

2025 - 5 Weeks Backpacking in Malaysia & Thailand

(from Perth) Singapore – Melaka – Bangkok –
- Golden Triangle - Chiang Mai - River Kwai -
- Penang - Kuala Lumpur (to Ipsach / home)

6th January to 13th February 2025
6000 km – Backpacking 37 Days
20 Hotels, 160 km/day Bus/Train
.....

Never say never again.....?

Just after our last **Caddy Around Italy Trip** in Spring 2024, I was still in the process of recovering, convinced that this had been my last adventure journey, when Peggy suddenly expressed her firm desire to **go backpacking once more this Autumn and no less than to roam through Malaysia and Thailand.....**

One of the triggers was probably when our dear twins announced their last **End-Year Ballett** performance taking place in December in Fremantle, next door to South-East Asia, so to speak!



Until the last moment I was not able to face the challenge and felt stressed when thinking of us being on the way again as backpackers but then, on the other hand I was, of course, very keen to go to see Padi and family and the last opportunity to witness a big Ballet Performance of the Grand-Kids!

..... and thanks to Peggy's Tenacity we had done the full Program in the End !

2. Plans and Strategy

Even trying to, I just could not face the challenge and it was impossible for me to concentrate on planning, whereas Peggy studied all available papers and guidebooks for months and drew up tentative plans and programs (partly in Chinese) which had the merit of being feasible, time filling and also leaving enough space for improvisation on site, which is our long-experienced strategy for our preferred travelling mode. At first Peggy had planned to do the backpacking before the family visit in December but to my great relieve she accepted to first visit the family over the Years' End festivities and relax before tackling the big challenge. Also the weather prospects for Thailans/Malaysia looked better that way.

3. Results

Australia:

Wonderful 5 weeks with our dear family in Fremantle. After arrival, still jet-lagging, we went to see the girls ballet performance of the Nutcracker Suite. We enjoyed it so much that we also joined the gala performance 2 days later which was even more enjoyable, then knowing in advance where to focus our attention.

Then all went perfect:

Peggy's and Anh-Dao's birthdays, a short holiday in Lancelin (150 km to the North), a lot of walking in all directions, often early morning to the Swan River to watch the girls' rowing training. Some socialising, small excursions, also to watch Laeti's windsurfing.....and of course all the good meals and the happy X-Mas and New Year. The 5 weeks passed very quickly and too soon, on the 6th January evening they took us to the Perth Airport to catch the flight to Singapore..... to start the hard part of the journey!

I was now ready for the Backpacking! Thanks to the very enjoyable and relaxing time in Forrest Street with intensive love exchange, I felt mentally prepared for the backpacking.....we'll see how it went!

Backpacking: It worked out - My 80th Birthday on the way!

We did the whole trip and within the 5 weeks as planned. But it only worked out, because Peggy did most of the daily activities perfectly and to my full satisfaction: I always slept well, ate well and felt healthy!

Peggy did:

- Looking for rooms and choosing... this often took 1 to 2+ hours looking at several hotels (while I waited).
 - Looking for food and choosing, mostly from street stalls or small eating places... (I only looked for the beer).
 - The packing of the backpacks with practical sense, remembering what is where (I did only carry my bag).
- On my side apart from looking after the beer, I just did my best using Google Maps to look for the locations of Hotels, Bus Terminals, Temples etc or also not to get lost when walking astray when already tired!

Many thanks Peggy!

Thanks to you I could, when back home, enjoy sorting photos and writing a trip report - the last one!?

4. Itinerary and Highlights (Shortlist)

- Melaka: Nice promenades along the river, historical sites.
- Jungle Train: Another way to cross Malaysia through the middle.
- Ayuthaya: A world of old to get through your skin.
- Phimai: I little feel of Khmer at the rim of the sphere of Angkor Wat.
- Golden Triangle: Having been to the end of Thailand and refreshing memories of Mekong in China.
- Georgetown: Another nostalgic British settlement (a bit like Malta) for us to chill-out at the end of the trip!
- Kuala Lumpur: Nice that Rocky came especially to take us for dinner to the Food Street at Bukit Bintang!

5. Various

Expenditures: Backpacking from **Singapore - Bangkok - Golden Triangle - Kuala Lumpur**

6000 km Bus/ Train – 37 Days, 20 Hotels: approx. 1300 CHF / 1400 Euro

Public Transport: 300 CHF, Hotels: 400 CHF, Food: 600 CHF

Believe it or not - even I have difficulty to believe it! We did not plan it but it just happened **and we enjoyed!**

Mishaps

There were no serious problems but a few annoying mishaps

- My new Visa Debit card was blocked for Malaysia/ Thailand! Fortunately Peggy had enough A\$ cash.....
- I failed to apply for Peggy's Immigration Arrival card on my tab before re-entering Malaysia. I sent a message to Padi and he got it for me in no time!

Difficulties

- Quite often it was difficult to get a suitable room after arriving at a new place by bus/train. We never booked in advance but also it was around Chinese New Year time and many hotels were fully booked. A few times we had to make last minute compromises, but we regarded them as reasonable (price/standard).
- Whereas English/Cantonese are widely used in Malaysia, it is much more difficult with English in Thailand especially off the tourist areas. But then Thai people seem to be endlessly patient and helpful with an old man...and also regarded Peggy as one of theirs and it helped!

Weather, Season

We were obviously very lucky that we got to Malaysia and South Thailand a short time after heavy floodings. Whereas we had the occasional shower during the first week in Malaysia and the first day in Thailand (Sungai Kolok), the weather cleared up as we went North and stayed mostly fine and comfortable for the rest of the time till the end of the trip!

5. Conclusions

I repeat myself telling, that the trip was out of my reach but that Peggy made it possible and that I am very happy now that we did it. Writing this report stimulates my memories and I often wake up at night and live some sequels through again and would like to do some more I think that says it all!

What's next? Relax in Ste Marie in Summer & Autumn and then

Peggy has some more Plans lined up:

Hongkong again, a little excursion to China....?

Que sera sera

Diary: Backpacking Singapore - Bangkok - Golden Triangle - Kuala Lumpur

Note: As we kept going on every day my old brain kept overwriting the days passed with the impressions of the successive days.....

Fortunately I had written dawn short and very incomplete notes every day but then I had made over 1000 photos and so I have managed to reconstitue the journey, combining Notes, Photos, Google (incl. Google Maps, Google Earth with Street View stimulating the gradual resurrection of my lost souvenirs.

The Diary is subdivided in 4 Parts

Part 1: Singapore - Bangkok

11 days, 7th to 17th January, 2200 km

Part 2: Bangkok - Golden Triangle (Mekong)

9 days, 18th to 26th January, 1300km

Part 3: Golden Triangle - Malaysia Border at Padang Besar (near Hat Yai)

8½ days, 27th January to 4th February, 1930 km

Part 4: Malaysia Border - Kuala Lumpur

8½ days, 4th Februar to 12th February, 620 km

.... but first a few pictures of our stay with Padi and Family in Fremantle! 4th Dec to 6th January!



The end of the Nutcracker Ballet



After the Gala....



... we all enjoyed to shine in the Glory!



Long walk to Perth



Lancelin Holiday



Early morning rowing...



... resting after rowing.



Holding up our Dirty Nelly Tradition



Peggy's B'day



Anh-Dao's Birthday



Prep. X'mas



X-mas Music



Perth by Night

WE HAD A GOOD TIME WITH YOU GUYS!

Part 1 - Singapore, Melaka, Jungle Train, Bangkok,
11 days, 7th to 17th January, 2200 km

Tue 7.1.	Dep. 8.15 Singapore	via: Johor Bahru (Malaysia)	arr: 16.00 Melaka	3 Buses: 260km
Bus: Sin Airport to JB Sentral /40km, to JB Larkin /6km, to Melaka Bus Sentral T./215km Hotel: 2°11'59.81"N, 102°14'56.45"E				
<p>Our overnight flight by Scoot Airlines had left Perth at 9.30pm and arrived in Singapore at 2am. Plenty of time to find out about bus to Johor over the border. The bus left right from the airport at 8.15. After immigration the bus continued to the central bus terminal. We now asked for the bus to Melaka: all answers were 'take taxi to Larkin Terminal' but a young lady told us to follow her to a bus stop on street level and take the local shuttle bus....she then even helped with tickets to Melaka.... thank you! Had time for a nice chicken soup before the bus left at 13.00 in good weather.</p> <p>We arrived at Melaka Terminal at 4pm in heavy rain! 3km from center after a while the rain was a bit less heavy and so we slipped into our skins and walked. After crossing a river the rain stopped and after a few tries Peggy chose a comfortable room for 2 nights in the Vintage Inn, a simple guest house (50RM). Common wet rooms, no problem.</p> <p>At 7pm we walked along the Malacca River sided by lovely colourful houses to the Jamabatan Bridge and then back along Bunga Raya Street, where in a narrow lane we discovered a small Chinese Tai Pai Tong with yammy seafood etc (snails, oysters, hollow veggies...) for 35RM (CHF 7.-). 6 Beers (50cl) from 7/11 44RM (CHF 3.-/l). Got back to our room around 9pm. I considered the day as a good start to the trip.</p>				
				
		Melaka River		Socialising at Table next to ours

Wed 8.1.	Melaka - Sightseeing			
<p>9am - Got hot water for coffee and a bite at 9am and left at 10am for another enjoyable stroll along the river to the Stadthuys (1640, Dutch) area and then over the hill, on top St. Paul overlooking the Malacca Straits. Then passing at the ruins of the church and down to the historical Portuguese Porta de Santiago (1512). Eventually we crossed the river for a turn into Chinatown visiting some Chinese temples (Hokkien Huai Kuan, Cheng Hoon Teng) and a mosque (Kampung Kling).</p>				
				
Melaka River	Square in front of the old....	... Dutch Stadthuys	St Paul Statue	View to 'Straits'
<p>1pm - Now was time for lunch and we went back close to the hotel to a small Malaysian buffet place in Hang Tua Street and had exciting crispy whole fishes, you could crunch from head to tail. Later I went to ask a few elderly local table-neighbours about buses for Gemas. They did not know details but when we tried to pay for our dish later, they had paid for us already!</p> <p>2pm - Now we went to explore the up-river area along a lunapark monorail and first passing the SWISS Garden Hotel. Pleasant walk along the winding river to the River Cruise Jetty and while walking back, it was turning 4pm, we decided to buy an Indian Tandoori take away near the Stadthuys we had visited this morning.</p>				
<p>We got back to our hotel at 5pm and enjoyed our yammy Tandoori picnic with beer from 7-Eleven quietly at our room. It was still early and so we left again for another river walk, this time by night with all the lightings on! Got back before 9 pm. I was finished but we had both enjoyed our stay in Melaka with its historical memory and the artistic look of the Melaka River!</p>				Crispy and all can eat!
				
