



Naturist tourism in Thailand shows 20 percent growth in 2019

Naturist tourism in Thailand showed a 20 percent growth in the first six months of 2019 compared to same half year in 2018.

According to the statistics collected by Naturist Association Thailand from all the naturist resorts in Thailand, there were 735 more rooms sold during the first half year of 2019 than in the first half of 2018.

Naturist tourism in Thailand is not experiencing the downward trend that tourism in Thailand in general is suffering this year, but the expansion has slowed down during the first half of 2019. Last year, in 2018, the naturist resorts enjoyed a 65 percent increase in the first half of the year. And the year before the sector had a 90 percent growth in the first six months - almost doubling its number of room nights.

Naturist tourists are individual travellers with a preference for resorts where they can be naked at all times without offending other people. They are generally in the higher income bracket, higher educated, more health conscious and more culturally sensitive than the average tourist. They are also generally more sociable and friendly towards fellow resort guests.

Naturist Association Thailand started measuring the growth of the sector in 2016. Since then, the total number of room nights has been expanding faster than any other tourism sector in Thailand. Total room nights in 2016 were 2774 rooms. In 2017 it expanded 75 percent to 4813 room nights. In 2018 it expanded further to 7090 room nights. So far, the number of room nights recorded during the first half of 2019 is already higher than for the whole year of 2017.

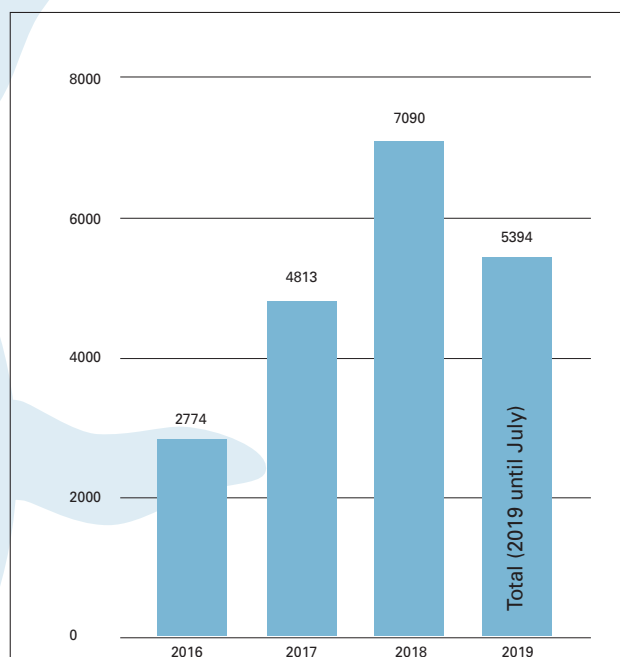
To catch up with the growth, Naturist Association Thailand participated in the spring 2019 Thai Tieaw Thai exhibition in Bangkok. The purpose was among others to network with the Tourism Authority of Thailand regions also present at the exhibition to ask for their help in locating potential resorts in their region or province that might be suitable for changing market to being a naturist resort. They would typically be small to media resorts, located relatively isolated from the mainstream tourism areas and suffering from



Naturist Association Thailand had a booth at the recent tourism exhibition in Bangkok. Founders Gregers Moller and Disraporn Yatprom are seen left and right. In the middle is Office Manager Woraporn Praditthanusorn.

the current downward trend for European, American and Australian tourists.

Naturist resorts are being evaluated by the board of Naturist Association Thailand on an individual basis and sign in case of approval a contract which binds them to follow the strictly non-sexual concept of naturism. In return, Naturist Association Thailand helps promote the resorts towards the increasing number of naturists travellers from around the world. Currently, Thailand has only seven naturist resorts.



Naturism? For sure!

Source: www.dasbiber.at/content/fkk-na-klar

No shy people please! Why Naturism should experience a revival, especially among young people, and what the sight of "leathery, flabby" buttocks can do for our own body feeling.

The first time always costs a lot of overcoming. I still know how, suddenly, I felt completely different when I saw the panel with the inscription "Naturism" on the way to the "Dechantlacke" in the "Lobau" (Austria). The idea of taking off my clothes in front of many strangers turned into an embarrassing nightmare in my mind's eye. My boyfriend at that time, who had a hippie mother and who was a true naturist fan, persuaded me to try it at least once. Maybe it was my education that initially got in my way. In my family nudity always was a taboo. And, even if that had not been the case: of course, visiting a naturist site is not for everyone. Although Vienna and naturism have a special relationship.

