

When There's a Wheel, There's a Way

Taxi rides need not be a daunting task if you know what to expect and how to deal with the unexpected

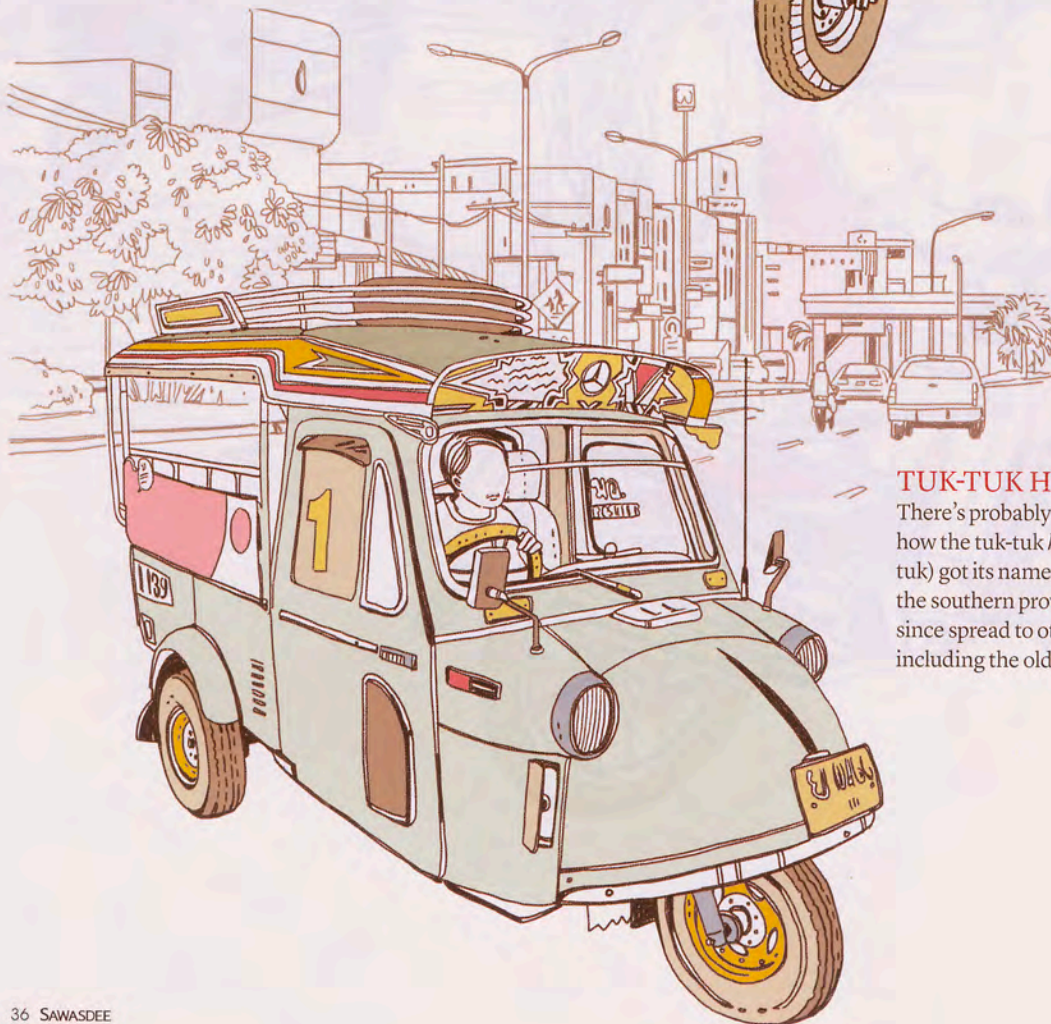
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Not everyone can hail a cab in Thailand. In fact, if it were up to me, cabbing would be a national sport. I have, on many occasions, clung heroically onto handlebars of taxis travelling at warp speed, balanced myself on motorcycles as they whiz through Bangkok's gridlocked roads, and flagged down tuk-tuks with a high-pitched shriek. For good measure, I've even mastered the art of taming a grouchy cabbie. If you've got determination, dexterity and appetite for adventure, a taxi ride doesn't necessarily have to be a nerve-wracking experience. →

TUK-TUKS

These motor tricycles make the picture-perfect postcard, but some people may not think inhaling a lungful of carbon monoxide is worth that Instagram moment. Still, who says you have to spend hours on one? Just go for a quick spin so you get a feel of it. A trip from the Grand Palace to Wat Pho, for example, should cost around 30 to 40 baht. Bargaining is acceptable. There are no tuk-tuk ranks, so just hail one at your convenience.