		Tandoori Dinner	An old Clipper early 16th Century	Reflections in the River
Today was very pleasant introduction into Malaysia!				

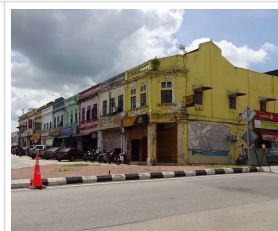
Thu 9.1.	Dep 10.00 Melaka	via: Tampin	arr: 16.30 / Gemas	2 Buses km: 104
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Bus: Melaka Sentral to Tampin / 50 km, Tampin to Gemas / 54km , Hotel: 2°34'49.75"N, 102°36'40.77"E

Our target today: Gemas, the nearest railway station to take the inland 'Jungle' Train to the Thai border. Normal morning routine, then walk to the Bus Terminal. Found out that there are no direct buses to Gemas and we have to first take the 10am bus to Tampin.

After a short brake we took the next bus at 12.00 to Gemas. Kamikaze driver, who also kept video phoning with his daughter ostensibly having some problems. Otherwise a pleasant drive through hilly countryside.

Got tickets to Kuala Lipis on 'slow' (ordinary) afternoon train tomorrow as planned. No way to buy tickets cash and my Visa Debit card was refused. So had to use my MC Gold credit card for 18 RM (CHF 4.-). Peggy found a simple room at a Chinese guesthouse called Bee Chew (Beer?) Hotel for 45RM. Seems that Peggy spoke Cantonese at the reception. Malaysia has English type sockets, so I bought a new (double-plug) USB charger for only 15RM (CHF 3.-) at a handy repair shop accross the road. I also bought 2 beers of 1664 Blanc (wheat) for 2*6 RM at a Chinese shop. Then shower and hanging around till 5pm. One only goes to Gemas to take the Jungle Train.....



Gemas City beside Station

Then went to look for dinner and found a small Chinese place with beer and had a lovely simple meal with noodles/rice, tau fu, pork, chicken, vegies.... Beer Anchor & Guinness (640ml). 46 RM food / 40 RM beer.

Then went shopping for water 1.6 RM and 2 Tiger beers 15RM. We spend more money on beer than on food:-). Back to room at 7pm. Room with fan only..... no problem, as it was not very hot and even cool at night time.

Gemas is a small town and has not much to offer except that it is 'Malaysian', for us it was part of the expected experience.



Lovely Chinese Dinner

Fri 10.1	dep 9.35 / Gemas	via: Kuala Lipis	arr: 16.30 / Gua Musang	2 Trains km: 350 km
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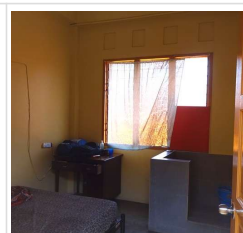
Train: Gemas to Kuala Lipis / 250 km, Kuala Lipis to Gua Musang / 100 km Hotel 4°52'31.35"N, 101°57'44.72"E

After a rather uncomfortable night, with overhead fan being too noisy and blowing too strongly I also realised that stand-up toilets have become very exhaustive for me. I'll probably have to get used again to such conditions.... (in fact this was then the only occasion of the trip - thanks god!)

On the way to the station we saw 2 ladies picking fruit from a tree. They squeezed one out of its shell and gave us to try. Peggy then got 2 more to open. I could not find out what fruit it is.



Bee Chew Hotel



.... our modest dwelling



The fruit

About the Jungle Train:

There are not many trains and from 8 trains every day (northbound), only 1 express train goes over the whole distance from Gemas to Tumpat, about 600km in 12 hours, starting in Gemas at 1am. Fortunately I had the printed train schedules from Internet and as we wanted to travel in daylight only, we had to take 3 slow trains which was fine (the 3rd train tomorrow).

The single track to Kota Bharu, our final destination (over 500km), implies that the trains keep to their schedule to cross at the planned stations.



Starting at Gemas, changing at Kuala Lipis to Gua Musang. Next day to Wakaf Bharu

At 9.25 the modern, comfortable train left Gemas and took us over a sinuous track through lush forests and mostly palm tree plantations. The train moves at 40-60 sometimes 80 km/h and we had plenty of time to watch and relax for 5 hours. The train stopped about every half hour on average. The passenger information system lets you know where you are and when getting ready to unboard on time.



Modern



....comfortable Tains



..... passenger info displays

When we arrived at Kuala Lipis at 14.25, it was raining heavily and so we decided to take the next train to Gua Musang leaving 2h later, instead of just hanging around for the rest of the day. Now we had enough time for nice lunch with a brown curry soup/sauce and yammy (tough) braised lamb ragout and vegi with rice! At 16.30, on time, our journey continued, now through a wilder jungle landscape with scattered rocky hills.



Brown Rivers



Kuala Lipis Mosque



Yammy chewy Lamb Curry

We arrived in Gua Musang at 18.30, still in heavy rain but noticing some Guilin-type hills. Wearing pelerines (over the backpacks) we set off to find a suitable hotel and after about 1h forth and back on both sides of the town's only main street and with very little choice, Peggy found a suitable very small room with WC/Shower/AC for 50RM. Then we went out for a yammy 'everything' noodle soup with beef, egg and diverse vegies for 9RM each. Back to the room before 9pm.



Gua Musang Peak



Lovely Soup Dinner

Sat 11.1. dep 13.00 / **Gua Musang** to arr: 16.30 / **Kota Bharu** Train km: 180 (+walk 7)
Train:Gua Musang to Wakaf Bharu (2 stops before Tumpat)/180km, walk to Kota Bharu:7km, Hotel: 4°52'28.78"N, 101°57'44.76"E

I had a very good sleep till 5.30, then dosing till 7.30. After easy morning routine, at 9am, we walked to the station for tickets to Wakaf Baru at 14.50. And now we had plenty of time to admire the Guilin-type hills around. The easiest to visit was the Gua Musang Peak behind the Station with a climbing trail and a zip line to glide to the ground.



'My Home Hotel'



Musang Peak with Climbing Trail



Bandar Razaleigh Mosque

Another site worth visiting was the great Bandar Razaleigh Mosque. We both had to wear their offered coates to get in. We were back at Hotel at 11.15 for checkout. Then went out for a rice dish with fish and various vegies. Now at 1pm, I am waiting for Peggy to complete her turn in a supermarket while hanging around for going to catch the train. We still were early at the station but now happy to watch people scrambling up the rocky wall behind the railway track and seeing them gliding down by the zip line (tyrolienne).



Sumptuous Lunch

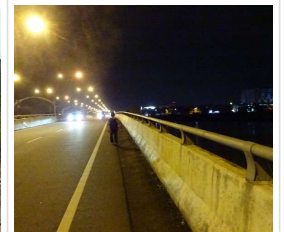


Ready to zip down

Again a slow sinuous ride through jungle for 3h, then, getting to the plain, the train picked-up up speed to 90km/h. The Sungai Galas River becoming the Kelanthan River at Kuala Krai and later-on passing Kota Bharu becoming gradually larger and larger. We arrived in Wakaf Baru station at 19.30 in the dusk. It was a bit of a headache to find the way to the hotel behind the station, shown in Googleand there was none...



Sungai Galas River near Gua Musang

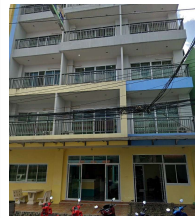


Walk over Kelantan River

....so we had to walk 7km in the dark along an obscure main hi-way to Kota Baru even crossing the endless Kelanthan Bridge without pavements for pedestrians. Eventually we saw a Hotel in bright light and it suited ... It was 9pm. The Peneka Inn was quite high standard for us but Peggy got a good price as it was late. Getting up to our room we sure were happy to find 2 soup noodles packets and a water boiler then shower and good night!

