

Travel Diary – Singapore and Malaysia (July-August 2016)

AUGUST 15, 2016

Now I'm home again it's time to share my diary – a list of flowers, dinners and a few steps climbed along the way! I'd highly recommend you use it to plan your next holiday – Singapore and Malaysia are amazing and you should definitely go! I don't think this will be my last post about the trip though as I've still got lots of like to share



Wednesday 27th July: London/Abu Dhabi

Waking at the Hilton Terminal 4, it was a short walk to check-in and through security to Costa and a bacon sandwich for breakfast. First flight was to Abu Dhabi before a quick stopover and we boarded the second flight to Singapore.

Thursday 28th July: Singapore

Landed just after 10am and, once through immigration and baggage claim, had our first glimpse of Singapore from the coach. Wide tree-lined roads (one that can have the central flower bed removed to create a second runway in case of an emergency) amongst the rising tower blocks that increase in number as you get further from the airport. Arriving at the hotel, we dropped our bags off and went for lunch in a food court. Checked into hotel at 2pm and it was time for a snooze and shower before travelling on the MRT to Chinatown. Visited the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and had a wander through Chinatown before having dinner at the Maxwell Centre food court.

Friday 29th July: Singapore

Visited Serangoon Secondary School and had the opportunity to meet the Humanities department and observe a Social Studies lesson. Then went to the Housing and Development Board (HDB) Hub to see a video and exhibition about housing development in Singapore (including show flats). Lunch in the HDB Hub food court and took the MRT to Punggol to see the new ecotown we had just been told about. Walked round Punggol and had a drink at a shopping centre overlooking the waterway. At the shopping centre we saw the a large number of young men who were celebrating the end of their fortnight of reserve training they have to do regularly following completion of National Service. Travelled back to hotel and had dinner in a nearby restaurant followed by a drink in a cafe.

Saturday 30th July: Singapore

Coach tour of Singapore with short stops for photographs. Went to the Urban Redevelopment Authority to see the exhibition on wider urban development and the sustainable vision for the future. Lunch in the Maxwell Centre food court. Visited the Marina Barrage to see the barrage and visitor centre to learn about water supply issues and management in Singapore. Coach over to the

Singapore Flyer to see sights of the city. Went over to Marina Bay Sands and went up to Spago bar on the 57th floor to drink cocktails and watch the sun set over Singapore. Dinner in a cafe near the hotel.

Sunday 31st July: Singapore

Early start to get to the Botanical Gardens and the Orchid Garden for opening. Then onto Gardens in the Bay to visit the inside conservatories (including a special orchid exhibition) followed by satay for lunch at Satay by the Bay food court. After a little wander through the gardens we went up to the observation deck at Marina Bay Sands then wandered round the shopping complex (complete with its own Venetian canal and gondolas) before returning back to the hotel for a nap! Dinner in the food court by the hotel.

Monday 1st August: Melaka

Set off for the border crossing into Malaysia with its long queues on the Singapore side and short queue on the Malaysian. Changed coaches and headed for Iskander, a new development area, to look around. Drove up to Melaka and headed out for dinner after checking into hotel – very funny waiter who showed us the extensive menu but then had to come back after we ordered with the options for what they actually had!

Tuesday 2nd August: Melaka

Went to visit Matrix Global Schools for a tour and to meet the CEO – a very impressive complex and vision for education. Returned to Melaka and had lunch at Nandos in a food court (Nandos in Malaysia is table service!) before going out on a walking tour of the city with our guide. Stopped off for drink in a cafe before returning to the hotel. Dinner and drinks in the Geographer Cafe.

Wednesday 3rd August: Melaka/Taman Negara

Early start to get the coach to the elephant sanctuary, stopping off at services on the way but the drive did seem to take forever! Saw the elephants and then made our way to Taman Negara, crossing the river in long boats at Kuala Tahan. Dinner at the resort hotel then a night walk through the rainforest to see lots of spiders and a scorpion while trying to avoid being touched by moths that can make you blind!

Thursday 4th August: Taman Negara

A morning walk through the rainforest to the canopy walkway. Walked along the walkway 50m in the canopy and then walked back to the resort area. Lunch followed by a lazy afternoon and then dinner.

