

Bangkok**THAT SINKING FEELING**

Bangkok was once called “The Venice of the East,” a reference to the days when boatmen paddled the local version of gondolas through the sprawling Thai capital on a vast system of canals. In coming decades, both cities are in danger of disappearing underwater. Though an international effort to shore up Venice has been under way for years, notes Anond Snidvongs, one of Thailand’s top disaster specialists, “I’m more worried about Bangkok resembling Atlantis.”

With increasing regularity, heavy rainstorms turn flood-prone Bangkok thoroughfares into soupy canals, often in just an hour.

Most locals tolerate the flooding with typical Thai aplomb. As floodwaters rise, swarms of kids can be seen bobbing playfully around cars, occasionally catching confused fish. However, the deluges are a portent of something less whimsical: According to the kingdom’s National Disaster Warning Center, by 2030 much of the Thai capital will be five feet below the surface. The culprits include inadequate drainage, uprooted coastal plant life and rising sea levels. But the most significant factor? The entire city is slowly sinking.

Originally built on a soggy marsh, Bangkok over the centuries has added layers of concrete and steel, not to

mention roughly 8 million inhabitants. All that weight, experts say, is slowly pushing Bangkok into the marsh. The flooding will increase by about 2.5 feet every decade, Snidvongs predicts.

The Thai government is considering a massive “Wall Around Bangkok” project to

hold back the tides, but for now the floods remain a soggy headache, choking traffic and sending street vendors fleeing. The local kids, however, are making the best of things. After all, where else can you go fishing with your bare hands in the middle of the street? —PATRICK WINN

**Kitzbühel, Austria****Cattle Call**

On a bright day in early autumn, a notably well-dressed herd of cows wends its way through the mountainous Austrian village of Kitzbühel. After a long summer spent grazing fresh grass in the high-altitude meadows, where

everything from precarious cliffside trails to lightning strikes poses real risk to hoof and limb, the cows come home to lower fields. It’s a rare season when every last one somehow survives, and on those occasions the villagers hold a raucous, spangled cow parade called the Almabtrieb. “The cow train is a celebration and a thank-you to God,” says farmer Nik Filzer. “We haven’t had one for twenty years.”

The parade begins at dawn, after the hair-raising overnight descent. At a staging area outside town, farmers dress their brown-and-white heifers in century-old bells and heirloom leather headpieces bearing images of saints or German sayings. Finally, each ruminant is wreathed in colorful paper flowers.

At noon the slow stampede arrives in town. Surrounded by beer-quaffing crowds, the cows—some 200 head—make their way slowly through quaint squares, past stately churches and designer boutiques gearing up for ski season. The clanging of the bells is deafening, but the crowds greet the parade with even louder cheers, perhaps in anticipation of the sweet milk, chocolate and savory cheese they’ll sample this winter. As for the bovine guests of honor, they seem mostly indifferent despite their finery. —RICH CARRIERO



Best coverage worldwide.



More phones that work in more
than 215 countries, like China.

att.com/global

Best coverage claim based on global coverage of U.S. carriers. Activation of international service required. ©2010 AT&T Intellectual Property. Service provided by AT&T Mobility. All rights reserved. AT&T, the AT&T logo, and all other marks contained herein are trademarks of AT&T Intellectual Property and/or AT&T affiliated companies. All other marks contained herein are the property of their respective owners. Coverage not available in all areas.