Sun 12.1.	dep 12.45 / Kota Bharu	arr: Border at Rantau/Sungai	3pm: walk to Sungai Kolok	Bus km: 40
Bus: Kota Bharu to Rantau Border/40km Hotel Roman: 6° 1'21.76"N, 101°57'52.45"E				
Note: Since Peggy preferred the option to walk across the border to Thailand at Rantau instead of taking the ferry at the Kelantan River Estuary near Tumpat, we just went for a sightseeing walk in Kota Bharu, prior to looking for a bus to Rantau Border.				
At 9.30 we left the Hotel, first walking to town via the nice Kelantan River Walkway and then turned-in at the Menara Tinjau Tower. Then we passed the War Museum and the Jahar Palace (Museum) and the Grand Palace, now a Royal Palace. All the impressive palace buildings are wooden constructions.				
		Peneka Inn	River Walkway & Tower	Jahar Palace and Grand Palace
Eventually we found the bus stop in the city center at the foot of a huge antenna tower. The bus left at 12.45 and reached the Malaysian Border Station at 2pm. Tedious getting out with Peggy and me being seperately checked with x finger-prints taken and camera checks viewed. Then we had our walk through the nomansland crossing the Golok River right beside the railway bridge, which Peggy had definitely wanted to do.				
		Walk to Immigration	Walk to Thailand	Walk over the Border
Even more tedious was getting into Thailand, as we were submitted to a special interview where the officer could not believe that we are on foot and had not booked any further travel or hotel ... Only after we told him that we will eventually turn back to Kuala Lumpur and had showed him the Turkish Airway flight booking on 12th Feb. he let us go through at last... over 20' of arguing.... it was nearly 3pm. Note: It was only 2pm because Thailand time is 1 hour behind! Found out 2 days later!! It was then still a bit of a walk to town. On the way I tried to get Thai currency at a bank's ATM with my Visa Debit card and to my surprise the card was rejected.				
		After Immigration	Start walk to Town	
Well now was also the time to start looking for a hotel. After a while Peggy chose a room which she considered 'soso' and told them, that we have to go out first to get local cash. The next ATM did not accept my Visa Debit either and I tried with my Master Credit card which was rejected too! Now I started to panic....also because heavy rain just started but Peggy said, that she has plenty of cash with her and so we walked close to the railway station to get cash from a (human) currency exchanger and				
.... the good thing was then, that when we had taken shelter from the rain, Peggy had spotted a more suitable hotel (300B/CHF9.-), even with a Chinese receptionist! Luck had turned!! I went to buy 3 LEO beers (620ml bottles) for 180 Baht at a small Chinese shop and we deserved our apéro in the room after which we had a lovely bite at the food quarters nearby. Back to room at 18.30 (we thought 19.30) for shower etc now writing at 10pm (in fact it was 9pm but I was tired!)				
		Hotel Roman....	1st LEOs....	..then our first Thai Dinner.
Mon 13.1	dep 13.00 / Sungai Kolok	to	arr: 16.30 / Hat Yai	Bus km: 250
Van: Sungai Kolok to Hat Yai / 250 km, Hotel ห้องพักกาญจนา (Kanjana), 6°59'43.77"N, 100°28'54.65"E)				
Morning routine before packing. Then waiting for the bank to open to try once more to get cash, this time with the assistance of a bank fairy lady, looking over my shoulder at the ATM. Visa Debit: rejected. Master Card, with one more click (credit) and I had my 15'000 Baht (but with charges).				
Note: Peggy then had surprisingly enough cash lasting till the end of the trip in Kuala Lumpur!				
2 km walk to the bus terminal with a few drops falling here and there and that was the last rain of the trip! Bought tickets to Hat Yai (2*220 Baht) for the bus at 12.15. To my surprise the bus which turned out to be a big van then drove straight towards the coast and then along the sea for a long while passing-by Pattani before turning off to Hat Yai to the bus terminal in the city centre at 16.30. We bought tickets to Surat Thani for tomorrow 10.30 right away!				
		Comfortable Van to Hat Yai	Glimpses: Mosque....	... & the Sea

Peggy found very quickly an excellent room even with balcony for 400 Baht in a lovely Guest House and we enjoyed the room right away with an apéro (I went shopping for beer at a Chinese shop around the corner). Then we went for a small sightseeing turn, first passing-by the Night Bazar which was unfortunately closed on Mondays. Then continued to Sripunavart Road hoping to find the



Kajana Hotel



... big and comfortable room

... Wat Klong Rien temple with the 4 Buddha Faces. Then followed a few busy streets giving us an impression of the town. On the way back we bought picnic: sweet potatoes, banana chips and fried chicken and more LEOs for a relaxed dinner in our comfortable room. Everything works perfect here, from AC to warm shower and hot water for coffee.



Sripunavart Road to....



Wat Klong Rien Temple, with.....



4-Buddha Faces

Tue 14.1. dep 10.30 / **Hat Yai**

to:

arr: 16.00 / **Surat Thani**

Van km: 340

Van: Hat Yai to Surat Thani / 340 km, Hotel: entry to side street at 9° 8'31.04"N, 99°19'36.69"E

Breakfast ...Peggy went to buy filled sticky (glutinous) rice and some kind of Mango Pudding. Was good with our Spanish Mercadona coffee (tueste natural).

We went to the bus station at 10am and after 10.30 the bus driver told us that the bus will only leave at 10.30!



Balcony View...



..lovely Coffee...



...with filled sticky Rice etc



Mini-Van to Surat Thani

WHAT ???? Oh oh! It was only 9.30 Thai time..... Lucky, it was not the other way round!

The bus was a small 13-seat Van with very restricted front view...I felt torn after half hour and now we are still on fishing tour around the city! But in the end I survived the 6 hours drive somehow and we arrived just before 4pm.

When we got off, all sorts of people tried to get us somewhere to get business. Our concern was how do we continue to Petchaburi tomorrow and where do we look for a hotel? We even boarded a Tuktuk but then realized that we had no small change and jumped off again and then decided to look for a room first. We good rid of everyone and walked away.

Not much later we saw an arrow for a guest house into a narrow side-street and 100m later we got a simple room for 190 Baht....



Tuktuk on and off



Simple Room for 190 Baht

At 6pm we walked back to the bus/van terminal to look for tickets to Phetchaburi (close to Bangkok) and found a ticket office with a trustworthy looking man from whom we got tickets for 2*800 Baht for a minivan leaving to Bangkok at some place else at 11am to pick us up at 10am. Hmmm.... wishfull thinking?



The Ticket Man









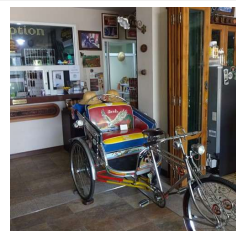




He then suggested us to go to the food-street nearby, where we then had an intestine hotpot and 2 brochettes with rice and the beers from next-door 7/11. All fine and satisfied and as we reached the guesthouse we saw the last full moon of the old Chinese Year! We went to sleep at 21.30 after a cup of tea and a biki.



Food stalls...



.....Intestines Hot Pot

Wed 15.1.	dep 13.00 / Surat Thani	to:	arr: 16.30 / Phetchaburi	Van km: 500	
Van: Surat Thani to Phetchaburi/ 500 km, Hotel Baan Kiang Wang: 13° 5'4.08"N, 99°56'50.18"E					
Note: Surat Thani is not a tourist destination and most tourists will just pass-by when travelling to the Islands by ferry, in particular Ko Samui. As I had not prepared for the trip I did not know this, until some tourists I met told me about the islands.					
The bed was a bit hard...otherwise all was fine except for the cold shower but at least we had hot water for coffee!					
We got out at 8am for a little turn along the Ta Pi River, visiting the Wat Tham Bucha on the way, reaching the river at the beautiful white clock tower. On the way back to the bus station we visited the Hokkien Shrine and then had 2 little morning snacks and a mini lap cheung.					
		Wat Tham Bucha	Ta Pi River	Clock Tower	Hokkien Shrine
Now waiting for bus already 1h late and the last night's ticket counter still closed. We were told to wait (with others) and then boarded a van turning up at 11.45. We were told that the ride will take over 8 hours. It may get tight for looking for a hotel..... This van was comfortable and we had a nice ride but after the second WC/snack stop we talked to some passenger speaking a little English and then we realised, that the driver was not aware he had to drop us off at Phetchaburi on his way to Bangkok. It took a long while and the help of the lady with her smartphone translator to get the driver to understand and agree to drop us off.					
			Pleasant....	.....Ride	
At the approach to Phetchaburi, still on the Highway near a (Big C-) closed shopping center, we (only us) were then dropped-off. It was already dark and no one around. Thanks to Google I found out where we were and a few hints for hotels nearby.					
Deep into a very quiet side street we found a quite luxury 'museum-type' hotel called Baan Kiang Wang Place (Chinese). Peggy managed to barter a reasonable price (600 Baht) and relieved we settled into a really comfortable room. It was 21.30 by now. Peggy had noticed a little eating place at the start of the sidestreet and off we went and had a yummy supper. Rice & chicken, soup noodles and pork and a dish of crunchy dough. Nice shower!					
			Hotel in the dark	Lovely Supper!	..... Diary Notes
Thu 16.1	dep: 13.00 Phetchaburi	via: Bangkok (Pin Klao)	arr: 16.00 Bangkok (Chinatown)	2 Buses km: 180	
Van: Phetchaburi to Bangkok (Pin Klao) /170 km, Bus 40 to Chinatown / 7km, Hotel New Empire: 13°44'19.49"N, 100°30'43.11"E					
Good morning routine also admiring some historic decorations and items displayed in the hotel's lobby and corridors. We left at 10am, first walking to town for a bit of sightseeing. Quite lovely walk to the city and visiting a few temples of which the Buddha Statue of the Wat Kong Karam School and the Chedi Wat Mahatat stand out the most!					
			Hotel Baan Kiang Wang	Buddha of Kong Karam School	Chedi of Wat Mahatat
We reached the distant bus terminal on the other side of town at about 12.00 and got tickets for a van leaving for Pin Klao, the South-Western bus terminal of Bangkok at 1pm. We got off at 3pm at some street near Pin Klao Village and wondered if we should walk the 7 km to Chinatown. Then a young man at a local bus stop told us to take Bus Nr. 40, which we did until we got off the bus after crossing the Phra Phutthayotfa Bridge getting to Chinatown from the South at around 4pm. (thanks to Google).					
Now we walked into the big Chinatown area and started to look for hotels..... There were many hotels of all sorts, even dorms but all suitable places were fully booked due to Chinese New Year holidays. After having explored all the small streets and almost desperate, just after we had reached the other end of Chinatown well after 6pm, near the Chinatown Market, we saw this big New Empire Hotel, still on popular Yaowarat Road. In the dark it looked a bit out of fashion and Peggy did her magic and we had a good room for 2 nights, the only one left (2*800 Baht).					
			Chinatown		Photo from Streetview

Of course we went out right away to enjoy ourselves in the crowd and we also had something to eat. It seems that we sat down a 1st time at 7pm to have some papaya salad and chicken and after another stroll could not resist to a yammy crunchy omelette with On the way back we bought a big pack of buns which enriched our morning coffee for the next 2 weeks! By the time we got back and had our shower etc it was midnight!



Yaowarat Road



Dinner first part



Supper for greedy!

Note: I had hoped to meet an old family member of mine, Heinz Wohlfahrt (81), living in the outskirts of Bangkok and whom I had never met before. As Peggy and I had planned to spend the whole day sightseeing tomorrow, I did not yet try to make an appointment with Heinz, hoping that we would stay one more day than planned. It turned out in the end that Peggy had enough of Bangkok at the end of the next day and insisted to move on..... hopefully we will have another opportunity to meet, perhaps in CH. I was disappointed but did not insist as it was Peggy who had done all the planning.

Fri 17.1

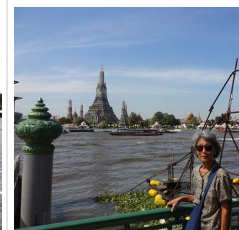
Bangkok - Sightseeing

After morning routine we walked out at 9.30am, walking first to the Chao Phraya River (Menam), then to follow it as close as possible towards the Grand Palace area.

