

# BARNHEM MUANG MAI

*Monday, November 24, 2014 through Wednesday, January 21, 2015*



*It has been quite busy since last you heard from us - it has not only been high season in Thailand but also at Barnhem. It is not until now that we can sit down and reflect and tell about everything that has happened.*

Barnhem was naughty and cheated a little bit since we began to celebrate Christmas a little earlier than everyone else. On November 25, we were invited to dinner at *The Corner* by Jens Klein who runs the restaurant.

We have our great volunteers Thomas and Martin to thank for this - Jens is German just like they are and when Thomas and Martin were at the restaurant for dinner on one of their days off they told Jens why they were here on Phuket. Jens decided immediately to invite the entire Barnhem for an early Christmas dinner. What a luxurious evening! We had the restaurant entirely to ourselves and were treated to delicious food.

As if that was not enough, Jens had also purchased individual Christmas gifts for all our kids. Many thanks to Jens and his wonderful staff for an amazing evening. If you are going to Phuket and want to have a really, really delicious meal, we heartily recommend *The Corner* - [thecornerphuket.com](http://thecornerphuket.com).

Not too many days after our lovely dinner at The Corner, the time had come for something less fun - it was time for us to say goodbye to Thomas. Huge, calm, friend-

ly, funny Thomas - during his stint with us he managed to get into the hearts of both the children and the staff.

Thankfully, Barnhem's beloved Anne and Ole Andersen came to Phuket, two days prior to Thomas departure, to stay an entire month. A whole month meant even more Anne and Ole for us than usual. As soon as they had landed they were at Barnhem on their first visit - and many more were to come during their month in Phuket.

The time has come to tell you about the most important thing that has happened to Barnhem during the last couple of months – *Happy Tour* crossed the finishing line!

December 6 was finally here, the day we all had waited for so long. A wait that not only had been dull, which waiting so often tends to be, but a wait filled with fun and exciting stories and films that Happy Tour had provided us with on their way from Sweden to Thailand and Barnhem.

We were all slightly nervous before their arrival - we wanted so badly to give them the royal reception they so richly deserved. We think we made it – as we weren't alone in wanting to greet them when they crossed the line.

Barnhem's courtyard was filled with people - the children, staff, volunteers, relatives of the adventurers, a lot of people living on the island who wanted to be involved and SVT News. Together we were a few hundred who stood waiting with our flags.

And finally they arrived - we could not hold back the tears. What a feat, what joy! We probably do not need to tell you that a virtual hugging and kissing party broke out, that thousands and thousands of pictures were being taken and that this was going on for a good long time - although the guys also had time to squeeze in an interview with Stefan Asberg from SVT News and to play some football with the kids.

After the reception the guys finally got to go home to Gjörling's house to take a shower as the kind Gjörling family of course, had decided to lend their house to our heroes for a couple of weeks. The Gjörling family which always is helping Barnhem. In the evening we had a gala dinner at Barnhem for the boys and their families. Guess if Porn and Miaoo had done their utmost to make the food taste delicious. They had also made tasty cakes.

After dinner it was time for disco - and the guys showed the children that they were not only good at riding bikes, they could dance too!

Then Barnhem got a few glorious weeks as the guys showed up every now and then to play with the kids. When it came to football Mr. Lee was the greatest success – with the children pounding us all the time that they wanted Mr Lee to come and play football because he played so funnily, we're not sure if it was just a compliment - but Mr. Lee was absolutely up for it.

Thanks to Happy Tour even normal days became a fiesta - until it was time for the next real party with Gecko School on December 13.

The party was held at Nai Yang beach and we were treated to good food, swimming and slack-lining (tightrope walking). Huw and Celi have really managed to create a *great* small school with very engaged parents, so it is always a lot of adults and children when Gecko throws a party.

Everyone at Barnhem was invited so even friends of Barnhem, thus Calle, Lee, Nelly, Sonja, Anne and Ole joined as well.

