



## Expat Counsel

By James Finch and Nilobon Tangprasit

While we're on the subject of scams, here are a couple for the tourist in all of us, and those visiting Thailand. Let's say you've always wanted to visit a Bangkok landmark, such as Wat Arun, but have never found the time.

You are walking with your family towards the ferry that will take you across the river when a well-dressed young man stops you and identifies himself in perfect English as a medical doctor, a professor of engineering at a local university or maybe a former exchange student in your country who has just recently returned to Thailand. He asks where you're going, and you tell him.

"Oh," he says, "what a pity. The temple is closed because tomorrow is a national holiday. I have an idea, though, since your country has been so kind to me. My cousin runs a jewellery shop, a special one, where all the prices are wholesale and there's no bargaining. Since you have obviously been inconvenienced, I'll call him and see if he will accept a below-wholesale discount for you."

He asks your name, calls someone, a taxi shows up, and you're driven to a jewellery shop.

Don't buy at this shop. The goods may be genuine, but they'll be grossly overpriced.

By the way, national landmarks seldom close on holidays. For example, Wat Arun, Wat Phra Kaeo and Wat Pho are all open on national holidays.

Here's another tourist scam. Let's say you're wandering around Bangkok with a few hours to spare. You're accosted by a tuk-tuk driver or a taxi driver who asks you if you want to go shopping. If you do, he says, he needs the business and will drive you around for 10 baht an hour.

Wait a minute. Ten baht an hour? For a taxi? Why so cheap?

Because this driver survives on kickbacks from local merchants who sell at inflated prices only to tourists. You're better off going to normal shops and dealing with merchants who sell to the general public.

Here's a variation on that theme. Every man who's ever walked around central Bangkok after dark has probably been accosted by tuk-tuk drivers. More often than not they'll hand you a folded brochure containing four-colour group photos of beautiful women, scantily clad, around a hot tub. If you're looking for a little fun, why not jump in?

First, those aren't the women you'll find at the places where you'll be taken. Trust us.

Again, these tuk-tuk drivers live on kickbacks from the brothels, so it ends up being unnecessarily expensive. Also, there are lots of other scams that come out of a trip to one of these places. For example, many a tourist has had valuables stolen at a place like this — and then is too embarrassed to go to the police.

We will, over the next few weeks, cover sex crimes. As we will discuss in much greater depth then, private paid-for sex in your hotel room is not a crime in Thailand, as long as the prostitute is neither underage