We started with the Yodpiman River Walk at the Phra Phuttha Yodfa Bridge and used every opportunity to look across the very busy Menam River over to the Wat Kanlayanamit Woramahawihan and the Wat Arun Ratchawaram. Eventually we reached the crowded Grand Palace area with temples such as Phra Chetuphon, surrounded by endless lines of



Menam River View...



... Wat Arun

stalls selling anything until we reached the white wall encircling the Grand Palace, with the huge palace of the Ministry of defense just opposite. One was even forced to make a detour to eventually reach the entrance by an underground path..... and then I was refused access to the palace because of my 3/4 trousers. So Peggy made a turn by herself first and then we went to the ladies for me to wear her wide long trousers..... and this time it worked and I could make the photo turn along the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Unfortunately I missed out looking at the actual Grand Palace!



Stalls near the Palace



The big Wall...



The Ministry of Defence



The Emerald Buddha Temple

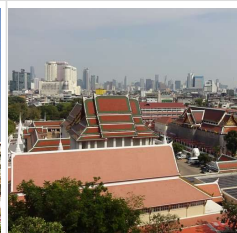


The Grand Palace (Google Earth)

It was 1pm and we decided to complete our sightseeing tour by cutting through the middle beside the Palace of the Ministry of Defense towards the big Bamrung Square with the Giant Swing (Sao Chigcha) and the Wat Suthat Thep. On the way to the next target, the Pagoda Hill, we had a quick dish of rice and chicken. Then made a short visit to Wat Thep Thidaram before crossing the canal to the Pagoda Hill.



Giant Swing



View from Pagoda Top



Pagoda Top



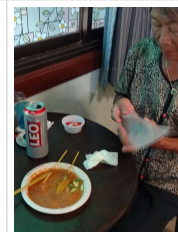
Buddha Cave

The Pagoda stands on a steep hill surrounded by a street from which you can climb up over a spiral ways (waterfalls etc) to the bottom of the pagoda. Now you can enter and take floor by floor by spiral stairs. The 360° roundview over otherwise flat Bangkok with its skyline of highrises justifies by itself the 100 Baht Fee.

Easy and pleasant walk back to Chinatown where Peggy bought yammy take away satay and me the beer for apéro at the hotel at 4pm, also to discuss our plans. Peggy was not at all interested to visit the modern high-rises parts of Bangkok tomorrow and was already looking forward to see ancient Ayutthaya. We had realised that our hotel was located near the main railway station and so we walked to look for train schedules to Ayutthaya for tomorrow (not without having a look at the Wat Trai Mit Witthayaram on the way). We were told that one cannot buy advance tickets for Ordinary 3rd class local trains..... no problem!



Chinatown buy for...

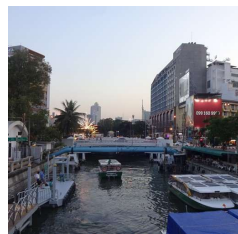


... Dinner

On the way back we had a little chat with 2 Americans who had a beer outside with a dish of worms! We tried a few and I really liked them as I they gave me the impression of eating Chili con Carne.... We should have joined for a beer..... Instead Peggy got us some fish and crab balls to have them with our instant noodles to finish the satay. Good deal!



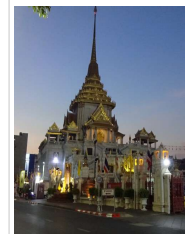
Wat Trai Mit....



Canal near Rail Station



Yammy Worms



.....Witthayaram

I went once more for beer.... Got to hotel at 8pm: eating, shower, internet, diary...22.35 ... bed-time.

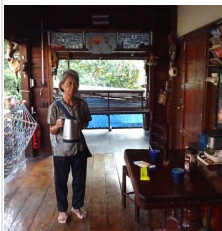



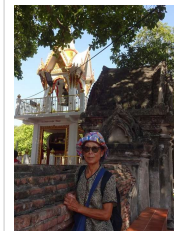



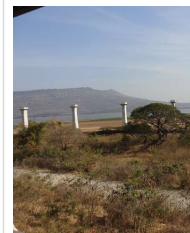



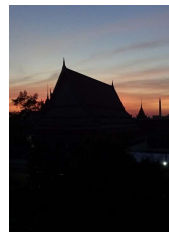
Epilogue Part 1









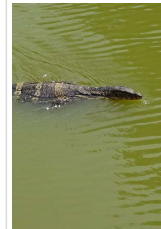



By now we had fully entered the flow of our way of **Backpacking Travel** and I was happy with the way it went and especially enjoying every meal every day!

Part 2 - Bangkok - Khorat - Chiang Rai - Golden Triangle

9 days, 18th to 26th January, 1300km

Sat. 18.1	dep 11.30 / Bangkok	to:	arr: 13.15 / Ayutthaya	Train km: 80
Train: Bangkok Main Station to Ayutthaya / 80 km, Hotel Ray Nu: 14°21'19.89"N, 100°34'28.65"E				
Walking to Railway Station at 10am and got tickets for the next Ordinary 3rd class to Ayutthaya at 11.30.				
Enough time to admire a historical steam train in the platform hall and for Peggy to buy a rice/pork box for lunch on the way. Our train seemed to be late and passengers were asked to board the train on the next track. Nice ride with open windows and many stops. The picnic was delicious!				
	Passenger Hall	Old Steam Engine	Outskirts of Bangkok	Picnic
Note: We also saw long stretches of bridges under construction along our tracks for a new high speed railway line, part of a Chinese project for linking Bangkok to China via Laos. The first section to Khorat (Nakhon Ratchasima) is planned to be operational in 2028.				
	Our Train continued...			
We arrived in Ayutthaya at 13.15 and asked about ordinary trains for tomorrow to Khorat. Answer: 13.15, buy ticket tomorrow before 12.30....all clear. Then walked to town after crossing the Pasak River on a Highway bridge then just kept walking towards the centre to look for a hotel.				
	Walk to Center			
We saw a few and Peggy went to look at one of them but wanted to look at some more. Suddenly we saw an unusual signpost on the road-side praising a cottage guest house, Ray Nu..... We went to look and Peggy asked the right person and (why not?) we got a very simple memorable room in a real cottage! (300Baht)				
	To Ray Nu ...	... Access...	...to our Room....	...cosy Community Space!
We now were ready to go for the historical Temples of this ancient capital. The first one: Wat Phra Mahatat in the Historical Park ....Bingo! Overwhelming collection of old awesome towers and halls forming a unique setting. That alone would justify visiting Ayutthaya! We started the visit at 3.30pm and stayed for almost 2h. Too little in fact!				
				
Wat Phra Mahatat in Historical Park....	...a small...	... extract of...	...ancient...	...witnesses of
				
Buddha Face behind Hat				
.... But then, earlier on the way, we had spotted a food street market but first we bought some LEOs and went to our room to refresh. After 6pm we walked to the said food street in setting sun. Peggy bought excellent dishes, such as her favourite hollow vegetables, pork (+) and a yammy seafood omelette danced by the cook which was the big public attraction! The ambiance with the lights and the crowd in falling night was unique.				
	Food Street in falling night!			
				
Yammy!	Danced Omelette			
Got back to the room after 8pm and moved to the common guest alcove to have our tea/sweets/pills and chatting with a Spanish Backpacker couple. A very satisfying and even thrilling day!				
Note: By the number of things to visit, we could have easily stayed another day, but then I still cherish whatever we got and enjoyed, which is infinitely more that if we had not gone on the trip! That became my motto for the 5 weeks, rich of impressions!				

Sun. 19.1	dep 13.10 / Ayutthaya	to	arr: 16.30 / Khorat (Nakhon Ratchasima)		Train km: 210
Train: Ayutthaya to Khorat / 210 km, Hotel Tokyo: 14°58'37.25"N, 102° 5'26.57"E					
Peggy got up early and we had our coffee+ in the homely alcove in morning atmosphere at 7.30. Left at 9am (with backpacks) to cross the Pasak River and visit the impressive Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon before walking to the railway station looking at this and that.					
	Morning Coffee	Pasak River	Wat Yai Chai..	...Mongkhon...	Drum&Bell Tower
The ordinary train to Khorat (2*39 Baht) left at 13.07. Nice 4h ride (3rd class, no AC / fans & open windows). After 1h we crossed through a tunnel up to the Khorat Plateau and after a long stretch along Lake Lumtakong we reached Khorat Station at 17.20 (30' late).					
	Ticket to Khorat 39 Baht each		Waiting for Train	Diesel Train	High Speed Track
It took 30' walk to the center of town, where we soon found a good room at the Tokyo Hotel (2 nights for 700 Baht). We soon found a good place to have a lovely street food meal: sausage with dumplings and vegies, delicious cold glassnoodle salad and rice with prawns+. At 20.15 we passed one more time at my little beer supply shop near the hotel for Peggy to buy some crackers. Now 22.30, after calling Evi, time to sleep!					
	Tokyo Hotel	Yammy +	My Beer Shop	Balcony View	
Note: In fact Peggy had planned to travel further South-East to visit Prasat Hin Khao Phanom Rung, a ancient Khmer Temple in a volcanic area near the Cambodian Border. Apparently it could be reached by bus from Khorat but I had read somewhere that visits by individual tourists are not recommended due to military presence. Perhaps we should have tried....Phimai was also offered as an option and we went for it.					

Mon 20.1	Khorat	Sightseeing				
<p>Today we walked early to the Bus Terminal to fetch a bus to visit Phimai (at 60km) and come back. There was a van leaving at 9.30 but apparently there was no van for coming back in the afternoon....although some said that there are minivans. It just seemed to risky....so we decided to visit Khorat properly today and move to Phimai tomorrow.</p> <p>Starting at 10am from the bus terminal, we walked and walked Takhong Pond, a market, Wat Rat Bamrung, Victory Gate, Wat Phayap, Wat Samakkhi, Wat Plub with the hitting Buddha. After a little yammy lunch at 12pm we then continued to visit the biggest modern temple of Thailand, Wat Sala Loi.</p>						
						
Wat Rat....	....Bamrung	Victory Gate	Wat Samakkhi	Wat Plub	Modern Wat Sala Loi...	....inside
<p>On the way back we saw giant Lizards swimming in a pond of Wat Pha Narai. There was big Buddha inside the temple between big wall paintings. At 3pm we were back at the hotel happy to have a little LEO apéro and a short rest till 5pm.</p>						
						
Wat Pha Narai		... Huge Lizard		Wat Pha Narai	Wat Pha Narai	Wat Pha Narai

Time for a turn to look for dinner and before 6pm, behind the hotel, we found a small restaurant offering cold noodles with papaya salad. Bingo! I went shopping for the LEO at the lady's shop and then we enjoyed our dinner and in the end we saw someone drinking Thai Whisky and they gave us a sip to trywhich was not bad at all. It was now 6pm and but the evening went on with laundry, shower, diary etc.

