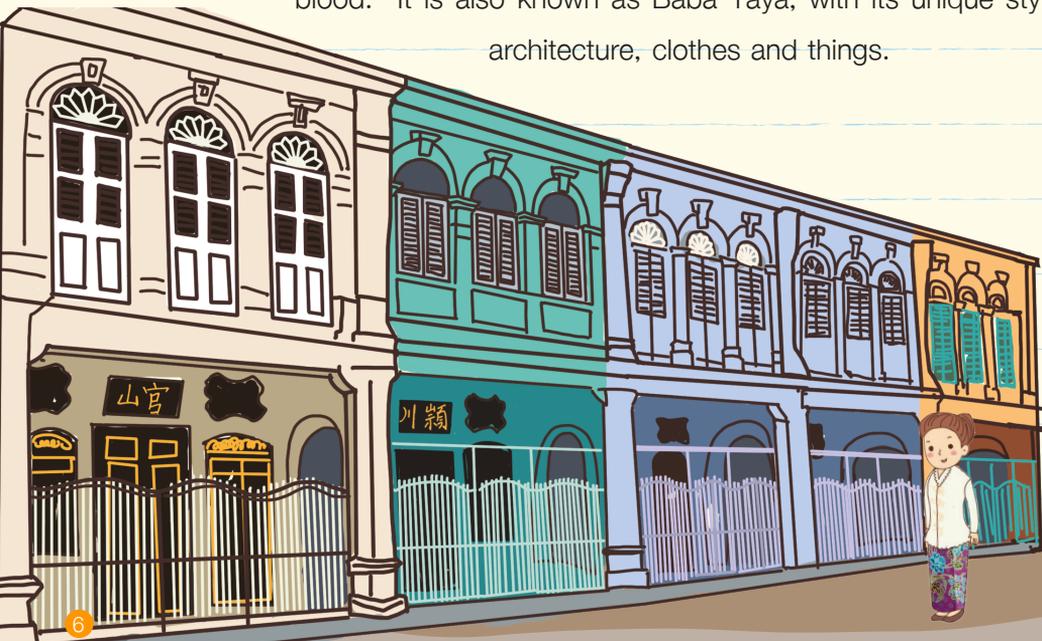


My name is Lee. My hometown is Penang Island, Penang State, Malaysia. In the old days, Thai people used to call Penang Koh Mak because there were a lot of areca palms here. I have a dream. I really want to visit Phuket Island, in Phuket province, Thailand, because many said Penang and Phuket are very similar. We are both influenced by Peranakan culture.

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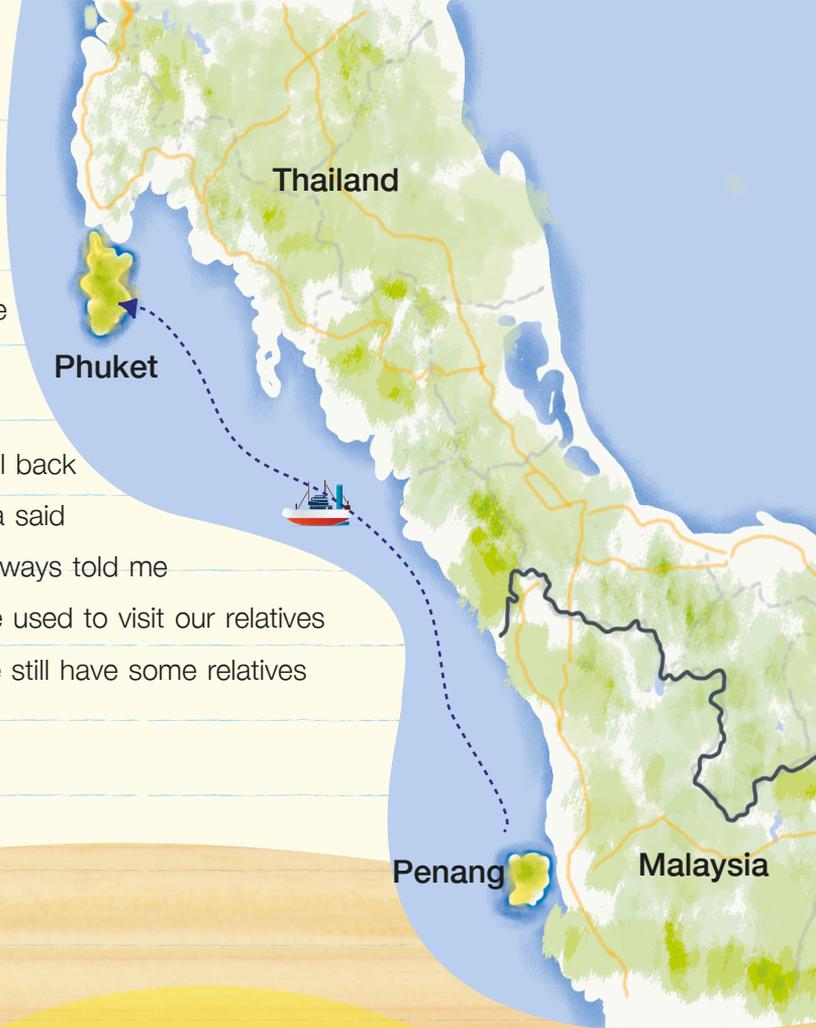


What is Peranakan? My grandmother told me that in the past, many Chinese people migrated to the Malay Peninsula - to Singapore, Malacca, Penang, Phuket and Ranong. When they married the local people, the Chinese and the Malay culture mixed together and that was how Peranakan culture started. The word Peranakan means half blood. It is also known as Baba Yaya, with its unique style of arts, architecture, clothes and things.