# CRIMINAL LAW IN THAILAND

## Part LVI: Beware of scams III — tourists in paradise

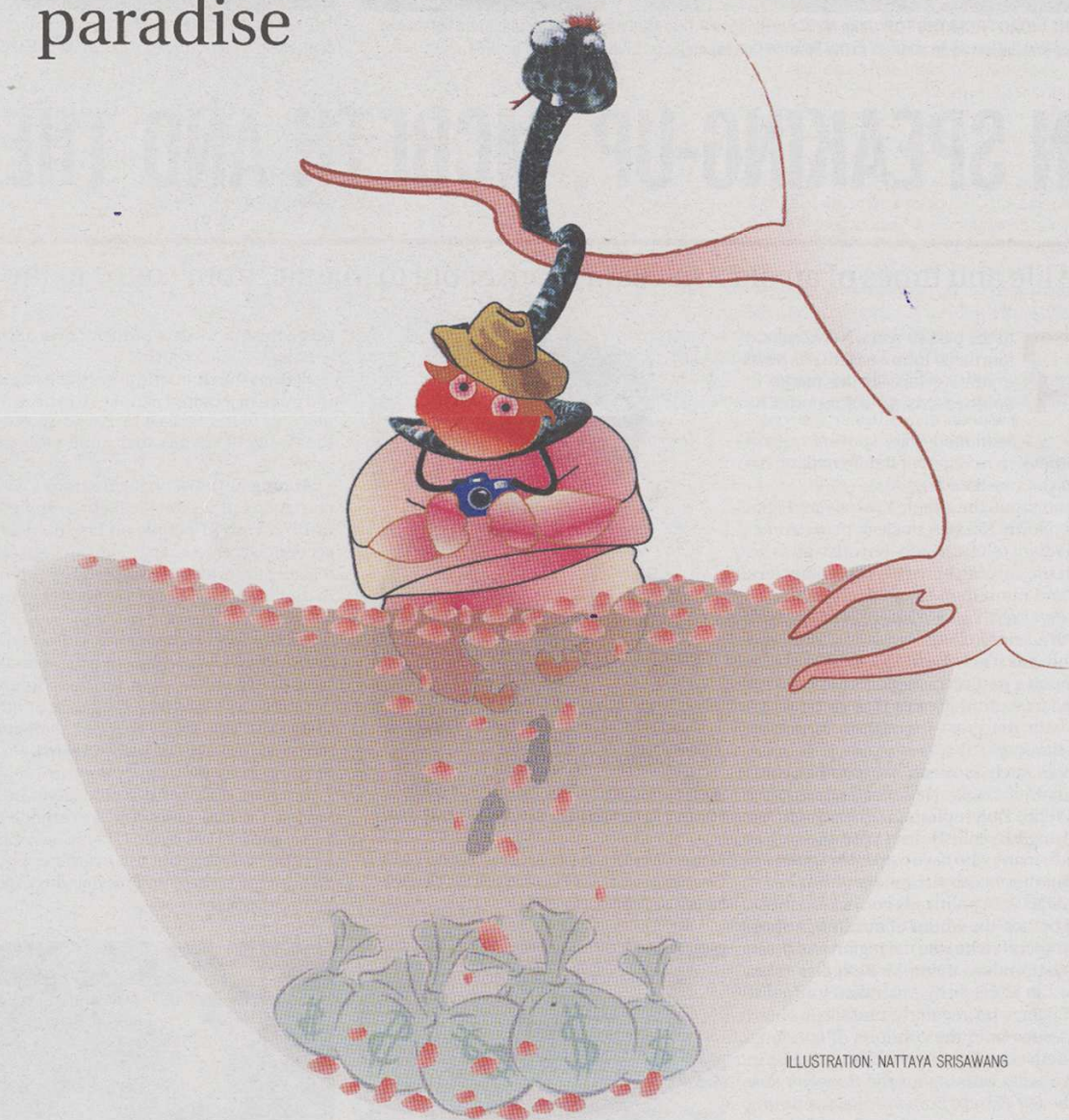


ILLUSTRATION: NATTAYA SRISAWANG

nor there as a result of kidnapping, deception, force or misuse of authority.

As we will explain at length later, however, it is a crime for you to be in a place of prostitution for the purposes of prostitution, ie sex. This will subject you to up to a month in jail. Where tuk-tuk drivers often take the passengers they solicit is an example of such a place of prostitution.

Here's another scam. If you're with people you don't know, such as in a brothel, or even just travelling on a bus and make

friends, don't accept anything to eat or drink from anybody. Police records are full of cases in which tourists are drugged by new acquaintances and have their money and valuables stolen. The drugging is often done by giving the victim food or drink laced with a drug that will cause them to lose consciousness.

If you've been the victim, or near victim, of a scam and you want to make sure others don't fall for it in the future, let us

know what it is. We plan to run further columns on scams in the near future. ■

James Finch of Chavalit Finch and Partners ([finch@chavalitfinchlaw.com](mailto:finch@chavalitfinchlaw.com)) and Nilobon Tangprasit of Siam City Law Offices Ltd ([nilobon@siamcitylaw.com](mailto:nilobon@siamcitylaw.com)).  
Researched by Sutatip Raktiprakorn and Sitra Horsinchai.

For more information visit [www.chavalitfinchlaw.com](http://www.chavalitfinchlaw.com).

Questions? Contact us at the email addresses above.