

"Kayaking and rock climbing, from water to rock"

written by Michel GÉRARD

With more than 150 islands and numerous underground caves, Krabi was a long time ago the favourite place of Asian pirates who could hide easily and disappear in the waters of the region. Now, the beauty of the place attracts more sportsmen than pirates with several possible activities of which kayaking and rock climbing are only a couple.



In the early morning before departure from the city of Krabi, our group gets ready for a drive down the road in the direction of Baan Tha Lane that is 35 kilometres from there, and where fantastic landscapes of seashore, forest and limestone rocks can be seen. At the camp, an instructor shows and explains to the participants the use of equipment and the safety rules for the hike, kayaking and rock climbing. We depart as soon as everybody knows how to use the equipment properly.

A short time later, we are in a kayak on a quiet sea surrounded by a mangrove forest listening to the different sounds of nature. The slow and silent advancing of the kayak on the Khao Khanab Nam Baan Tha Lane or "Canyon River" enables us to hear the cries of birds, the sounds of land animals and even aquatic creatures like fish that sometime agitate the water. The sights are also very interesting with the animals living there, like the crab-eating macaques, the gibbons, the otters, the kingfishers and the herons, among others.

More or less 600 metres from our starting point, we arrive the site of the underground cave Tham Kang Kow that got its name because of the numerous bats that used to live in it in the past . From the kayaks to the cave, it is necessary for us to walk in the humid wild forest. This enables us to observe the fauna and flora closely. When we arrive at the entrance of the bats' underground cave, we learn from our guide that it is now occupied only by otters, monkeys and birds. It is possible to wander inside and admire superb stalagmites and stalactites, and also paintings, several thousands of years old, on the superior arch.

It is time now to get ready for climbing and everybody is equipped with a safety harness before starting the climb up the cliff. Slippers are fastened to the feet and a small bag filled with talc is fixed to the belt. The instructor is the first to climb. He shows the right niches where the feet and the fingers can find support. Ten metres higher, we appreciate a panoramic view of the mangrove forest, the sea and the islands of Krabi. We take time to rest a little and check the equipment again before going down. Our instructor takes this opportunity to explain the procedure of sliding down the rope so that everything goes well and in complete safety. Along the twenty metre drop, moving down the rope is faster than climbing it and also much more exciting. Helpers are at the foot of the cliff close to the kayaks to guarantee the safety of the participants, and everybody meets again a few minutes later to explore the sea.

The silent, slow navigation allows us to admire the charming sites and see the crab-eating monkeys and other animals again until we reach a beach where the group appreciates an awaited picnic. There, some among us cannot resist the temptation of a swim in the clear waters, while the others use this time to relax and sunbathe. After some time, the kayaks are pulled again into the water for the quiet return to the coastline, leaving behind us this amazing ambiance of nature.

The participants of this excursion in the bay of Tha Lane, will remember this sporty adventure in the region of pirates for a long time and the next trip will offer the opportunity to practice scuba diving among the coral reefs and participate in a hike in the national park of Khao Phanom Bencha.

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