If we look at the map, we will see that both Phuket and Penang are on the left side of the Malay Peninsula.

Because they are not far from each other, people would travel back and forth for trading. Grandma said that they are like twins. She always told me that when she was a child, she used to visit our relatives in Phuket by boat, and that we still have some relatives in Phuket.



This coming school holidays, I am already prepared to visit the twin city of Penang. How much alike are they? Do they share the same Peranakan culture? Let me pack my bag and follow me!



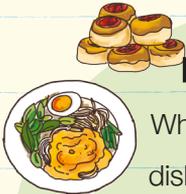
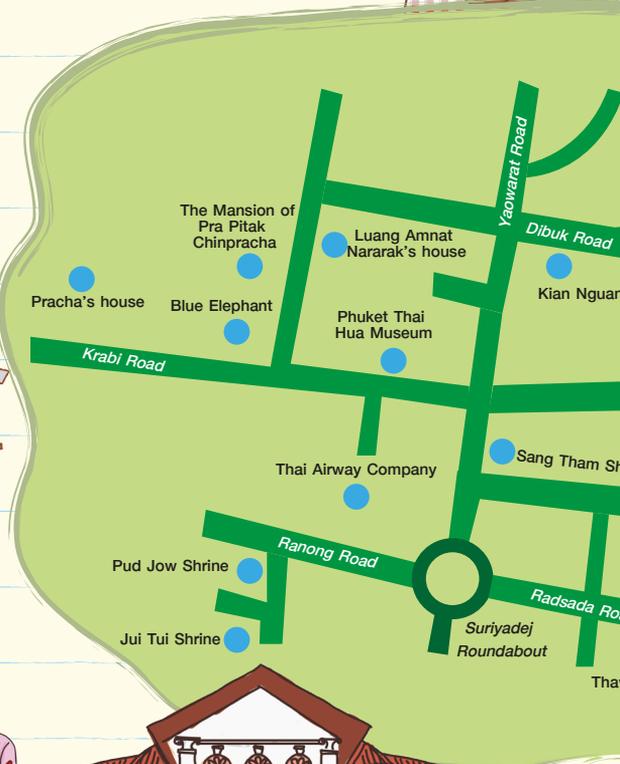
Things You Can't Miss in Phuket.

I bought a travel guide for Phuket. There are so many places that I want to go but I'm not sure I can make it to all places. So I focus mainly in the city. If I'm lucky, I would get to go to the beautiful beaches.



Khao Rang

Khao Rang is a beautiful viewpoint of Phuket for both daytime and nighttime. But when will I get to go there, day or night?



Food and Clothes

While many delicious Phuket dishes are similar to Penang, many are different. I really want to try Kanom Jeen Nam Ya (Thai vermicelli with curry) the most. There are also beautiful Baba Yaya clothes.



Ban Chinpracha

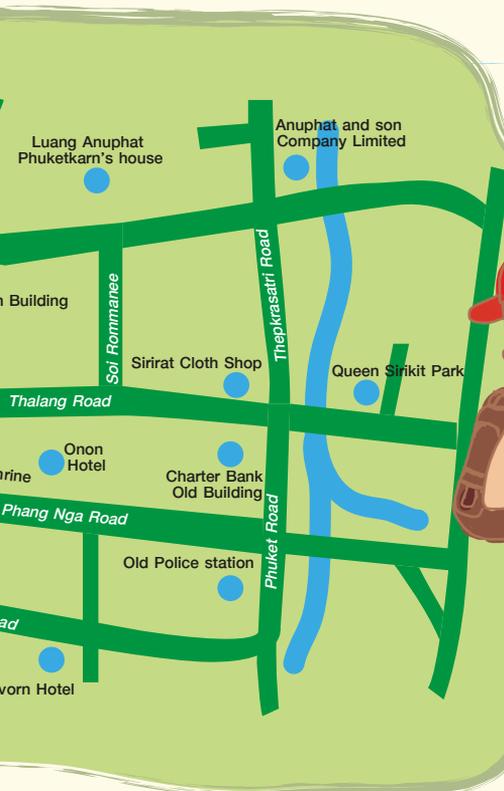
If you want to see a mansion, go to Ban Chinpracha.

Bougainvillea is the flower of the city.



Thalang Road

This road in the city center has a similar view as streets in Penang. There are buildings and lively shops. Can't miss!

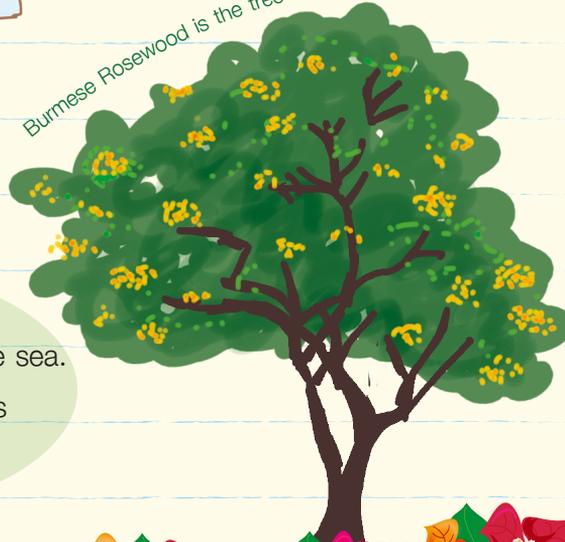


Thai Hua Museum

This place used to be an old school. Now, it is a learning center about Phuket, Peranakan culture and the history of the school.



