

Live and Invest  
**OVERSEAS**<sup>™</sup>



Volume 15 • Issue 8  
August 2022

# OVERSEAS

## Living Letter

**Overseas Living 101:**

**How To Discover  
Carmelita Gardens,  
Belize, In 3 Days**

Falling In Love With

# The Isle Of Aphrodite

**Earning Anywhere:**

**You Used To  
What?**

**Spotlight On:** 5 Years, 10 Countries, And 35 Cities Later...  
Still In Love With Latin America





## Earning Anywhere:

By Bart Walters, aka Bangkok Bart



### **You Used To What?**

After visiting me in Bangkok several years ago, my younger brother was completely enamored with the expat community.

"Everyone is so interesting," he said. "When you tell me about a business meeting or a party, I always imagine a menagerie of people... for sure someone is wearing a turban or a fez."

It has been a while since I've seen a fez, but the expat community throughout Thailand is as colorful as you'll find anywhere. It's an interesting place full of interesting people living interesting lives.

I know a hotel owner who used to be a software engineer in Silicon Valley. I know a retired prison guard from England who owns a used bookstore. I know a former Wall Street fund manager who teaches business English for corporations in the industrial estates near Pattaya.

I don't know anybody who does what they did "back home."

One thing I notice about getting older is that fewer things surprise you as years progress. You've seen it all... heard it all... nothing seems outrageous. But when you live in Thailand you get surprised on a regular basis.

A few years ago, I was writing for a Russian real estate magazine in Pattaya. The magazine was owned and run by a couple I assumed were Russian.

Alex was a nerdy computer type who spoke serviceable English and his wife Irena was the gorgeous outgoing editor/salesperson.

The only English word I ever heard her say was, "super." That's how I knew she liked my articles and approved them for translation... "Super Mr. Barton!"

As my relationship with their magazine expanded, I got curious and googled them. As it turns out, Alex is Russian and was a successful software developer in Moscow, holding patents on several graphic design applications.

Irena is Ukrainian, has a Masters' Degree in Architectural Design, and was a city planner in Kyiv. One night at dinner I asked Alex why they had left such lucrative and prestigious careers to live in Thailand.

Alex translated the question to Irena. She gave me a big smile and said the only other words I've ever

heard her speak in English, "No beach in Kyiv." That says it all somehow.

A few years ago, I was writing for a different real estate magazine, this one in English. My editor was a 40-something Englishman named Paul. He is a handsome fella, always sporting the latest fashion and cool haircut.

I wasn't surprised to find out he was a "hairdresser to the stars" in London, styling for some of the biggest names in U.K. showbiz. Since coming to Thailand, he had owned a bar, a bungee-jump business, and was now trying his hand at publishing. But that's not the surprising part.

During a lunch meeting, I mentioned that I was from Orlando, Florida. Paul said, "Oh really? I've spent a lot of time in Orlando."

After a little prying, I was floored to find out what occupation he had been pursuing in my hometown. Most people who know about Orlando associate it with Disney World and other vacation theme parks.

However, there is another industry that seems to be headquartered in Orlando that most people don't know. Televangelists. Round up the top 10 profitable TV preachers in the States and 7 of them are produced out of studios in West Orlando.

My editor Paul was being groomed by one of these tele-ministries to deliver the gospel while passing the collection plate via a 1-800 number. "I still have all the suits," he said with a goofy smile.

My own path to the Land of Smiles was no less intriguing. I'm ex-military. I'd done a number of jobs before I found my calling running an investor relations company for a decade or so.

At one point that business made me soul sick, so I cashed in my chips and moved to Thailand. Since then, I've been a college professor, a real estate developer, and now a published author.

During my real estate development adventure, I hired a crusty old Aussie named Marcus to oversee the

construction of my houses. He'd been in-country 10 years already and spoke every dialect of Thai I've ever heard of and even a little Lao.

Every day Marcus would show up and direct a team of 35 to 50 men and women who were building four three-bedroom pool villas near the southern tip of Phuket.

The results were stunning. I felt blessed to have met Marcus and paid him a big bonus when the project was completed.

One day I was having lunch in an outdoor café when a man approached me and in a strong Aussie accent said, "G'day mate. Are those your houses on Soi Sammakea?"

After I confirmed that it was my project he asked, "Who built those?"

I told him Marcus had been my project manager.

"Marcus from Queensland?"

I nodded my head yes.

"Do you know what he did back in Oz?"

I told him I had no idea.

The big Aussie cackled, "He was a hairdresser mate."

After so many years in Thailand, I wasn't even surprised.

All I could think to say was, "Well, he does have really nice hair."

The real lesson to learn from this phenomenon is that anyone can change their stripes. That's the kind of place Thailand is. Last year I published my first novel titled "Sunset Vertigo." This is the copy used as a teaser on the back cover:

"We never really know who a person was before they came to Thailand. What's more, it is impossible to know how extended exposure will affect someone once they get here. If you plan to come to Thailand for any length of time, my advice is to be prepared for changes, big and small. Some people come here and take on a new identity, shedding old lives like a reptile sheds its skin. Others find out who they really are. Like I said, be prepared."

When it comes to expats, sometimes the most interesting thing about them is who they used to be. 🗣️



### About The Author

Bart Walters is an American expat who has lived in Thailand for over 20 years. He's been active in real estate development and has written dozens of articles and essays about living and doing business in Thailand. Bart has also been a teacher at a major university in Bangkok and recently published his first book titled "Sunset Vertigo," a collection of short stories about expat life in Southeast Asia.