

# Thai Massage Training at Wat Pho



***By: Keitan, a Thai massage student and practitioner***

***The information on this page reflects my experience as a student in February 2002. This page is NOT the official school site, but it reflects the experience of a student who attended the school. If you would like to visit the school's site, please go to <http://www.watpho.com/>.***

Among the steam and smog of Krung Thep (Bangkok) lies a place where people are trained to press, stretch and pull each other to help maintain optimal health and flexibility. It was here at the Wat Pho Massage School that I decided to get training in massage to help people do what is also known as a passive yoga. I have been doing yoga for over three years now, and feel that its benefits fully compliment any exercise or meditation practice. For me, yoga is the way to keep my physical being happy and healthy in the world, while helping me to reach a deeper connection between mind, body and spirit. Thai massage was a natural addition to this practice.

The Wat Pho Massage School is one of many schools that train people in the art of Thai massage. This school is probably the best known around Thailand as well as outside the country, but the thing that attracted me to this school was the flexible schedule of class offerings. There are three classes offered for massage, Traditional Thai Massage, Foot Massage, and Therapeutic Acupressure Massage (a.k.a. Advanced Thai Medical Massage Therapy).

The teachers at Wat Pho are conditioned to foreigners. Unfortunately, there are many foreigners who come to

this school simply to spend some time and money to earn the certificate, but don't take the instruction seriously. Nevertheless, the teachers are extremely eager to train the students who are serious about learning massage.

Here are some helpful tips to get good training at Wat Pho Massage School:

**REMEMBER:** The certificate you receive at the successful completion of a class does not replace the training required in your country

Come early to register on the day you wish to start the course (around 8 - 8:30 a.m.)

Bring cash or use your ATM card to pay for the courses.

Finish the course in as short of time as possible (full time studying). This will help you get matched with a serious partner.

Come showered.

Bring a pen or pencil to take notes on the materials they give you. Good notes are critical to remembering the methods when you have returned home.

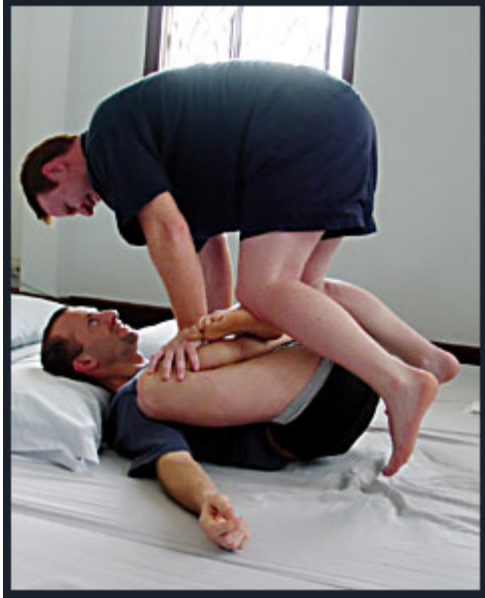
For more information, you can try to contact the school (WatPoTTM@netscape.net). They usually respond with business relations and opportunities.



### **My massage school experience:**

Since I came to Bangkok solely to learn Thai massage, I started the first course as soon as I was over most of my jetlag. I booked a room at a nearby guest house and decided to stay there for the duration of my stay in Bangkok. The innkeeper, Ton, and her family made my stay in chaotic Bangkok a pleasant one with a super-clean room and family atmosphere. The location of the guesthouse was also only a fifteen-minute walk from the school, and also located adjacent to the Indian section of the city.

The first course was great! My teacher was Preesha, a skilled and talented teacher who was very involved in getting our technique right. I was in a group of four people, and was finally paired with Mike, a Scottish guy who lives in Berlin. Cheryl was an American living in the north of Thailand and Kwatchi was an ex-pat who also lives in Germany. Together we spent the five days twisting and pressing each other until we got to a point where it all came together.



I took a one-day break after the first five days were over. Then I signed up for the Foot Massage course. This course was one level down with many chairs and ottomans. While the Traditional and Acupressure courses use no oil, the foot massage uses a mixture of oil and lotion as part of the massage. This was a three-day course of six hours each day (please note that the current foot massage course is now a five-day course). I was blessed again with a great teacher named Aey. She was a sweet and shy teacher who was serious about teaching the proper technique. I was paired up with a nice guy named Peter from Bulgaria. He had no massage experience but was very quick and eager to learn. We spent the three days together, and at the end I was able to do all the 60+ steps without looking once at my notes. Peter was almost able to do it without looking at his notes, but Aey made him stay late on the third day until he could get it all right.



The last course I took was Therapeutic Acupressure Massage. Normally the school tries to put you back with the same teacher as the Traditional course, but Preesha had a full complement of students. Instead, he matched me with Ooy. Ooy was a tiny teacher (compared to westerners), but she had a powerful thumb! Her English was the best of all the teachers I had, and she was really interested in learning more. So, she taught me acupressure and I taught her anatomical words.

Learning acupressure can be quite painful until one gets it right, and since I was the only student from Ooy that was there to learn the Level two course, I took turns with her level one student from Japan named Mayumi, and I also shared training with another level two student from another teacher named Moi, from Wales. Between the three of us and the two teachers, we all received good training and learned a lot about precise energy points in the body. And as you can see, Ooy liked to have her photo taken, and always asked if her hair was ok.





All in all I had a great experience and felt fully prepared to start my practice upon returning to Germany. I have started already and my wife, friends and in-laws have been the lucky recipients of my new skills. Thai (yoga) massage may not be the most relaxing type of massage, but afterwards it is sure to have the most lasting effects that will keep you coming back for more!

Namaste und Sawatdii Krap!

Keitan