Burmese Rosewood is the tree of the city.

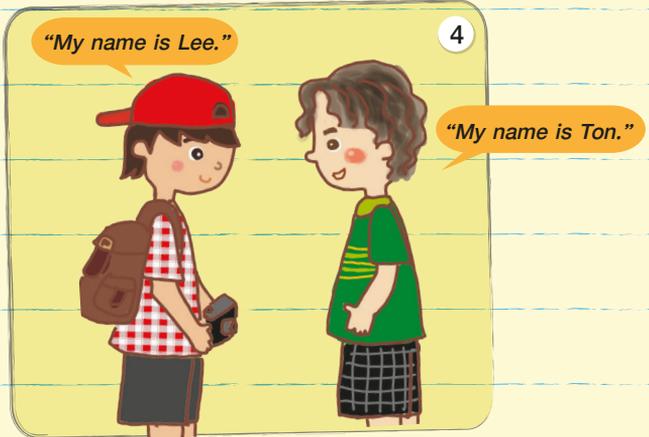


Saphan Hin

It is a public park located by the sea. It's so amazing. The road is actually a reclaimed land.

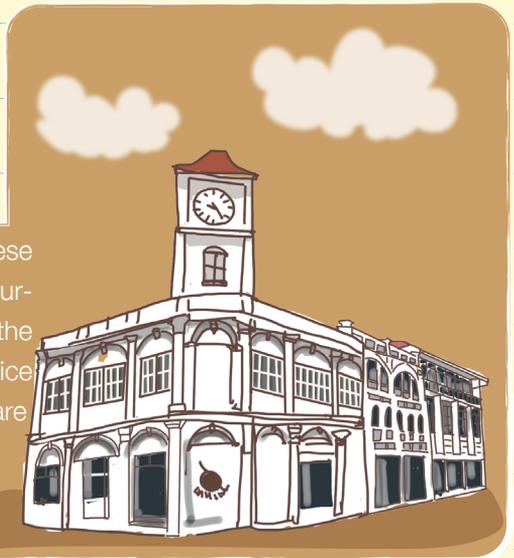


When The Island Boys Meet!



"You want me to take a picture for you?" Ton asks. "Thank you." Lee smiles happily while Ton is taking a picture of him, and their friendship starts. Ton volunteers to take Lee around Phuket, to places within the walking distance.

The police station in Talat Yai is a Sino-Portuguese building. It is a white, two-story building. There is a four-story high tower in the middle, directly at the corner of the street. The top of the tower was made to look like a police hat in the old days. The window and door top frames are in curving shapes, with pilasters between the gaps. The top of the pilasters are beautifully decorated with molded lime.

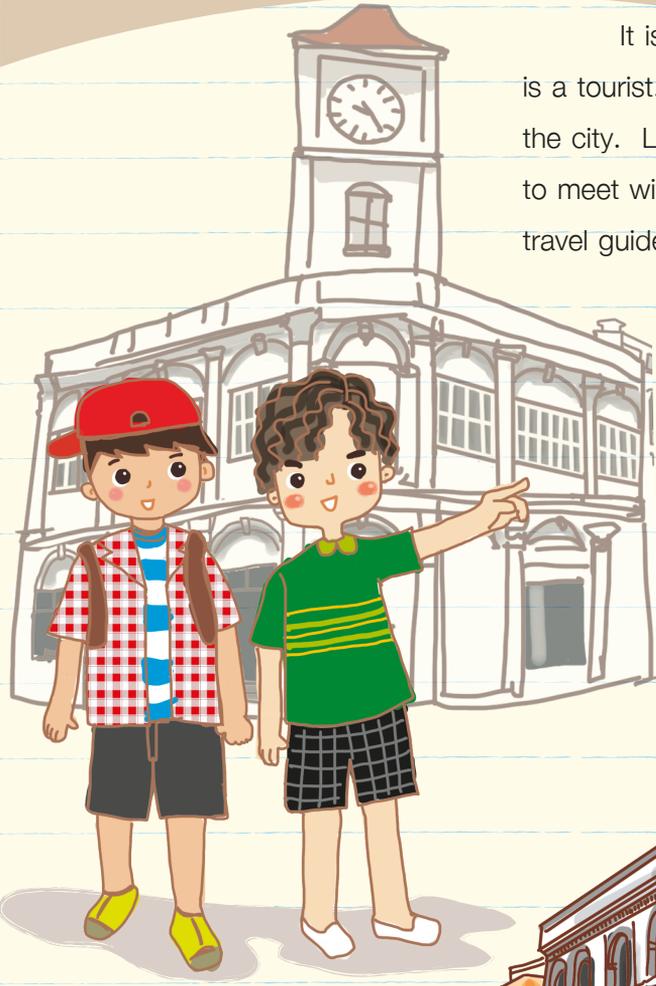


Because both Phuket and Penang are not too far from each other, they have the same equatorial climate. They are impacted by Southwest Monsoon and Northeast Monsoon. They have the same tropical weather. And because people travelled back and forth for trading between the two cities, their architecture is similar.

It is not hard for Ton to notice that Lee is a tourist. So, he volunteers to take him around the city. Lee is very happy to make a new friend, to meet with kind local people like it's said in the travel guide. Thai people are kind and welcoming.

And because they are the same age, it doesn't take much time before they become close.

Ton points out a building across the street to Lee.