NATURISM AS A REALITY-CHECK

That among the usual naturist visitors one finds mainly elder people, quickly got also clear to me on my first visit at the Dechantlacke. Meanwhile that is four years ago. Today I can say: nude bathing is getting popular again among young people. It seems to me that during the years I regularly do it, more and more people of my age are nude at those places. But that varies from bathing place to bathing place, as well as that it depends on the weekday of the visit which kind of clientele one may encounter. I still know that at my first visit there also was a group of students who had settled directly on the water. They were all as talkative as they were naked. One of them was plucking a guitar. Then, slowly, as I myself also dropped one garment after the other, I felt more and more comfortable. Somehow it reassured me that so many elder people were around us, because seeing how "real" bodies look alike had put me back to reality. With the whole #Insta madness and the filter-optimized bodies one sees every day in the network, you actually lose the connection to reality. Perhaps naturism is the ideal counter-blow to all these rigorous expectations of our bodies and an instrument with which one can take action against the oversexualization - especially of the female body.

Those people one can see on the lawn are not Hollywood actors, fitness bloggers or - if you like

- porn actors. But normal people, like you and me. Some of them had a bit more on their hips, others were completely hairy or looked ten years older, because their skin was already so strongly tanned by the sun. The categories of beauty in naturism are different from that outside. Beauty does not mean to have the hottest, fitness-trained body, or the most fashionable swimsuit. It is much nicer to see how such bathers enjoy the water and the sun on their bare skin, or how a group of students relax by the water, eating and reading.

THE FIRST RULE: THOU SHALT NOT GAPE!

Laura is 28 years old and still remembers her first naturist bathing day. She was 17 at that time and had accompanied her older sister and a few friends to the Lobau. Nudity was quite normal in her parents' house. She grew up in a house with a garden, where her mother used to sunbath topless during summertime. "At the beginning, being nude at the Dechantlacke was quite normal to me. But soon I noticed an elderly man who stared at me. Only then it got very unpleasant to me", she says. This unspoken, number-one rule in the naturist world was broken: Thou shalt not gape.

Although this rule is so obvious, one can never be sure that all people will comply. In the extreme case, the counter-action always helps: "Why do you look that stupidly?" Most gapers feel caught in this confrontation and, embarrassed, look away.



LIVE AND LET LIVE

"If you do not make a big deal out of nudity, you are on the safe side", Laura knows. There are some bathing places in Vienna that are so to say unofficially-officially open for nude bathing. These include, in addition to the Dechantlacke, one side of the "Ziegelteich", or some sections of the "Donauinsel". During my research, I came across one question for which the opinions differed a lot. Do we really have to be totally naked at a naturist site if this is not a regulated nude zone? In other words: Is it really mandatory, for example at the recreation area in the Ziegelteich, to pull down clothes, if this is not being checked?

Laura has a clear opinion to that: "I feel bad and being observed, if someone comes to the naturist bathing place who does not undress. For that, you can simply go to another place for bathing, where you have to wear clothes. I know many people who would not even undress in a sauna if that would not be mandatory. But for naturism, this should always be valid.

Markus is 33 years old and from time to time visits a naturist bathing place in Vienna. There is a designated naturist zone in the "Gänsehäufel" where everybody must undress - that simply is the rule there. But in the Lobau I do not need to undress. I think that should be up to you whether you want to be naked or not. Personally I prefer to keep my swimsuit in the Lobau, because I just feel better there." Laura as well as Markus seem to be right, out of various reasons.

At the end, the incredibly good feeling of the cool wetness and the hot sun on the skin wins - without the annoying synthetic material. That way nude bathing is also a sustainable affair for the environment. So, what are you waiting for?

Events October

28.09. - 06.10. 2019

Family Meeting South Europe

El Portús - Cartagena - Murcia (Spain)

Organised by FEN, Contact: fen@naturismo.org



18. - 20.10. 2019

Eunat Swimming Gala

Paris, France

Registration forms are available since 17.02.2018 in the open EuNat Download under „EuNat Events“

Contact: laurent@naturistes-paris.fr



Correction

Unfortunately we had an error with our portrait series at the last edition of Focus.