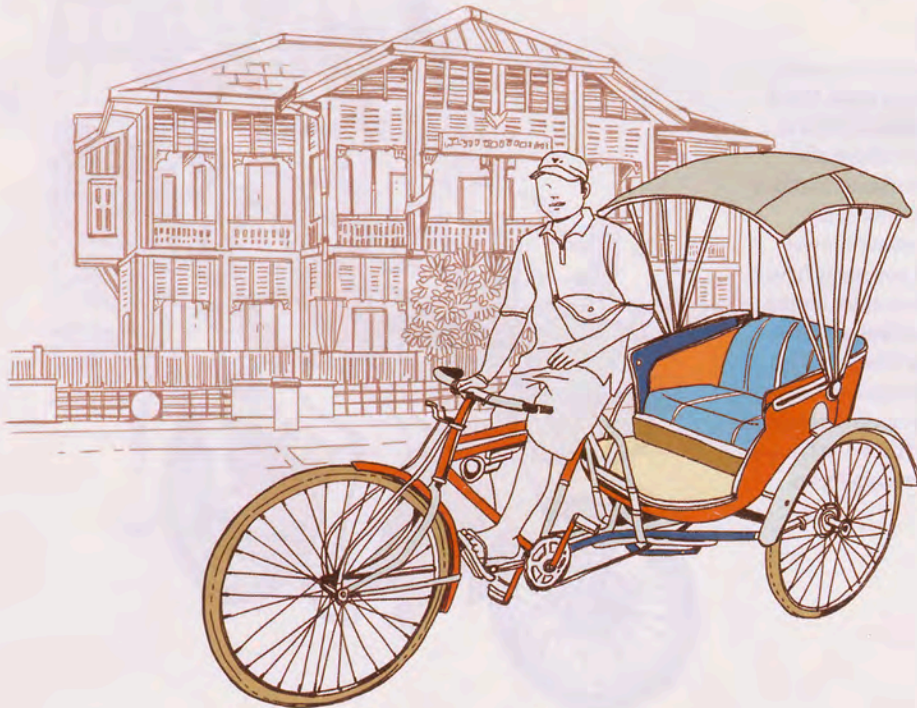


TUK-TUK HUA KOB

There's probably no need to explain how the tuk-tuk *hua kob* (frog's tuk-tuk) got its name. Originally found in the southern province of Trang, it has since spread to other parts of Thailand, including the old capital of Ayutthaya.

HORSE CARRIAGES

Yes, horse carriages are still used in the northern province of Lampang – the only place in Thailand with such luxury. If you're visiting this charming city, be sure to try this out.