Standard Chartered Bank was built during the reign of King Rama V to accommodate the economic growth. The building is decorated with Ionic columns both upstairs and downstairs. The capitals of the downstairs columns are in volute shape. Between the columns are arches decorated with stone sculptures. This is the first bank in the region.

Old Road Old Stories



Thalang Road



Ngor Kha Khee

Ton takes Lee to Thalang Road, one of the main roads in the old days. The buildings along the road are in the “Tium Choo” style, Sino-Portuguese style. They were built as both houses and shops. In the past, there was a small gutter between the houses and the road. But what makes these houses in Phuket and Penang similar is the “Ngor Kha Khee,” the connecting walkway for the pedestrians to avoid the rain. This results from the tropical weather, where it rains so much all year. Lee and Ton are so proud of their ancestors’ idea to sacrifice small spaces for public use.

Lee was interested in taking pictures of Soi Rommanee, where there is a pink building at the beginning of the Soi. Ton tells him it used to be called “Hung Alai,” a place for nightlife in the past. Later, Phraya Ratsadanupradit Mahisaraphakdi changed the name to “Rommanee,” and it stays like that until the present.



Sirrat Cloth Shop



Sin & Lee Shop

Some of the buildings on Thalang Road are well-preserved so Ton and Lee are able to see beautiful old buildings in their original design. Some of them are renovated as restaurants, hotels or residences. This road is also a main road for Phuket cultural fairs.

Convenient “Tium Choo”

Ton and Lee walk from Thalang Road, pass Yaowarat Road to Krabi Road. Ton explains to Lee that “Tium Choo” is a half-shop half-house building. The word comes from two words in Hokkien language, “Tium Lai” means shop front and “Choo” means townhouse. The two words are put together and become “Tium Choo.”



Bedroom

The master bedroom is in the front of the house. There is a peephole looking at the “Ngor Kha Khee,” to watch if there are any guests.

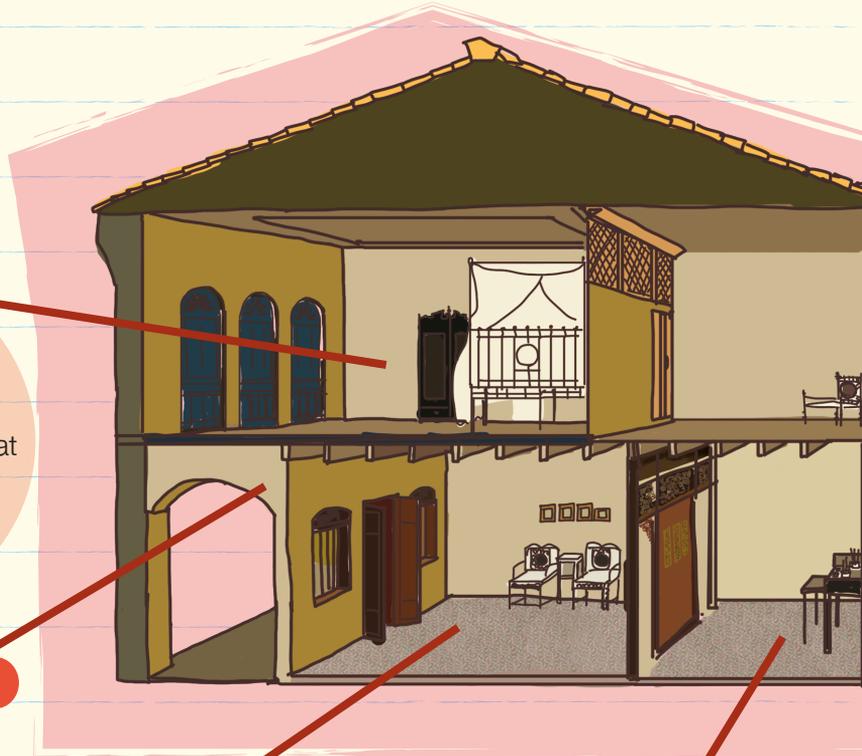
Ngor Kha Khee

Living Room

The living room is in the front. It can be adapted as a shop front or an office.

“Wai Jao” (The Shrine)

A place of worship (Wai Jao) is usually hidden behind the curtain where a shrine is set up according to the Hokkien belief.

