

# Destined to run

ING Thailand Temple Run, 19 March 2006

By Roman Floesser

Destination marathons are the coming thing. Over the last few years they have surged in popularity, and the phenomenon is unlikely to let up. Combining running with a holiday means that fast times and personal bests are some way down the list of what tourist runners look for in a race. That's good news for an event like the ING Temple Run. Fast times are not part of the package, but the run has a lot more to offer than that.

Started by the general managers of a hotel and a tour company in 2002, the run was always envisioned as a destination marathon. Less than 400 runners, including 34 from 12 foreign countries, participated in the first edition. The ING Thailand Temple Run has grown since then to accommodate more than 3000 runners including 645 foreign runners from 45 countries.

The location of the race is itself appealing. Samut Songkram is Thailand's smallest province situated some 85km south east of Bangkok. It is known for its coconut, banana and lychee plantations as well as its floating markets. Millions of fireflies glow at night along the Mae Klong River. Combined with the countless temples scattered throughout the countryside all this makes the setting of the ING Thailand Temple Run one of the most beautiful race locations on the marathon calendar.

Living up to its name, the event starts and finishes at Wat Pumrindudeethong, a temple that is home to fifteen Buddhist monks. The monks not only play host to the race but the abbot of



## MEN

1	Boonchoo CHUNDECHA	THA	2:40:08
2	Jirisak SUTTHICHAT	THA	2:40:08
3	Umnuai THONGMIT	THA	2:40:08
4	Solchai CHOOSAKHUL	THA	2:40:13
5	Khordae SENMOOD	THA	2:42:23
6	Anusak PHITSAWONG	THA	2:42:47
7	Meechai CHOOCHEEP	THA	2:43:03
8	Suphit CHANTHARAT	THA	2:44:05
9	Chadaruk CHAIYAKHAMCHORN	THA	2:44:33
10	Jiratthikarn BOONMA	THA	2:47:45

## WOMEN:

1	Sunisa SAILOMYEN	THA	3:15:20
2	Khetmanee SENAPHAN	THA	3:16:32
3	Saiphin PATJUN	THA	3:23:31
4	Khan KHOOSUWAN	THA	3:24:20
5	Praphan KHAMBURI	THA	3:27:14
6	Thanaporn PIEMSAKHUL	THA	3:36:18
7	Ashley CLARK	USA	3:39:16
8	Pratheep THONGCHAI	THA	3:39:44
9	Dhutsanee SAEHENG	THA	3:48:59
10	Unchalee WONGPANIJ	THA	3:53:13

## HALF MARATHON:

## MEN

1	Boonthung SRISONG	THA	1:13:14
2	Umnai SRICHARD	THA	1:13:35
3	Somyhod KIJDUM	THA	1:14:19

## WOMEN

1	Diane FUSEALDO	AUS	1:27:07
2	Phatcharee CHAITHONGSRI	THA	1:28:42
3	Sonthiya CHAIWAWE	THA	1:29:52



To the sound of a gong, runners are sent on an out and back course leading through typical Thai villages, through fruit plantations, rice paddies and past more than twenty temples.

Australians, Americans, Danes, Germans Japanese and Singaporeans around the table and the atmosphere is relaxed.

In the evening runners are treated to a five star pasta dinner. The official race hotel puts on a great Italian buffet and the executive chef himself prepares the pasta for the hungry athletes. The medical director provides some last minute tips on how to cope with the heat before everyone heads back to their rooms for a short night's sleep. At 03.00 the shuttle buses leave for the one-hour ride to the race site. Breakfast is served on the bus and many runners try to catch some more sleep.

Coping best with the lack of sleep was local runner Boonchoo Chandecha. The reigning Southeast Asian Marathon Champion had to fight tough resistance from Jirasak Sutthichat and Umnuai Thongmit. All three of them crossed the finish line

neck and neck. The finish line judge declared Boonchoo the winner after the official timing recorded all three runners with the same time.

The female category was less hard fought with Thai star Sunisa Sailomyen winning her first race back after childbirth. She finished just a minute ahead of Khetmanee Senaphan.

In the half marathon race Boonthung Srisan again proved to hard to beat, winning his fifth consecutive ING Thailand Temple Run. In the women's race Diane Fusealdo from Australia became the first ever foreign runner to win at the event.

Next year's race is set for 18 March 2007 and promises to be again an exotic destination on the AIMS race calendar.

the temple also blesses runners in the traditional Thai opening ceremony before the race gets under way.

To the sound of a gong, runners are sent on an out and back course leading through typical Thai villages, through fruit plantations, rice paddies and past more than twenty temples. Thai music bands and supportive locals cheer the runners along the course and even the numerous dogs give a supportive bark.

Water stations are plentiful on the course and provide welcome refreshment for runners as temperatures soar from a mild 22C at the marathon start at 05.30 to a scorching 35C by 10.00. There are sponges, local fruits, sticky rice and plenty of water and

electrolytes served by the always smiling volunteers.

Foreign runners get a chance to see the course on a race site inspection the day before the event. The tour also gives runners a chance to experience some of the sights of the province which may escape them during their fleeting visit during the race. A visit to the famous floating markets is obligatory.

Lunch is served at a local home stay on the river banks where there is a choice of the famous Tom Yum Koong soup, delicious Thai curries, local river fish and the traditional fried rice. The easy Thai hospitality gives runners a chance to get to know each other and catch up on the global running scene. There are Brits,