Note: We had not planned to stay 2 nights at Khorat but we made the best of it, I think!



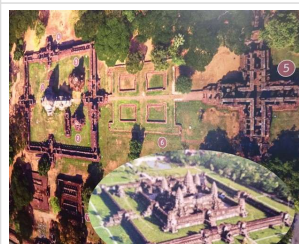
Tue 21.1	dep 9.30 / Khorat	to	arr: 11.00 / Phimai	Bus km: 60
Bus to Phimai / 60km Hotel 15°13'5.99"N, 102°29'41.89"E				

We left the Hotel at 8am to walk to the Bus Terminal and got an air-conditioned bus leaving at 9.30 and arrived at Phimai at 11am. We inquired about the onward journey (to Khon Kaeng) and they said that there is no such bus service available and that we would have to go back to Khorat.....-((. Grudgingly we went to look for a room for tonight and soon saw a very local guest house.... hmmm? (Boonsiri Guesthouse). It turned out to be fine, even with a terrace. Then the mother called her son out of his room (still in bed?) to do the admin. work and he even spoke some English!



Great luck! We also told him about the problem with onward buses.... 'No Problem!' he exclaimed and then told us to get a bus to Khorat but to jump off after 12 km at the Highway Junction and wait for the Bus to Khon Kaen coming from Khorat. Uff!

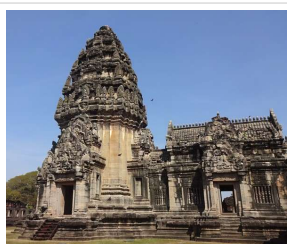
And now, more relaxed, after 1pm, we could go to visit the Historical Park with remnants of a Khmer City, built in the 12th century in the same style of the famous Ankhor Wat in Cambodia. The main attraction is the magnificent Prasat Phimai Temple in the center of the park.



Phimai Park & Ankhor Vat (Pic)



Prasat Phimai



.... Temple...



...from...



..... different Angles.

Then Peggy bought a bag of a fried mix of pigs' ears and lung etc and we had it for for lunch on our terrace with LEO. It was now 15.30 and we went for a short rest to our room.



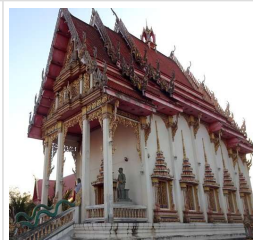
Intestins Wraps



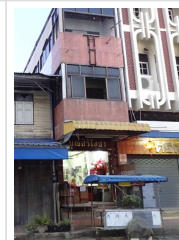
Yummy for Dinner



Wat Mai Prathu Chai



Wat Kao Prathu Chai



Our Guest House



Picnic on Terrace

At 17.00 we started another stroll to 2 temples near the bus station, but hardly started, Peggy saw this yummy food stall and thought of the terrace. Then we continued to Wat Mai Pratu Chai (pond outside) and Wat Kao Pratu Chai. Then we completed the tour during sunset via a canal back to the hotel. Before Peggy had bought some more take away for dinner: deep fried fish sticks, deep fried mini shrimps , one tripe sausage and a cup of lovely everything desert.... started eating at 18.30 (with LEO of course). All yummy!

Note: With Pimai we had partially satisfied Peggy's wish to visit some Khmer Temples near the Cambodian border and we will now turn back Northwest to join the main route again towards the Golden Triangle.

.....
 Wed 22.1 dep 9.00 / **Phimai** via: 10.00 Hiway Stop - 13.00 Khon Kaen arr: 15.00 / **Chumphae** 3 Buses km: 240

Van to Highway Stop 10 km, Bus to Khon Kaen 150 km, Bus to Chumphae 80km, Hotel: 16°32'38.89"N, 102° 6'9.26"E

Big surprise at breakfast at 7.30am!

Peggy had slipped out early, while I was still in bed, to buy Yau Dja Guai and a flask of Hong Thong (Malaysian Whisky) for

my 80th birthday!!!



Many Thanks Peggy!



Yau Dja Guai

Later we went to the bus station and got a van to Khorat at 9am and got off when reaching the Highway after 12km at Talath Koe. After about 1h waiting, at 10.15, we hopped on the bus to Khon Kaen. There at 1pm, we managed to change bus to Chumphae. We arrived at Chumphae at 3pm just beside the market and could not resist having a portion of spring rolls containing glass noodles with salad and sauce.



Highway Interchange



Bus to Khon Kaen



Market Lunch

Then went to look for a room . We made an unnecessary loop because in the end we stayed at the first hotel I had looked up on Google but had overlooked the small panel 'Hotel Queens!.... Hmm.... good deal for 200 Baht. After a rest we left at 5.30pm, it was already getting darker, for a little stroll with the idea to pass-by a pond while also looking for somewhere to eat (Birthday in mind) hhhmm....we did the walk around the pond but then



Our Hotel



... walking to



.... Pond....

.... things did not turn out as we would have liked and we finished-off my birthday with snacking and 2 Leo's.

Consolation: I know there is a bus to Phitsanulok tomorrow at 10.45.....so I may sleep in peace

.....
 Thu 23.1. dep 11.00 / **Chumphae** to arr: 16.30 / **Phitsanulok** Bus km: 230

Bus to Phitsanulok 230 km, Hotel: 16°48'43.80"N, 100°19'46.48"E

We walked to the bus station closeby at 9am to buy bus tickets. At the market next-door Peggy could not resist to buy yammy tidbits to eat while waiting for the bus: 2 different chuechli, fried wuchau (taro root) chips and some glutinous desert in lotus leaves (sticky Rice).



The Chuechli



Sticky Rice



Crispy Yammy



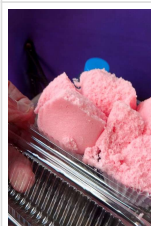
Sticky Rice Delights



Taro Root Chips!

At 10am we went back to the hotel to get our backpacks. The bus to Phitsanulok left at 11.00 and since they had told us we would arrive at 14.00 we had planned to continue towards Chiang Rai even more so, as the bus terminal 2 is at 8 km from the center of Phitsanulok.

It was a very nice drive over 2 mountain ranges with over 100km of winding up-and-down roads offering many nice sceneries while crossing the Nam Nao National Park.



Welcome



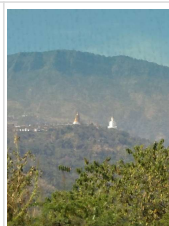
View and Mask



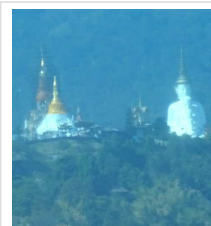
Nat'l Park



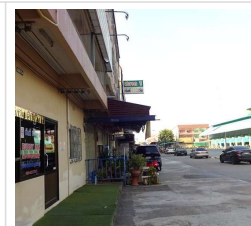
Maoi Kaho Ko



Temples



.... same Temples



Hotel and Bus Term'l

The bus was very slow uphill and so it was 16.45 when we arrived at Phitsanulok Bus Terminal 2. Too late to continue neither by bus, nor for walking 8km to town.
 Lucky again! Peggy found a very nice room for 200 Baht at the Buddy Inn Guest House within the terminal compound. Bingo!
 First an apéro then diary.... Had yammy dinner: rice dish with pork/vegi and my favourite tom yam soup just beside the Guest House.



Lovely Dinner and...



....celestal Tom Yam Soup

Fri 24.1. dep 8.45 / **Phitsanulok** to arr: 14.45 / **Phayao** Bus km: 320
 Bus to Phayao (passing Uttaradit & Phrae) 320 km, Hotel: 19°10'28.07"N, 99°53'58.84"E

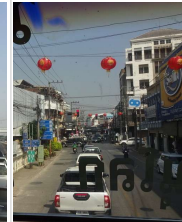
The double-decker bus started at 8.45. We had seats on top deck in 2nd row but as 1st row was empty... we moved and enjoyed 6 h of balcony ride till Phayao. There was also some bus sightseeing as we transited through small towns like Uttaradit and Phrae. Before arriving at Phayao at 2.30pm we already saw bits of Lake Phayao. We then found a very good room (400 Baht) in Anchisa Mansion.



Like low flying



...near Uttaradit



through Phrae



Lake Phayao

At 4pm we walked through town to the Lake Phayao and passed-by nice sites, such as Wat Ratcha Khruet, the City Pillar Shrine in a nice park and Wat Si-Umong Khan.



Wat Ratcha ...



... Khruet



City Pillar Shrine



Wat Si



...Umong...

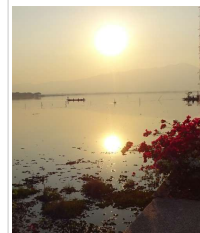


..... Khan

Near the lake we passed a lovely open-air market. After a short stroll along the lake in stetting sun at 5.30pm to a lovely Buddha Figure (Wat Tilok Aram), we walked back towards the hotel. On the way we had dinner, sitting outside a small restaurant: 2 different very tasty noodle soups with meat and vegies and remarkable fried sausages.



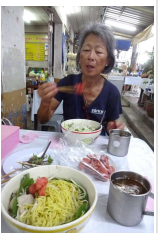
Night Market at Lake



Lake Phayao.....



Buddha Wat Tilok



Got back a 7pm and had another beer at the room, then shower etc went to sleep late...after 10pm.

PS Last night I did a wrong mouvement in the shower and pulled my sciatic nerve.....today I suffered the whole day.....not too badly but I feel uncomfortable.