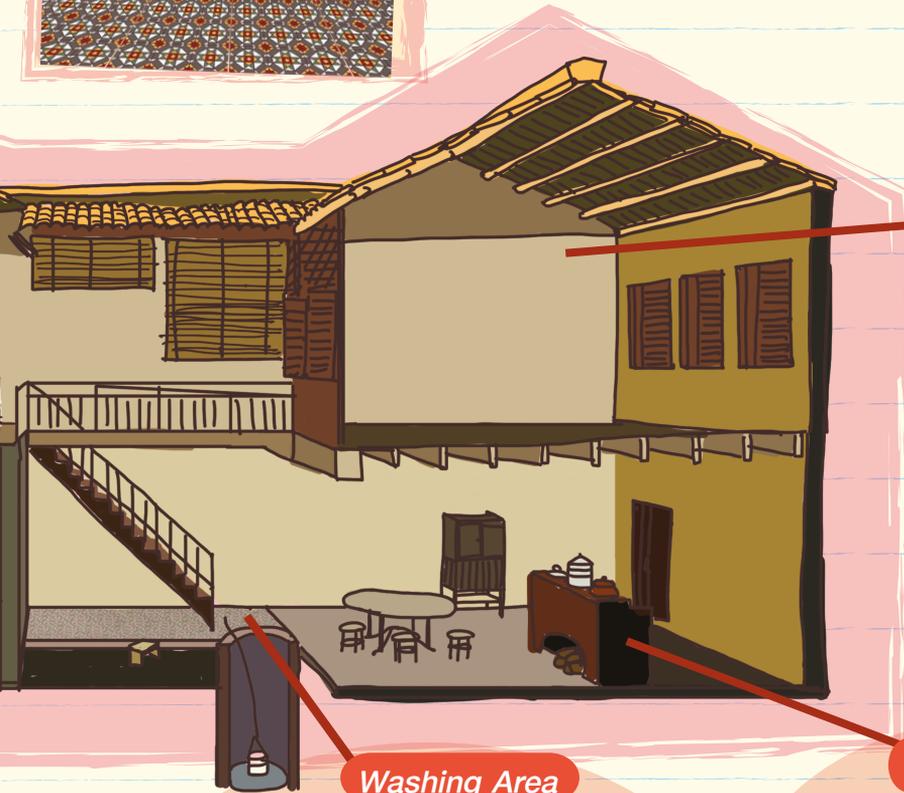


There is always a well inside this kind of house under the roofless area called “Chim Jae.” This allows light and wind in to house which allows better ventilation.

Chim Jae



Since there is also this kind of house in Penang, Ton cannot help but ask why Lee is so excited about it. Lee tells him that because they are so much alike that he feels like his house has a twin brother. It is like he comes to his relatives' house, where he feels warm and welcomed. His answer warms Ton's heart too. He feels like they are related.



Second Bedroom

This bedroom is in the back. It is for other members of the family.

Washing Area

The washing area is an open air area in the middle of the house that allow the rain to fall so the water can be saved. There is also a gutter to drain the water. In some houses, there is a well in this area.

Kitchen

The kitchen is in the innermost part of the house where there is a big cement stove. This is where the food for the family is cooked and where the family eats together.

Chinese School in Thailand



Phuket Thai Hua in the past.

Ton tells him that his parents used to study here when they were in primary schools. It was a bilingual school that teaches Chinese. So, his parents can speak Chinese a little and they teach Ton some words too.

Ton takes Lee to a school. First Lee thinks it's Ton's school but it turns out to be his parents' school. Now it is changed to be Thai Hua Museum.



A red bat sculpture in front of the gable with its spreading wing refers to an opened book. This symbolizes how lucky one is to get to learn.

Sueng Soon Pin, a head master who initiate the school's motto: *"To be excellent-brain, heart and body."*



The school roof is in a turtle shell shape. Since the Chinese believe that a turtle is a sacred animal because it lives a long life, so will the dwellers of the house.

Anyone who visits this place will see an old piano that Master Sueng used to play along while leading the students in singing Chinese songs.



The Entrance Hall



The Dragon Room

There are 14 exhibition rooms inside the museum. The exhibitions display a story since the migration of the Chinese people to Malay Peninsula until the Mining Era, which was a golden age in Phuket, a story of how the city turns into a tourist attraction, and a story of a well-blended Peranakan lifestyle.



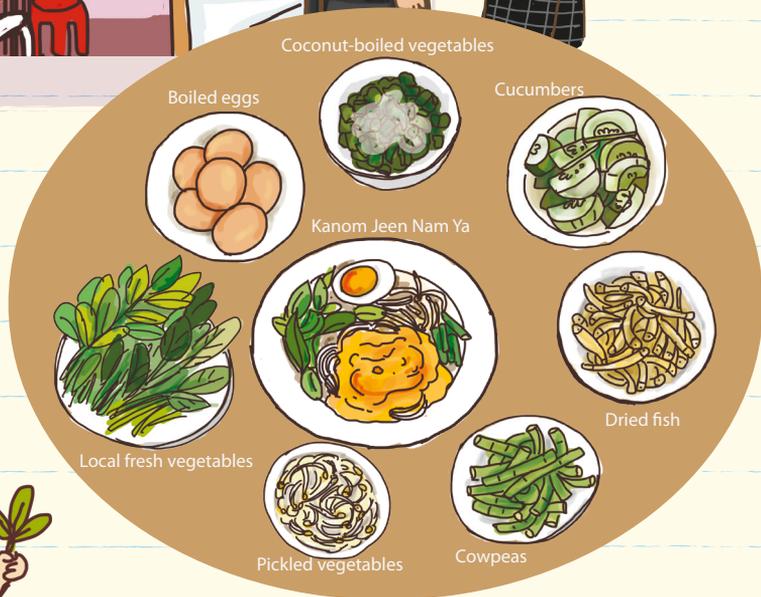
The Exhibition in an old classroom

Ton tells Lee that his grandparents and parents were primary-school students here. Their classmates all lived near the school.

So Full! Phuket Delicacy



It's lunchtime. Ton asks Lee what he wants to eat. Lee says he really wants to eat Kanom Jeen Nam Ya because there is nothing like this in Penang.



Kanom Jeen Nam Ya in Phuket is well-known because it is different from other southern Kanom Jeen dishes. What makes it different is Nam Ya Poo (crab meat curry). It is eaten with variety of vegetable side dishes-pickled vegetables in vinegar and sugar, coconut-boiled vegetables, and fresh vegetables.

Lee and Ton talk about food. Lee tells Ton that some of Phuket delicious food can also be found in Penang because they are Hokkien food. Both of them confirm that they are all delicious.