The picture which should be of Werner Zimmermann is also a photo of Eduard Frankhauser.

We apologize for the mistake.

Info Focus December

Deadline to remit articles: 20th November

Release of Focus latest: 05th December

LE BETULLE Villaggio Naturista

Near the Alps, at 25 km from the center of Turin, 20 minutes from the airport Caselle. Caravans, plots for Recreation Vehicles and tents, completely equipped bungalows, caravans with chalet.

Pool, solarium, jacuzzi and sauna. Clubhouse restaurant, petanque, mini-tennis, table tennis, Volleyball. Mountain bike circuits and trails in the Park Mandria

Sights: Venaria Royal Palace and Park, St. Michele Abbey, Rivoli Castle, Mole Antonelliana, Egyptian Museum, Piazza S. Carlo, Basilica of Superga.

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PORTRAIT - Paul LAMBRECHTS

Recorded by Stefan Lambrechts on basis of some conversations and notes of Paul.



During summertime 1951, at the age of 5, Paul discovers naturism on the "Île du Levant, the "naturist" island in the Gulf of Lyon.

They went to the Île du Levant twice. Paul still remembers very well that his Mother Irène did not like at all the turbulent boat transfer - the Île du Levant could be reached by boat only - and that they attended a religious service on the island with the family.

On his return, his father Robert started looking for a naturist club in Belgium. They joined the "De Spar" as a family, but during the naturist activities the parents were separated from their children. As this was not the naturism Robert and some others had in mind, some members of "De Spar" founded Athena in 1955.

Robert and his young son Paul started searching for a site for the recently founded Athena. He took the young Paul with him during his researches till the islands of "Zeeland". At the end, a site was found at Ossendrecht, on the Belgian-Dutch boarder. Robert sold his house to buy the site.

Almost immediately the youth group "Young Athena" was founded, where Paul spent some beautiful years.

In the meantime his father founded the FBN (Belgian Naturist Federation), which he represented at the INF-FNI at Hélimonde in 1964. Paul was also present at the congress and participated at the youth meeting. That is how he came in contact with the INF-FNI for the first time. His father did not lose much time and made sure that the next INF-FNI Congress would take place at Athena.

It was an enormous success; the delegates were escorted by the police to Antwerp, where there they were welcomed at the City Hall.

Paul, then aged 19, transported all the people around by a shuttle bus.

After this success Robert was offered the INF-FNI secretariat. Robert accepted this mandate and Paul accompanied him to fetch the complete administration from Switzerland to install it in the manor house in the Sint Thomasstraat in Antwerp, where the Lambrechts family lived. That way the INF-FNI members regularly came back on visit.

In 1970 Paul married Rita and a big party took place at Athena.

Three years later Paul and Rita settled in the house at the entrance of the site in Ossendrecht. The house was arranged so that the INF-FNI members could stay in the house when meetings took place. That way, during breakfasts, Paul could better become acquainted with them.

In June 1974 a first interfederal meeting was organized at Ossendrecht, an informal meeting with the representatives of the Western European countries. After this a Congress followed at Agde in August, where Paul and Rita were present and of which Paul still has very good memories. This is the place where the definition of naturism was fixed.

In only a few decades Athena has grown from a relatively small association to the largest association in Europe, with 14.000 members, 5 domains and 7 sections. And as Athena is active both in Belgium and in the Netherlands, Athena is affiliated with both the Belgian and the Dutch federations.

Then, another period started for Paul. His fatherhood required a lot of energy and he established a career in the electrical industry where he worked during long days in a planning department in Brussels.

However, shortly later, the terrible news came: his father Robert had cancer.

To complete the work on Athena, Paul started to work for Athena, first as part-time, but soon as full-time.

On 17th December 1982, his father Robert died of cancer. At the funerals that many people showed up that they had to follow the service outside the church.

One week later, the central committee appointed Paul as the new president of Athena.

The first priority was to create a large clubhouse at Ossendrecht, the great dream of Robert, of which he had seen the first drafts on his deathbed.

In 1984 the construction authorization was finally granted and the first shovel could be put on the ground. It took a little bit more than 2 years to finish and it is still appreciated on daily basis.