Sat 25.1. dep 10.00 / **Phayao** to arr: 12.00 / **Chiang Rai** Bus km: 90
 Bus to Chiang Rai (T2) 90 km, Walk to Town: 7km Hotel: 19°54'11.97"N, 99°49'55.52"E

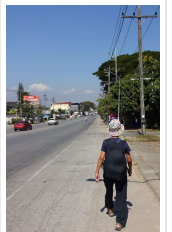
It was painfull to wear my trousers.....but I was still able to enjoy my morning coffee in the room. We were a bit early for the bus to leave at 9am. Easy drive to Chiang Rai on top level again but as expected, the ride stopped at Terminal 2 at around lunch-time. Long 7km walk (with backpacks and sciatica), first along the highway but then more residential. As we got closer to the center, Peggy bought me a pair of light elephant pants for 50 Baht.



Morning Coffee



Double Decker Bus

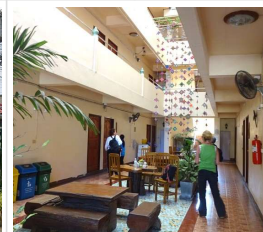


Walking to City

Peggy, while walking, also started to look for hotels and near Terminal 1, she found a good room in Jansom House for 500 Baht. Lovely hall leading to the staircases, with tables for the guests, also for socialising. Then we went first to the bus terminal 1 to find out about buses to Chiang Saen for tomorrow: every hour hh.40. Now at 3pm we started sightseeing with the Night Bazar (still closed) beside the Bus Terminal 1.



Entrée to Jansom

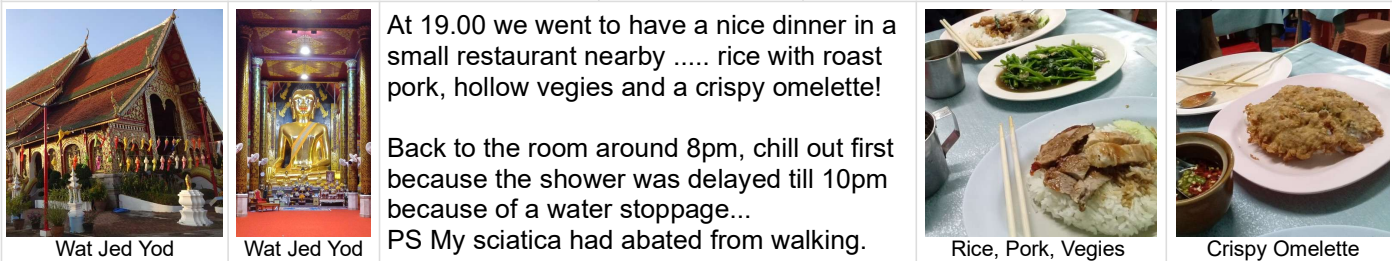


Socializing Hall



our Room was top left

We then walked a Temple-Marathon, first passing First Church (15.20), to Wat Klang Wiang (15.35), Wat Phra Sing (15.45), Wat Phra Kaew (more a Museum) (16.10), Wat Mung Muang (16.45) and on an way back we passed the remarkable Clock Tower (17.10) and then, just beside our hotel, there was still the Wat Jed Yod (17.20) with the huge Buddha Statue looking over us to be safe..... seems a lot but we enjoyed looking at every single beautiful temple!



At 19.00 we went to have a nice dinner in a small restaurant nearby rice with roast pork, hollow vegies and a crispy omelette!

Back to the room around 8pm, chill out first because the shower was delayed till 10pm because of a water stoppage...

PS My sciatica had abated from walking.

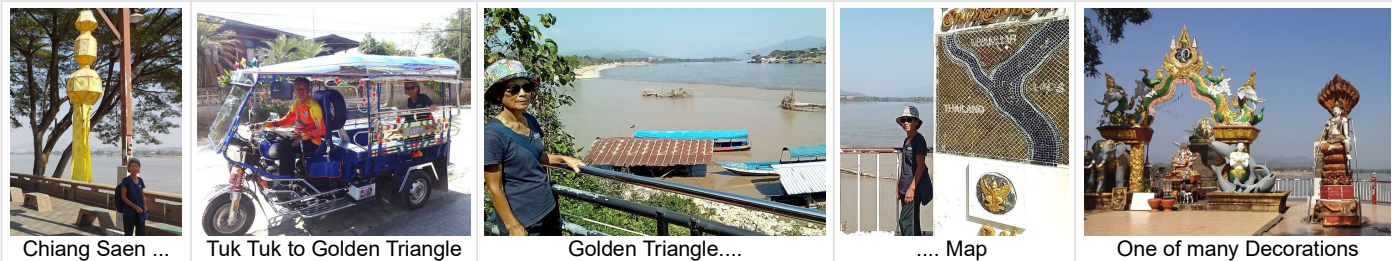
Sun 26.1.	dep 9.40/ Chiang Rai	to	arr: 11.00 / Chiang Saen	Bus km: 60
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Bus to Chiang Saen 60 km, Hotel: 20°16'41.57"N, 100° 5'13.12"E

Surprise: Peggy calls me to go to breakfast room and there we have toast butter confiture etc to go with our coffee! Then went to take the 9.40 bus to Chiang Saen on Mekong. It was an old local bus and we had a nice fun drive for about 60km arriving at Chiang Saen after 11am. A lady had told Peggy that on the opposite of the road there is a booking office for buses to Chiang Mai (daily at 8.30) and Peggy bought tickets right away for tomorrow.



Now we walked a bit along the Mekong Promenade and Peggy soon found a hotel (Amphai Guets House) with a nice room for 400 Baht. As Peggy had wished, we took a Tuktuk to the Golden Triangle where we arrived at 12.45. Very touristic place with view of where the Ruag River joins the Mekong forming the 3 country border, the Golden Triangle (Thailand/Laos/Mynamar) with numerous symbolic statues and figures.



After about an hour we started to walk back towards Chiang Saen but stopped after 1km for a dish of fried rice on a open terrace when 3 Romands arrived and sat next to us. One of them lives closeby and he told me about a foot-path directly along the Mekong to Chiang Saen.... but at first I did not see any such path. It was just getting hot, noisy and dull along the highway, when they passed us with their motorbikes and one of them made a sign which I took as indication for the path.... Bingo, there it just started! So we really had our Mekong riverside walk... When entering town we saw a few historical sites before getting back to the hotel in high spirits at 5pm.



Starting walk back

Wat Sob Ruak

Laos with Casino

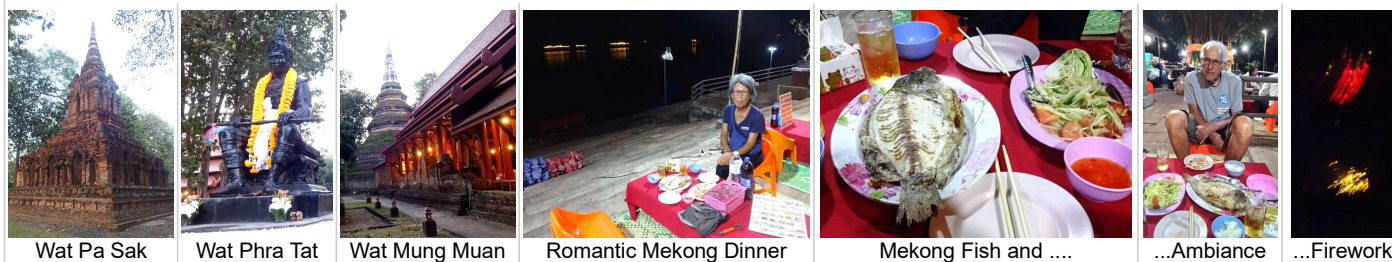
Walking Path

Strange Fruit

Witness of Monsoon

Still enjoying walk!

Half hour later we decided to visit 3 Chedis at Wat Pa Sak (sunset at 6pm), Wat Phra Tat and Wat Mung Muan which added another 3 km walk and we finished the last sightseeing almost in the dark and as it was 7 pm when we reached the river and sat down beside the water at a street food stall. We had a great time with a delicious braised big Mekong fish, papaya salad and rice with 3 Leo's from 7/11. We finished the meal just when a few firework rockets lit the sky at 8.20pm



Wat Pa Sak

Wat Phra Tat

Wat Mung Muan

Romantic Mekong Dinner

Mekong Fish and

...Ambiance

...Firework

We then passed one more temple, Wat Pha Khao Pan, at 200m from the hotel, arriving at 20.30 for our evening routine. Now it is 22.30 and Peggy wants to get up at 6am for getting an early bus without rushing....

Epilogue Part 2

At this stage, at the end of the northbound journey, I felt that both of us had reached our essential targets: Melaka, Jungle Train, Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Phimai, Chiang Rai and for Peggy, most of all, the walk along our old companion from China which we had crossed in 2005, **the Mekong River!**

So far all went without serious troubles and we had not used any of our reserve time yet as we were already about to turn back homewards!

Part 3 - Golden Triangle - Chiang Mai - River Kwai - Malaysia Border

8½ days, 27th January to 4th February, 1930 km

Mon. 27.1	dep 8.45 / Chiang Saen	to:	arr: 14.00 / Chiang Mai	Bus km: 190
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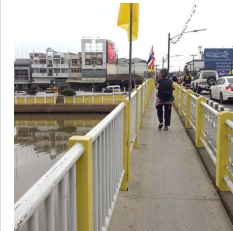
Bus: Chiang Saen to Chiang Mai / 190km, Arts Gate Hotel: 18°47'42.63"N, 99° 0'10.71"E

Peggy really got up early and we went down to the breakfast room, still in the dark at 6.15am. The morning rather cool and windy and later in the morning when we were already in the bus, it rained for a short while, the first time since Sungai Kolok and then no more until the end! One more short walk along the Mekong to the bus to Chiang Mai, leaving at 8.45. We had a comfortable 5h ride in a luxury bus, with a short stop at Chiang Rai Terminal-1 which we had started from yesterday!. Then continued via the mountainous Khun Chae Ntl Park to Chiang Mai, arriving after 14.00 at Terminal 3 which is 2 km from the Ping River and 3km from the East Gate of the City Center.