Hokkien-style fried noodle



Hoo Chae



Lo Ba



Gium Goi



Ah Pong



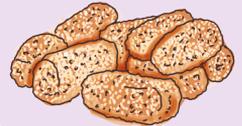
Tao Soh



Kanom Tao



Moh Lao



Ton tells Lee it is too bad he isn't here during Vegetarian Festival, which begins on the 1st day of the waning moon and ends on the 9th day of waxing moon of the 9th month every year. During that time, people in Phuket wear all-white clothes, and they don't eat meat or meat products. It was first held in Kathu District. Then it became popular. It has been carried on for hundreds of years. The principles are: do not extend your life with animal's life, do not make animal's blood your blood, and do not make animal's meat your meat.

Shrine Parade during Vegetarian Festival



Stories From Wealthy People Mansion



Ban Chinpracha

Ton takes Lee to Ban Chinpracha or Ban Pra Pitak Chinpracha, a mine owner who was the ancestor of Tantawanit Family. The house was built by the Chinese from Penang. Lee tells Ton that there are also this style of houses in Penang and they are also well-preserved.

Besides “Tium Choo,” there is another style of house called “Ang Mor Lao.”

The word comes from two words, “Ang Mor” means foreigner and “Lao” means building. Combining together, the word refers to the buildings that were built in a Western style in the past.



Floor tiles imported from Europe via Penang



Oval shape glasses, 1 of the 8 auspicious symbols, were installed into the doors according to the old belief.



Chim Jae

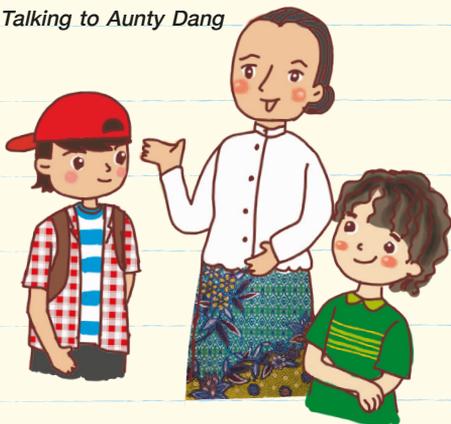


This is the picture of a main entrance where it can not be entered nowadays



Floral design windows. cotton rose means wealth and lotus means unity.

Talking to Aunty Dang



Lee introduces Ton to Aunty Dang, the 4th generation descendant who is now taking care of the house. She dresses in a beautiful Yaya dress. She tells Lee the history of the house, of Tantawanit Family, whose ancestor travelled here from Hokkien Precinct, the People's Republic of China. She shows Lee many title deeds and the family plates, and she tells him a lot of fun stories.



Ban Hong Yok

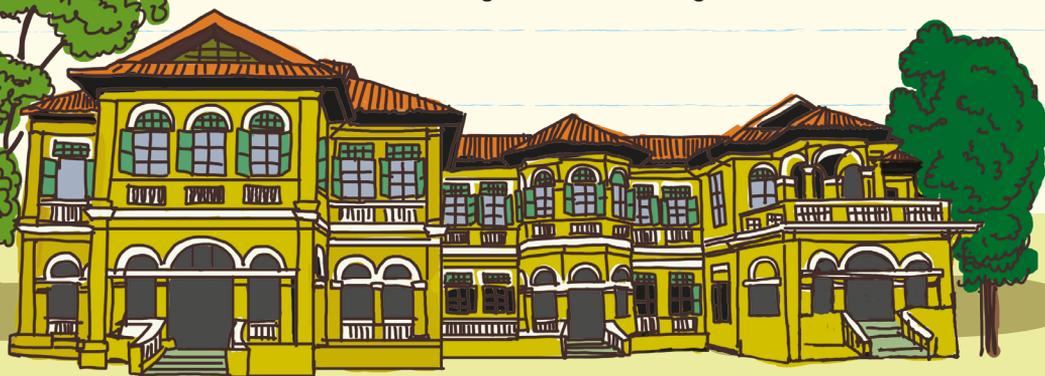
Ban Hong Yok was built by Luang Anupas Phuketkarn in 1930.



Ban Luang Amnat Nararak

Ban Luang Amnat Nararak was built by Luang Amnat Nararak, the ancestor of Tantawes Family.

There are also other “Ang Mor Lao” houses in Phuket, i.e., Ban Hong Yok, Ban Luang Amnat Nararak



Ban Pra Pitak Chinpracha

Ton brings Lee to another nearby mansion of Ban Pra Pitak Chinpracha which was adapted as a well-known restaurant, Blue Elephant, Phuket branch. It is another interesting “Ang Mor Lao” house.

Saphan Hin: A Reclaimed Land



Ton takes Lee to the sea. Lee is so excited because he doesn't think he will get to go the sea in Phuket city. Ton tells Lee the sea here is not as beautiful as the seas out of town. Anyhow, Phuket City is a seaside city where Saphan Hin Public Park was built for people to come exercise here. It is also used to hold many important events in Phuket. Now Lee can finally get to breathe fresh air.

A dredger is used in the sea mining. "Look Cher" (drag bucket) is used to dig up dirt that contains tin from under the sea. Then they would spray water on the dirt to separate the tin out. Nowadays, the sea mining is no longer franchised.

So the dredger and "Look Cher" are only stories among Phuket people.



The 60th Lak Monument, the Tin Monument designed after the shape of "Look Cher"



Look Cher



Historic Dredger



Viewpoint



Kiew Tien Keng Chinese Shrine

The History of Saphan Hin

After walking for a while, Lee asks Ton where the stone bridge (Saphan Hin) is. Ton says he doesn't know too. He's been here since he was young but he never once saw a stone bridge. He only sees the 60th Lak Monument where kids have used as sliding board since the time when their parents were young. There are also mangrove forests for them to learn about.

