

"November full moon shines,  
Loi Krathong, Loi Krathong,  
and the water's high  
in the river and local klong"

-Loi Krathong's lyrics

# Loi Krathong

## The festivities of Loi Krathong were beyond my imagination

### About Deanna

A company executive who was on the Objective Shooting home programme in 2004, Deanna travels extensively in her work which takes her to many different countries.

□ The camera: Nikon D70

### Where do I begin?

It was five days madcap activities for Loi Krathong in Sukhothai, the first capital of Thailand. From monks offering at

6am in the morning to the touring of the historical parks, parades in the afternoon and finally to the fireworks that decorated the skies every night, it was a photographer's dream come true. There was so much to see and shoot that sleep seemed like a waste of time.

"Loi Krathong" is held on the full moon night of the twelfth lunar month. This year, it fell on 26 Nov 2004. 'Krathong' - a banana-leaf cup - is intended to float away ill fortune as well as

to express apologies to Khongkha or Ganga, the River Goddess. There are different variations to the festival. In the Chiang Mai, Khom Lois, balloon-like lanterns, are floated into the sky.

The festivities of Loi Krathong were beyond my imagination. There was a full programme for all 5 days. At the crack of dawn, locals prepared themselves for Loi Krathong by giving offerings to the monks as an act of good deed. Half a day was spent taking in the sight of the Historical Park. Before we dived into the festivities, we decided to pay a visit to Si Satchanalai-Chaliang Historical Park, a quiet ruin set among hills.

In the night, the park was transformed into a wonderland as it came to life. Laser and firework shows telling the story of Sukhothai and Loi Krathong were staged at Wat Mahathat. You could also watch it from the side of the Wat for free. Sticky rice in bamboo sticks, grilled and

cuttlefish, freshly made pomelo salad, beef noodles from the hawkers made a hearty picnic in the park. Women folk gather and made Krathongs that they sold for 10 baht to 40 baht. There's also the thrill of selecting your first Krathong and floating it into the river. Beautiful girls came from all over Thailand for the Miss Loi Krathong Competition. It was held at the main stage and the winner was paraded in the procession the next day.

But nothing prepared us the magnitude of the festivities on the actual day. The riverbanks were lined up with people by 7pm. The countdown for Loi Krathong was at 12 midnight sharp. That is when they float the King and Queen's Krathongs into the river. Fireworks lighted up a huge "Loi Krathong 2004" signboard and it was followed by a 30 minutes display of fireworks. It was crowded and I couldn't set down my tripod to get a decent shot of the fireworks but I was happy. A family had just set aside a space for me so that I could sit down with them to enjoy the fireworks.

By Deanna Ng

### Details

#### How to get there

If you're on a shoestring budget, fly to Bangkok via the budget airlines and take an 11pm night coach from the northeastern terminal to Sukhothai. A bus ticket would cost about 256 baht (abt SGD\$12) and arrive in Sukhothai at 6am in the morning, saving you 1 night's accommodation.

#### Where to stay

Book your accommodations early, as Sukhothai is one of the most popular locations for both Thais and Tourists to celebrate Loi Krathong. Sukhothai is divided into old city and new city. Sukhothai Historical Park is in the Old City, Thai Village Hotel is located 1 km from the Historical Park. Great when you're walking to the park at 5am in the morning for the monk offering. For reservations, go to [www.thaivillagehotel.com](http://www.thaivillagehotel.com).

#### Where to go

Rent a bicycle and cycle around the park. For 20 baht per day, it could save you a lot of walking and bring you to the monuments that are further out. Bike rentals are readily available outside the park. Most bicycles have a basket in front. Save yourself from carrying those heavy camera bags. Head out to Si Satchanalai-Chaliang Historical Park by taking a public bus from Sukhothai Bus Terminal in the New City. It's about 1 1/2 hrs to 2 hrs ride. Bike rental is available at the bus stop right outside the park. Sawngthaew is a lorry converted into a public bus by putting planks across its seats. For 5 baht per person, it could bring you to the historical park directly from anywhere in the old city or to the new city for a 10 baht. If you're planning to head anywhere in the morning, take the Saamlaw (a modified tuktuk) because the Sawngthaew are packed with students heading to school. It cost slightly more at about 20 - 40 baht per person.

For more information about the festival, visit <http://www.loikrathong.net/>

