

## Happy New Year!

4 Jan 2010 by Jancis Robinson

For many of us, today feels like the first day back at work in earnest.

Thanks to the magic of modern communications, I have never been far from this site (as I hope you've noticed), but in the last two and half weeks I have also been in Bordeaux (see [Bordeaux – a city revamped](#)), Thailand and my native Cumbria. I feel mightily fortunate that, despite threats from snow, gridlock, black ice and a British Airways cabin crew strike, none of the journeys involved was painful. Indeed yesterday's drive back to London from the Cumbrian village seen here in a *colour* photograph taken on New Year's Day was almost delightful. Including a major shop at Britain's only pleasant [motorway service station at Tebay](#) in the south-eastern Lake District, the journey may have taken six hours, but the sun shone continuously, on the beautifully snowy fells initially, and there were no major traffic problems.

Our international flights just happened to escape the many dates on which there were significant delays, and our base at the defiantly modern Alila hotel on the beach at Cha Am two hours' drive south west of Bangkok (where we had tried to go in 2008 but were thwarted by political unrest in Thailand) turned out to be a great success. This was quite a triumph since we had benefited from no personal recommendations in advance, and our family of five extremely fastidious eaters was almost entirely dependent on the hotel's kitchen for three meals a day for a week. The only other possible place to eat within walking distance is shown above. It didn't open until Christmas Eve and its promise of 'free from toxic' vegetables did not exactly inspire confidence.



We had already pretended that 13 Dec in London was Christmas Day, and had enjoyed the whole tree, stockings, presents, turkey, pudding, over-eating bit. We were therefore able to devote most of our time in Thailand to our family's three favourite holiday activities: reading, eating and sloth. On the beach was a bar with various tropical fruits, drinks and the sign on the blackboard shown above left. But there was the most delightful reminder that 25 Dec was a special day when all 14 pupils at the local primary school appeared on the beach and treated us hotel guests to a performance of Christmas carols in



admirably good, if delightfully accented, English. Figgy pudding's all round.

The only shortcoming of the Thai holiday was the lack of affordable wine. Taxes are crippling and even perfectly serviceable local wines such as the Monsoon Valley range produced partly from their newish tourist destination vineyards near Hua Hin (complete with elephants) seem overpriced to visitors from Europe.

As Nick outlines in [Bangkok – first find your restaurant](#), our 36 hours in Bangkok on the way back to London were not without incident. And jetlag helped us get up early enough to race north on New Year's Eve in time to beat the traffic.



Anyway, enough of all that. I am now back at my desk in London, and we are all getting everything in place for our major survey of Burgundy 2008 later this month. The hundreds of tasting notes that I took at some of the best domaines while in Burgundy in November are ready for uploading to our database, a process that will begin this week preparatory to a thorough report on the basis of these visits and extensive tastings in London this month. I can see from the [Burgundy 2008](#) thread in our members' forum that there is considerable interest in this vintage, as well there might be, considering how surprisingly well some of the best wines have turned out. I'm very much looking forward, with a completely open mind, to seeing how the less glamorous wines are tasting.

But there will be very much more than burgundy to keep you entertained this month. Do please keep visiting. We intend to continue to add new material at our usual crazy frequency (typically three articles every weekday and two at the weekend), and always welcome suggestions for improvements. See the comment box below.

We thank you for your interest and wish you a wonderful decade.