Ton tells Lee that the park was not this big in the past. It gets bigger because of the filling of the land into the sea until it becomes a big piece of land over Thung Kha Bay as it is now.

There is also a Kiew Tien Keng Chinese Shrine, built to worship Kien Tien Lien Lue, Taoist goddess. Phuket people believe that she helps protect them from harm. This shrine is also used in the receiving and sending ceremonies at the beginning and at the end of the Vegetarian Festival.



Night time in Phuket



*Phraya Ratsadanupradit
Monument*

After enjoying the evening view by the sea, Ton takes Lee back to see the nightlife in Phuket city. Ton tells Lee that at night, it is breezy up on Khao Rang and it is a good place to see a panoramic view of city lights from up there. Lee is not going to miss this.

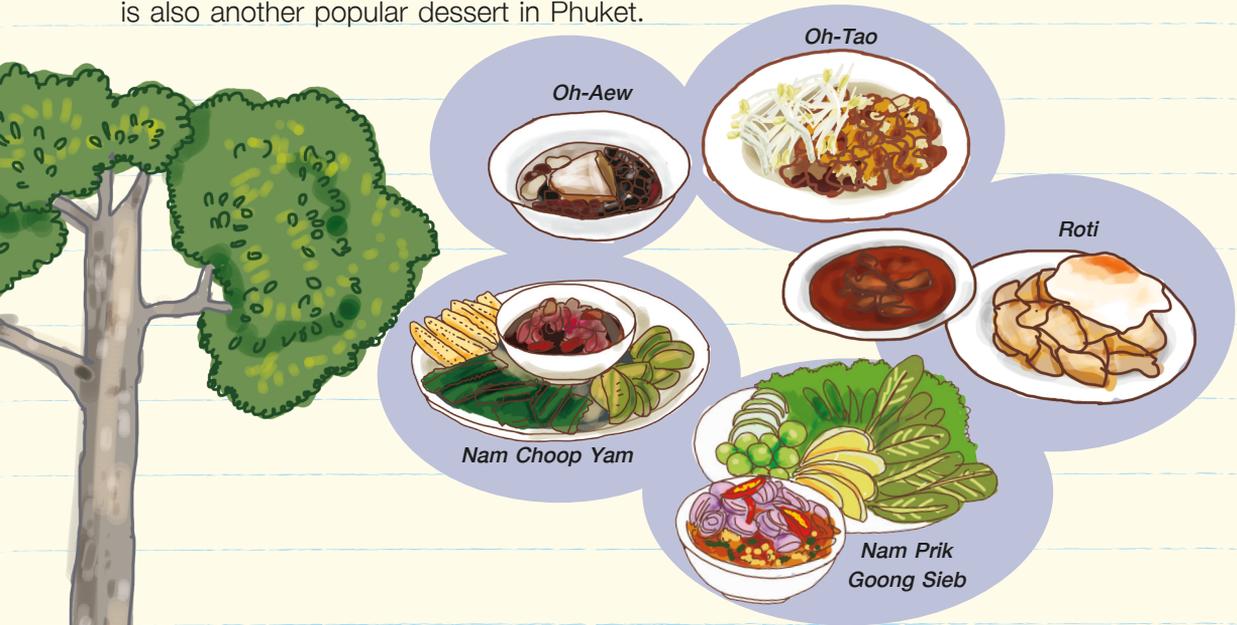
In the past, Khao Rang was called Khao Lang because, when looking from the sea, the mountain, which is behind Phuket City on the northwest side, looks like the back of Phuket.



The city on Saphan Hin's side is considered the front of Phuket. Here at Khao Rang Public Park is where Phraya Ratsadanupradit Monument is situated. He was the former governor of Phuket who was widely respected by the people because he brought development to the city. The park can be reached by car or by foot.



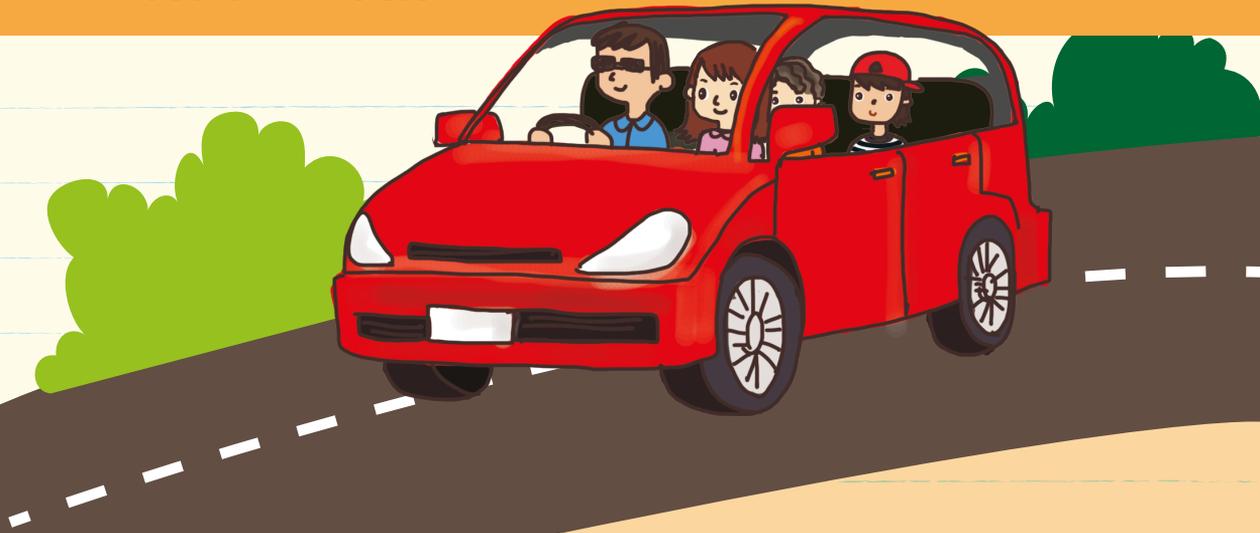
After enjoying the view on Khao Rang, Ton's and Lee's stomachs start to rumble with hunger. They decide they should fill up their energy before continuing the city tour. Phuket, has a lot of good food selling at night as same as during the day. For example, there is "Oh-Tao," a mushier version of "Hoi Tod" (crispy mussel pancake). "Oh-Aew" is a refreshing dessert made of bananas that are mashed into white jelly that helps cool down the heat from walking all day. "Roti" is also another popular dessert in Phuket.



