

A group of Buddhist monks and a young boy are walking up a white staircase outdoors. The boy in the foreground is carrying a large bag on his shoulder. The monks are wearing traditional orange robes. The staircase is flanked by white railings. In the background, there are trees and a building with a white roof.

**HERE A MONK,
THERE A MONK...**

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To say that our bus ride was interesting would be a gross understatement. From Takua Pa on the west, right across the country to Surat Thani, on the east coast, our bus journey took just three hours, stopping briefly, to pick up, or drop off, passengers. In fact, so brief were the stops that the bus barely came to a halt before haring off again!

If it hadn't been for the two rows of fans running the length of the bus, the heat would have been very unpleasant. The driver would wait for the interior of the bus to reach an uncomfortably high temperature before switching on the fans, and as soon as he deemed the temperature had dropped sufficiently, he switched them off again!

We had already heard that some of these bus rides could be pretty hair-raising, and now we could witness it at first hand! The bus had the almost requisite display of amulets, Buddha images and garlands of golden jasmine hanging from the rear view mirror, and this great cluster of Buddhist paraphernalia would swing alarmingly, mimicking windscreen wipers, as the bus careened