Walk to bus along Mekong

So we just walked on and only started looking for a room when approaching the river. Peggy found a reasonable hotel but we thought we may find one nearer to the center in Chinatown across the river There were many guesthouses around, but the ones in our focus were all fully booked because of Chinese New Year (on 29th). So we returned back over the river to the Arts Gate Hotelet voilà, the réception was vacated.... Peggy went to the shop next door and they called..... telephone check-in, hotels tele-camera for passport, code for keybox, payment in cashbox...it was 16.30 when we settled.



Car Bridge to Chinatown



Arts Gate Hotel

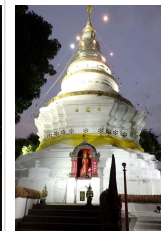
Now we crossed the river again to make a turn to visit busy Chinatown but as we did not find the 'right' place to eat we returned to the hotel, this time crossing the Ping River on the foot bridge surrounded with Chinese New Year illuminations. We then walked towards the bus station where we had seen some food stalls earlier on and decided for take-away to have a quiet dinner at our nice room.



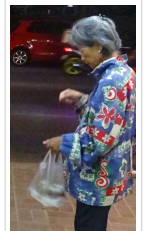
Foot Bridge over Ping R.



Chinese NY.



Wat Ket Karam



Takeaway

Tue. 28.1. **Chiang Mai**

Sightseeing

There was no hot water for coffee.... so we got out at 9am already for sightseeing and started with the Wat Ket Karam close-by and admired a street-arts mural (we will see hundreds in the coming weeks), before crossing the river again to Chinatown. Then visiting the Wat Buppharam on the way to Tha Phae (East) Gate. On the way to the Chiang Mai Gate (South) we saw the Key Hotel where Rocky etc have stayed.



Mural near Foot Bridge



Wat Buppharam



Tha Phae Gate

We then left the inner City for a detour to admire the Wat Sri Suphan - Silver Temple.



Near Chiang Mai Gate



Silver Temple



.....



.....



.....



.....Silver Temple

Walking back we stopped for a yammy rice/beef dish. Then went on to the Center to see the main attractions, the old Wat Chedi Luang (we missed out walking around it!) then the Wat Phra Singh.



City Pillar Shrine



Wat Chedi Luang



Temple of Lanterns



Wat Phra Singh

Then passed the West Gate and 1km beyond to the Wat Suan Dok with a great number of small white Chedis looking like grave stones. Back to the West Gate we decided to stroll back slowly to the center and on the way passing the 3 Kings' Monument and Chinatown and back to the hotel. When we passed Chinatown with 100 food stalls aligned we could not resist to pick a few yammy dishes and tidbits for takeaway to eat quietly at our hotel as we were both worn out. It was past 4pm and we had been on the way since 9am.....



At 6pm we decided that it would be a shame to miss out a Chinese New Year's Eve in Chinatown and so we went out once more for a turn over the Ping River to just enjoy



.... being part of the crowd in festive mood and stroll through the food stalls under all the light decorations.....

We were back at the hotel in the dark before 8pm and then we deserved a good shower!

***Note on Fried Pancakes:** 80 Baht with Seafood, 60 Baht with Mussels!

Wed. 29.1	Dep: 9.30 Chiang Mai	via Lampang and Tak	arr: 15.00 Kamphaeng Phet	Bus: km 355
Bus to Kamphaeng Phet: 355 km, Wilai Condotel: 16°28'5.90"N, 99°31'48.31"E				

After self-checkout, we walked the long way back to the bus terminal arriving just before 9.30 and after getting tickets to Tak we could just hop on the 9.30 bus to Kamphaeng Phet passing Lampang (on the way we could see a big Buddha of Wat Doi Ti near Lamphung).

Nice drive in comfortable bus. We arrived in Tak before 3pm. Since Peggy did not like to stay in this small town we paid the additional fare to continue to Kamphaeng Phet arriving before 4pm. We soon realised that we would have to cross the Ping River on a highway bridge to the City. Instead of following the highway tracks, we scrambled up to the old barred bridge in-between the 2 new bridges and finally we reached the Clock Tower.



It took us still a while to reach the first hotel and then several more tries until we found a reasonable room even with breakfast included. At 5.30pm we walked out to the nearby river and just popped into a night food market. We were both tired and Peggy bought yammy take away and there was even a 7-11 on way back to the room. We enjoyed 2 different brochettes, 2 different fish with rice and a huge portion of vegies. Went to sleep at 23.00.



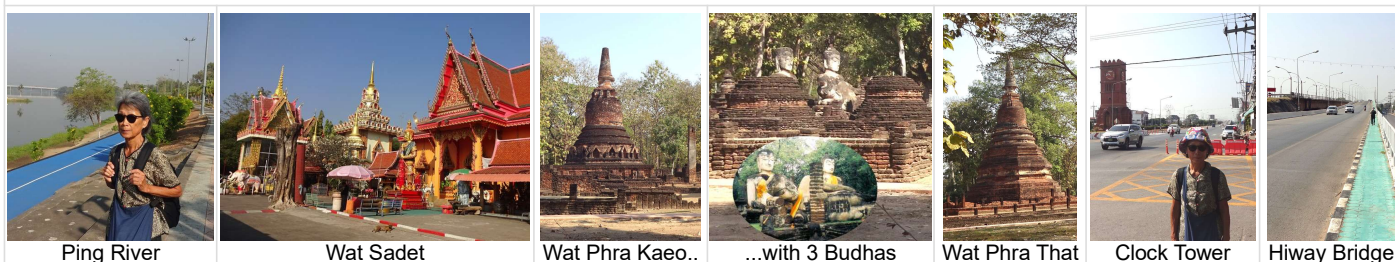
Almost forgot to mention that today was Chinese New Year and that there was a Chinese Theater Play taking place on a open stage in the park beside the Night Market.

Thu 30.1	dep: 12.00 / Kamphaeng Phet	to	arr: 2.00 Nakhon Sawan	Bus km: 120
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Bus: Kamphaeng Phet to Nakhon Sawan: 120km Hotel Jarunan: 15°41'56.04"N, 100° 7'0.96"E

Got up at 8am and had coffee and light jam sandwiches (luxury for us;-).

We left at 9.15 with backpacks for sightseeing before taking the bus at 12pm. First went back to the River then visited a couple of temples, Wat Bang and Wat Sadet then after the Clocktower we went for the historical Park with ruins of old temples, e.g. Wat Phra Kaeo (with 3 Buddhas, one lying) and Wat Phra That. Then walked back to the Clocktower to cross the Ping River, this time over the Highway Bridge, to the bus station arriving at 11.15!



Ping River

Wat Sadet

Wat Phra Kaeo..

...with 3 Budhas

Wat Phra That

Clock Tower

Hiway Bridge

The small van to Nakhon Sawan, leaving at 12pm, was packed full also with luggage and after a nice ride we arrived after 2pm. It was quite easy to find simple room (no A/C) for 250 Baht at the Jarunan Mansion..



Crowded Van

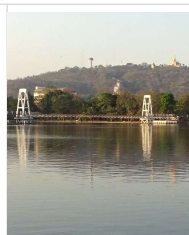


View to Hills

We left the hotel at 4pm for a walk to the city center beside the Ping River. We chose to walk along a very nice big pond (1.2km long) and then turned to the city which was still in full celebration for the 2nd day of the Chinese New Year (The Visit Family & Friends Day).



Walk along the Pond..



Temple on the Hill



Chinese New Year

Still a big crowd, rich decorations and as the evening approached appeared the illuminations. Again stalls with irresistible street food along the river promenade and as it was getting late (7pm after sunset), Peggy bought brochettes, noodles, rice with meat to take away to the hotelwith LEO of course (eating at 8pm) but first passing back beside the Pond and the Paradise Park.



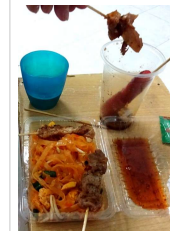
River Promenade



Luna Park at River



Paradise Park



Paradise Dinner

Now 22.30, time to sleep but I still could not make up my mind wether to continue to Kanchanaburi (River Kwai) or go South directly towards Ratchaburi! Hmm....

Fri. 31.1	dep 9.00 / Nakhon Sawan	via Suphan Buri	arr: 16.00 / Kanchanaburi	2 Buses km: 250
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Bus arr: 12.00 Suphan Buri 160km, Bus at 13.30 to Kanchanaburi 90km, Hotel Chitanun:14°2'0.76"N, 99°31'13.82"E

At 9am the old rattle bus started moving and it was a calm drive to Suphan Buri. On the way we saw a big Buddha Statue 'Shakyamuni' at Doem Bang 40km before we arrived at Suphan Buri at 12.00. As there was no direct bus to Ratchaburi but another bus already waiting to start to Kanchanaburi at 13.30, we gratefully took this option! Again a calm ride passing places like Wat Chum Nook Som and a Hill Temple called Wat Khao Meng Amonmet of which I found a splendid picture in Google.



Bus to Suphan Buri...



... old Style



Shakyamuni



Bus to Kanchanaburi



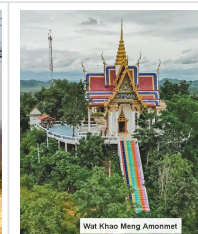
Soup-Noodles



Wat Chum..



Hill Temple...



....Wat Khao Meng

We arrived at Kanchanaburi at about 4pm and started to look for rooms right away. After erring around for too long we almost went back to a lousy hotel near the bus terminal..... when a Lady-Angel convinced us that we should just continue along the river, promising us good and cheap hotels..... (in fact Google had shown me to go to the River Kwai Road near the Railway Station). It turned out to be the main touristic hub and after several tries and errors, another Lady-Angel helped Peggy to get an acceptable room (in a bungalow) at 8pm along River Kwai Road in the Chitanun Guesthouse.



Google Picture



River Kwai Road

We then found a good place for a simple dinner, with the flaw that 7-11 did not sell me any beer for unknown reasons! On the way back to the room I then asked another (OZ) guest why I could not buy beer. He told me, because of strict government directives on tomorrow's national elections. Back in the room I just settled for a sip of Thai Whisky, when there was a knock on the door. The Aussie had still found a place selling beer and now gave me a bottle of LEO's as a present! That saved my day.....

Note: I was a bit long writing here on the issues of finding a room and the ban on the beer. I think I dwelled on them because in both cases there was a happy end because of other people helping.....