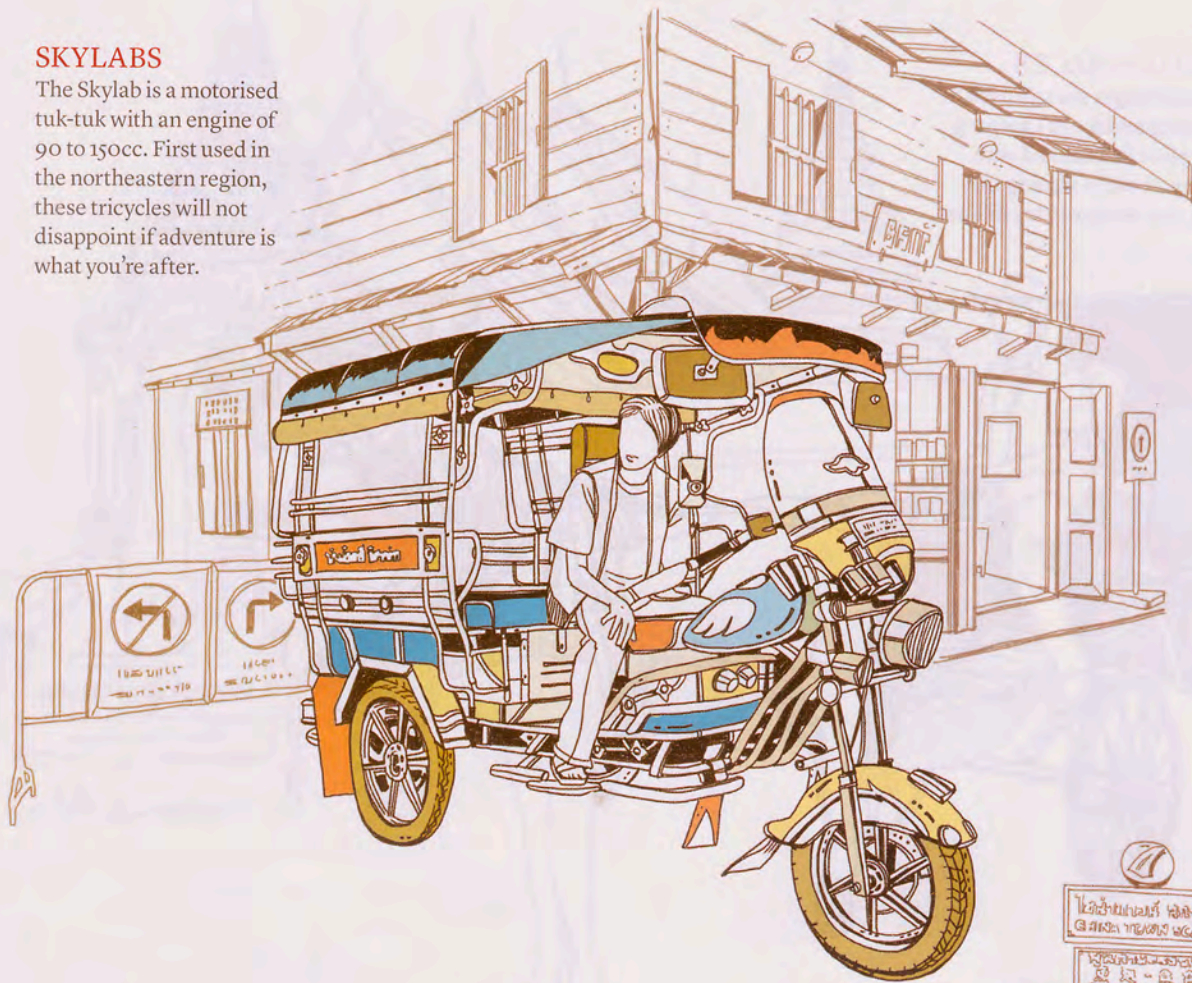
CHAKRAYAN SAMLORS

(three-wheeled bicycle carriages)

In a world that's evolving so rapidly, you've got to give it to the *chakrayan samlor* drivers for doing what they do. Guilt will cause almost every passenger to make himself or herself weigh as little as possible but believe me, you will end up looking silly. Just enjoy the ride, because these guys are much fitter and stronger than you think. The best thing you can do for them is to leave a handsome tip if you're happy with their services.

SKYLABS

The Skylab is a motorised tuk-tuk with an engine of 90 to 150cc. First used in the northeastern region, these tricycles will not disappoint if adventure is what you're after.



MOTORCYCLE TAXIS

Bangkok is probably one of the few places in the world with motorcycle taxi services. You'll see groups of men sporting numbered bibs in virtually every part of the capital (from afar they resemble a team of netball players huddled together). You'll need to rely on your sense of balance, as he'll most likely weave his way through traffic. Only get one if you really have to, and insist on wearing a helmet since it's the law. The most salient lesson I've learned from "being in a hurry" is to keep my knees tucked in as tight as I can to avoid unwanted contact. Most motorcycle queues have prices displayed at their makeshift "station", but if they don't, make sure you agree on a price before hopping on. Bargaining is acceptable.