Friday 5th August: Taman Negara/Cameron Highlands

Another early start to go across the river by boat and then a drive in the coach to Tekam Plantation Resort to see how they are developing palm oil and other crop growing together with a residential area for the workers. Continued driving to the Cameron Highlands past the new HEP plant and dam. Stopped off for a cup of tea at a tea plantation when we got to the Highlands. Arrived at the hotel then went down into the town for curry for dinner.

Saturday 6th August: Cameron Highlands

Breakfast at the hotel followed by 4x4s to a viewpoint over the Highlands and a walk through the Mossy Forest. Visited a tea plantation and saw the factory process then went to a strawberry farm. A quick walk through a local market followed by an afternoon visiting Sunlight Flower Farm. Met with some of the group back at the hotel to discuss how sustainable the Flower Farm appeared to be before dinner at a Chinese restaurant and a drink in a local bar. First place we visited that was full of tourists!

Sunday 7th August: Cameron Highlands/Ipoh

Left the Cameron Highlands and drove to Ipoh, stopping at two waterfalls and the Gua Tempurung Caves on the way – a day of climbing lots of steps! Arrived in Ipoh and spent a couple of hours reading and relaxing before having dinner and drinks in the hotel's rooftop bar.

Monday 8th August: Ipoh

Breakfast followed by a trip to Tesco to buy rice and toiletries for the village we were going to. Spent the morning at an Orang Asli village learning a lot about how they are being 'integrated' into mainstream society – a visit that threw up far more questions than it answered! Lunch followed by a tour of Ipoh including a visit to the geological museum. Dinner in a local restaurant that was extremely spicy followed by another visit to the hotel's rooftop bar.

Tuesday 9th August: Ipoh/Penang

A day of boats! Left the hotel to drive to Kuala Sepetang Recreational Forest. Boat ride through the mangrove to see dolphins to visit Kuala Sangga, a fishing village. Spent time in the primary school (10 teachers for 19 students) and saw cockle farmers at work. On the boat ride back we saw the eagles. Visit to a charcoal factory (I watched from the bus!) followed by group lunch of vegetable fried rice. Walk through the mangrove on the walkways and a quick stop at the Eco-tourism centre. Next stop was Bukit Merah Orang Utan Island which involved another boat ride there and back. Drove onto Penang and had street food for dinner followed by tea and brownie in a coffee shop.

Wednesday 10th August: Penang

Went up Penang Hill on the funicular – it's like a really tacky theme park up there! Lots of cloud at first but cleared in time to see a view before going back down. Coach to Georgetown followed by a bit of souvenir shopping and lunch in a vegetarian Chinese restaurant. Went round some of the exhibitions as part of the Georgetown festival then bought postcards and sat in a cafe writing them. Walked back to hotel then went to That Little Wine Bar to see a quarter perform baroque music and have dinner. Walked back through a redeveloped area, stopping off for a drink in a very 'cool' student type outdoor bar.

Thursday 11th August: Penang/Kuala Lumpur

Breakfast at the hotel then a long drive to Kuala Lumpur, stopping off at a service station in the way. Visited the Orang Asli Museum in Gombok

including seeing an old documentary on the life of the Orang Asli – very interesting to see the contrast between the museum and the village we had visited a few days before. Visited the Batu Caves but did not climb the steps and went souvenir shopping instead! Checked into a very nice hotel for an end of trip treat and had a massage followed by room service for dinner!

Friday 12th August: Kuala Lumpur

Breakfast at hotel then walked round to meet the rest of the group at their hotel. Went up the Petronas Towers then drove round some of the main sights. Shopping and lunch in the Central Market then walked back to hotel for an afternoon of sleep, reading and packing. Drinks with the whole group to mark the end of the trip then dinner in a Chinese restaurant.

Saturday 13th August: Kuala Lumpur/Abu Dhabi

Lie in followed by making the most of the buffet breakfast. Finished packing then met up with group and loaded luggage onto the coach. Visited Putrajaya on the way to the airport. Evening flight to Abu Dhabi for a stopover (and a proper cup of tea!).

Sunday 14th August: Abu Dhabi/London

Second flight to Heathrow. Can't quite believe the trip is over – had an absolutely amazing time! Now to sort out all my photos!