At Athena Helios, in the vicinity of Brussels, another site Of Athena, the focus was on the 25 m pool, which was solemnly opened during the "Interfédérale" in 1984, after 9 years of volunteer work.

At Athena Le Perron, in the Belgian Ardennes, a large clubhouse has been built meanwhile.

Athena was doing very well.

After the death of Paul's father, Robert Daelemans took over the presidency of the Belgian Federation. Paul himself was appointed Vice-President, but later on became President of the Belgian Federation.

The combination of the presidency of Athena and the Belgian Federation induced a high workload, with weeks of more than 80 hours work.

Of course it was Athena that took the highest part of time.

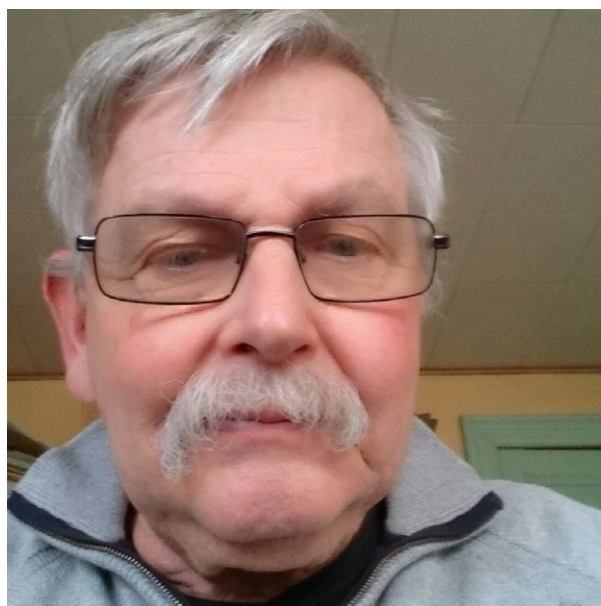
Beyond the daily management and the new initiatives, the adaption of the legislation, the reinforcement of rules and controls, it was necessary to adapt everything that already had been achieved. For example, the 25 m pool at Athena Helios, which had been opened only a few years earlier, was reduced. For decades the campings situated in non-compliant zones in Belgium had been tolerated until the 1990's, when 40 to 50% of the campings disappeared, according to estimations.

After 7 years of litigation Athena Gravensteen at Sleidinge and the daytime recreation area of Athena Heidegouw at Houthalen also had to close their doors. The same at Athena Le Perron: the pool had to be completely renovated in order to get a new camping permit.

Athena kept its head out of the water, but the years were not easy.

Paul decided not to run for president of the FBN anymore and Arlette Debbaut succeeded him. A little bit later, however, Paul was appointed administrator of the INF-FNI at Rutar Lido and when Bart Wijnberg resigned shortly afterwards from his post as president of the INF-FNI, Paul was temporarily integrated in the Central/Executive Committee of the International Federation. However, later on he did not apply for this position anymore.

In the meantime Paul continued to work hard for Athena, but he also continued his work for the federations. He ensured that the congress for 25th anniversary of the INF-FNI was organized at Ossendrecht. This went very well, with a lot of enthusiastic



collaborators. But the people also experienced the exciting and unforgettable departure of Tom Operti, then in the terminal phase. He was greeted by everyone when he left the congress, under the supervision of the police.

After the presidency of Arlette for the Belgian Federation for a while, Paul took over the reins of the federation and came back as president during various international congresses and meetings, where very often he acted as mediator.

Some years ago Paul resigned as president of the Belgian Federation. But Athena remains active at the national as well as the international level. National or international events are organized each year at Athena.

Many things have changed, also on the sites of Athena during the last years. At Ossendrecht a permit has been obtained to establish cottages and rental housings have been installed.

This holiday formula is more and more popular. Rentals of Pods and Safari tents are also foreseen at Waimes and Meerbeek.

This year a special attention has been granted for motorhomes at Ossendrecht. Athena wants to welcome all the naturists, regardless whether they come by camping car, caravan or tent, whether they want to rent a luxury Safari tent, or simply want to spend a day at Athena. Hereby we try to be ready for the next generations of naturists.

Beginning at Autumn Paul's sons Stefan and Thomas will lend a hand, which will be necessary given the precarious health status of his wife Rita, and his own health is not too reassuring either.