We managed to squeeze in a little everyday-life before it was time to party again. This year we celebrated Christmas Eve at Paresa. The entire Barnhem had been invited and the kids were really excited before their appearance for Paresas hotel guests - they would sing three Christmas carols.

After they were told that they would sing, which was sometime in early November, they have been practicing for about an hour every night under the management of Non.

When we arrived at the hotel all the kids got a red shirt and a Santa hat, then there unfortunately was a little wait before it was time to perform. And waiting is not our children's strongest side, but they did actually really good. They sang their heart out and their performance was a success. After the performance each one of them got a present from Paresa submitted by guests.

After singing it was time for the Christmas dinner - we had yummy food and lots of good cakes before it was time for a very tired bunch of children to go home.

Around Christmas time a lot of friends of Barnhem came visiting so for a while we were surrounded by many lovely people.

The Noremark family - Lotta, Conny and Elsa - Lotta is Chairman of Happy Child, Conny helps as a photographer among many other things and Elsa - their daughter - will be a fantastic volunteer when she gets a little older. The Gjörling family - it's Thomas Gjörling who, among other things, each year organizes open house at the City Clinic in favour of Happy Child and the orphanage. The Ryden family - Folke Ryden that has produced two fantastic documentaries about 10 years after the tsunami. The Tenerz family - a family that not only supports Barnhem but also makes it possible for Neng to go to university - and as mentioned before, Anne and Ole.

It felt amazing that all these fabulous people had the opportunity to meet each other here at the orphanage they all help so much.

And yes, on December 26 ten years had passed since the tsunami, a tough day for many of us but a day that does not actually concern the children at Barnhem to any great extent. We do want to mention that the Swedish embassy organized a very nice memorial ceremony in Khao Lak. Thank you to everyone involved in the ceremony!

We celebrated New Year's Eve - as usual with a bunch of games in the day, and fantastic food and disco dancing in the evening. We had a lovely day and the kids went to bed kind of late after a fun-packed evening.

The New Year started with a farewell - it was time for Martin to return home. Just like Thomas, he will be greatly missed here at Barnhem.

But we also got a new volunteer – Vira - who came to us January 4.

During the period that has passed, we have been contacted by some really friendly people that work here in Phuket for Thomas Cook Northern Europe.

They contacted us because they both wanted to organize a fun day at Barnhem for our children - something they are pros at since part of what they do at work is entertaining children on holiday. They have also started collecting food supplies and set up information about the orphanage at their hotel - so that guests wishing to contribute can do so.

Peak season is over, most of our friends have returned to Scandinavia, and we enter a bit quieter period so Children's day with lots of fun organized by the staff at Thomas Cook is something we really look forward to.

And lastly, a few days ago a new volunteer arrived. Welcome Amanda!

*Warm regards,*

Sussi and Hans



*Early Christmas dinner at The Corner.*



*Waiting for the delicious food.*



*Presents for everyone!*



*Finally the adventurers arrived!*



*The children had made friendship bracelets for our heroes - time for Fredrik to receive his.*



*Sometimes being a reporter means that you have to wait....*



*Everybody loves Mr Lee.*



*English teacher Katheryn having a conversation with Bet, Bom and Meow.*



*Calle and Grandma. Two dear friends that have not met in a loong time.*



*Gecko school threw an afternoon Christmas party at Nai Yang - Mr Lee is teaching Gun some important slacklining lessons.*



*More slacklining, Calle and Nelly watch as Wea is supporting Lan on the rope.*



*The last picture of Mr Lee together with the kids before he started to cycle back all the way to China.*



*GM David Koegelenberg and the kids at Paresa.*



*Quite the nervous gang before they went onstage.*



*Not sure what is going on here but I am sure it is Hans, Bat and the Noremark family.*



*Did you know that you can support the kids by ordering the Barnhem bracelet - to find out more just go to [www.happychild.se](http://www.happychild.se)*