Phuket city never sleeps. You can always find food to eat. The daytime food is totally different from the nighttime food, especially at the 24-hour market where you can find fresh-made food, serving hot to your table.



Golden Beach



Ton asks Lee before they split where Lee is going tomorrow. Lee tells him he has no plan so Ton asks if Lee is interested in going to the beach with his family. Lee knows that Phuket's beautiful beaches are far from town so he is more than happy to go with them. He will meet Ton and his family in front of the hotel tomorrow morning.

The next morning, Ton and his parents pick Lee up from the hotel. Ton's dad and mom welcome Lee in Chinese. This makes him feel very warm. Ton's dad tells Lee that he is taking him to three most popular beaches in Phuket - Kata Beach, Karon Beach, and Patong Beach, a very long beach where is mostly visited by the tourists.





His dad drives up to Sam Ao viewpoint where they can see the three beaches, Kata Noi, Kata, Karon join together in a crescent shape. But the most spectacular view is how the color of the sea changes from light green by the beach to darker blue. Lee can't stop taking pictures.



Ton's dad tells Lee that when Tsunami hit the city and killed many people and destroyed many things, he and his family survived because they lived in the city area. This event causes the city to be more careful in keeping watch on the natural disaster.



Tsunami Warning Sign



Dad brings Lee to Prom Thep Cape, the best place to watch the sunset in Phuket. Many tourists are here to take the pictures. Lee wants to wait for the sunset too but mom tells him here is another special place that she wants to take him to. So, Ton tells him to come back here next time.

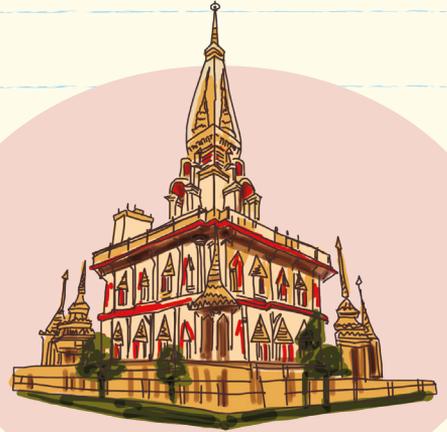
Chalong Temple: the Spiritual center of Phuket People's Buddhists People



Wat Chalong

Nobody knows when this temple was built, but there was a record during King Rama III's reign of the sacredness of Luang Por Cham, the abbot of the temple, in being able to cure any kinds of bone diseases. His influence was also what kept the temple and the people safe from the Aung Yee (Chinese mafia) raid.

Ton is curious about this special place dad and mom want to take them to. Finally, dad stops at Wat Chalong or Chaitharam Temple, a famous temple that gains a lot of respect from Phuket people and people nearby. Mom tells Lee to pay respect to the Buddha image in order that he will be protected.



Wat Chalong Chedi



Luang Por Cham. Former abbot who was widely respected by Phuket people. Also known for his heroic action to fight against the Aung Yee.



Luang Por Chuang. The abbot succeeding Luang Por Cham. He is an example of an embodiment of the four principles of virtuous existence.



Luang Por Gleum who carried on the bone therapy and meditation study.



Mom sees Lee casting the lots so she asks him if he wants her to translate the prophecy for him. Lee is more than willing because he cannot read Thai. Mom tells him that he gets a good one. But most importantly, the prophecy says that he will find something that he has lost. Mom asks Lee if he has lost anything but he says no. She tells him it's ok, they will find out soon.

Everybody moves on to pay respect to the Buddha's relics that was given to the temple by the Sri Lankan people. It used to be enshrined inside The Stupa of Anuradhapura, the former capital city of Sri Lanka. It is more than 2,200 years old. Lee spends a long time praying. Ton asks him what he prays for. Lee tells him he wishes to meet his long lost relatives that his grandma used to talk about. Ton tells Lee to ask his dad and mom because they know a lot of people. When Lee asks them about his relatives, mom pulls him to her and hugs him. She tells him her maiden name was the same last name Lee is asking about. She changed her last name when she married Ton's dad. Lee is happy to finally find his cousins.

The two boys are thrilled. Not only are they friends now but they are also related. Lee tells Ton to visit him in Penang. He will take Ton and his family around. Ton tells Lee to come back here too and he will take Lee to watch the sunset at Prom Thap Cape together.





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Local Knowledge Book Series Phuket and Krabi