Vegi Dish

Sat 01.2.	dep 10.45 / Kanchanaburi	via: Ratchaburi	arr: 17.05 / Cha-Am	Bus/Train km: 180
Bus to Ratchaburi 80 km, Train dep 15.26 to Cha-Am: 100 km Hotel Perfect House: 12°47'31.79"N, 99°58'53.13"E				

No hot water for coffee.... so we left a 7am to walk 3km to the River Kwai Railway Bridge. We enjoyed the early morning walk and the crossing of the iron bridge walking on the rail track. We also stopped briefly at the museum's entrance to look at an old steam engine on display.



Steam Engine at Museum



River Kwai Bridge



Peggy on Track



The River Kwai from the Bridge



Military Cemetery



Cosy Bus

We got back to the room at 8.30 then packed and walked back, also visiting the big military cemetery, and reached the bus station at 10.30. Because of election-day buses ran unscheduled and we were lucky that we just caught a bus to Ratchaburi at 10.45. The cosy bus drove leisurely (good old diesel growling) to Ratchaburi and fortunately we hopped off at 1km from the Ratchaburi Railway Station, as the bus would continue to a remote bus terminal. We got tickets for the Ordinary Train 3rd Class leaving at 15.26 to Cha-Am at the sea, to arrive at 17.05, which would hopefully allow us to find a room before dark. Not so easy but in the end, after many tries, Peggy then found a room at 7pm in Cha-Am Beach, 2km from the Station. It was already getting dark but it was a good room (500Baht) at 150m from the beach in a night-life side-street.



Rail Tickets



Ordinary Train to Cha-Am



Cha-Am Beach



Take Away...



.. all over



...night cap.

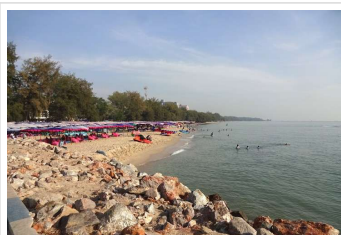
Tired now, Peggy bought a good take away and I went to get the 3 LEOs pack (172Baht) at 7-11 and then we had a quiet meal in the room Bed at 11pm.

Sun. 02.2.	dep 11.21 / Cha-Am	to	arr:16.40 / Chumphon	Train km: 300
Train to Chumphon 300 km, Hotel Suriwong: 10°29'56.93"N, 99°10'36.27"E				

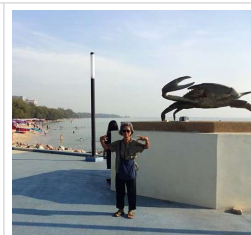
After coffee, at 8.30, we went for 1h stroll along the beach and we enjoyed to be directly at the sea for the first time ever since we left Australia. Peggy also bought us a little picnic for the long train ride.



Our Hotel



Cha-Am Beach

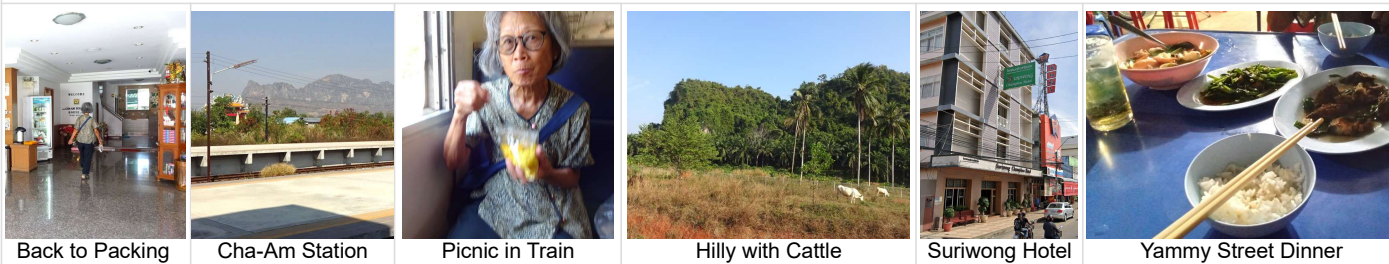


...2 Crabs



Our Street

Time to go packing (Peggy did of course) and then walked (both of us did) 2km back to the station. The ordinary train 3rd class to Chumphon left at 11.21 sharp. It was a pleasant ride in a full train with windows open arriving at 16.40 in Chumphon. This time it was not too difficult and after a few tries Peggy found a very comfortable hotel, not far from the railway station, with an 'inviting' reception hall. After settling, it was 7pm, we went out look for dinner and found an outdoor kitchen close-by where we had another excellent meal with seafood noodle broth, tasty ragout and rice. They had beer and ice as much as needed/wanted.



Mon 03.2.	dep 22.27 / Chumphon	Sightseeing Chumphon then overnight train to Hat Yai	see Trains 04.2.
Start Overnight Train..... continued 04.2.			

Preliminary note: I could no more sleep after 4am, pondering between 2 options remaining after we dropped the idea with the early 06.15 morning train to Hat Yai.

a) night train after 10pm directly to Hat Yai

b) train to Surat Thani at 2pm and continue next day from Surat Thani to Hat Yai at 9am.

After breakfast we went to the station and Peggy opted for a): buying tickets for tonight's overnight train at 22.27 ohoh! (I had still been undecided but Peggy seemed to like the idea of not having to look for a room for one night).

We were back in the hotel at 10.30 for Peggy to pack (to check-out) and for me to edit and submit the requests for our arrival cards for Malaysia Immigration. I managed mine first on my i-Tab but I did not get Peggy's application form through acceptance (unexplainable reasons and some fields not accepting any input at all). So I gave up at 12.30 and asked Padi for help. He had already assisted me in Fremantle for the 1st entry to Malaysia. 30' later the confirmation-mail from Immigration arrived! **Thank you Padi!!!**



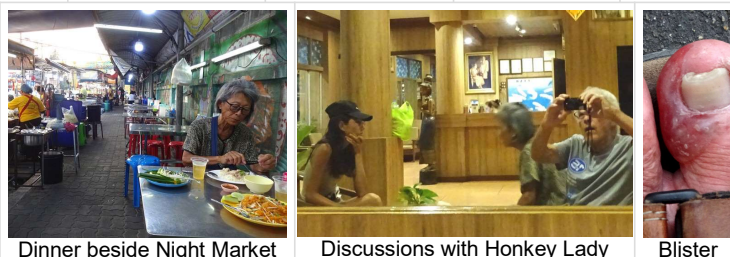
My Breakfast

It was now 1pm and **we had time till tonight!** Went out for a turn, first passing a huge Food Market then stopping for noodle soup and eating in the woman-cook's kitchen, so to speak. Continued then to the main square with the City Pillar Shrine and to the little Tha Taphlap River. Then back to the Hotel where I stayed for a while in the Lobby killing time and having fun with the Lobby's mirrors.



Later, at 6pm, we went for a nice dinner at the food street beside a night market.


Back to the hotel we waited till 9.30 pm before moving to station, in the meantime also having a chat with a Hongkongese young lady, staying almost next door to ours, doing extended backpacking in Thailand. Peggy had a few long talks with her through the day. She kept being scared about ghosts! I used the mirror.....



Dinner beside Night Market

Discussions with Honkey Lady

Blister

.....				
Tue 04.2.	Overnight Train	via Hat Yai	arr: arr. 8.05 Padang Besar (Border)	2 Trains km 530
Overnight Train arr 6.30 at Hat Yai 480 km, Train dep 7.20 to Padang Besar (border) 50km				
Our Train 'Rapid' (3rd class our carriage) left on time at 22.27. Open windows, fans, food sellers, not very comfortable seats, train mostly runs at 100km/h and is shaking us thoroughly for 8 long hours and over 500 km..... I am not complaining! We wanted it that way and it belongs to our backpacking life.....				
I did not sleep 1 minute on the train but could also not listen to music! My hearing-aids' batteries were empty at 2am and I also had to save my tablet's battery for tomorrows basic needs and hazards in case.....				
We arrived at 06.30 in Hat Yai and immediately bought tickets for train at 7.20 to Padang Besar Border station arriving at 08.05. There we saw that a train to Butterworth would leave at 9.30 and so we rushed for passing the 2 immigration offices and it all went smoothly. We then realised that the train will only leave at 10.30 Thai time:-).				
Note: Just after boarding the train to Butterworth we both regretted that we did not get off at Padang Center Station to stay and rest for another day enjoying Thailand.....				

Night Train to Hat Yai

Epilogue Part 3

I think both of us were very satisfied by our journey through Thailand. All had worked out without major difficulties and we very much liked the food (mostly street food), all the beautiful temple sites but also the very green landscapes. But I also noticed that my aging brain had kept overwriting my daily souvenirs as we progressed and also that I gradually became saturated somehow. Now I am very relaxed with respect to the remaining portion of travel to Kuala Lumpur we we still have kept our time reserve. We can and will take it easy!

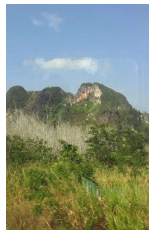
Part 4 - Thai Border - George Town (Penang) - Ipoh - Kuala Lumpur

8½ days, 4th Februar to 12th February, 620 km

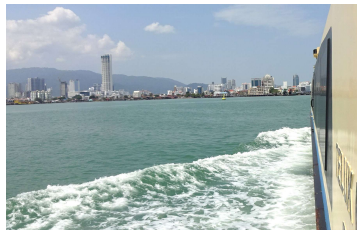
Tue. 04.2	dep 10.30 / Padang Besar (Border)	via Butterworth	arr: 13.15 / George Town	Train/Ferry km: 165 / 3
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Train: to Butterworth / 165 km, Ferry to Georgetown / 3km, Hotel Star Lodge: 5°25'11.45"N, 100°20'9.44"E

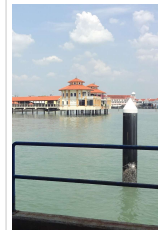
It was a modern electric train and we had a nice ride to Butterworth arriving at 12.30 at the big Train/Bus/Ferry Terminal. We Got the 13.30 Ferry for a lovely crossing to the Penang Island's Georgetown Pier. The fare is 2 RM and no cash is accepted. Peggy asked another passenger if he would get us the tickets..... he did not take our 4 RM!



View from Train



Nice ferry ride to Georgetown....



...arriving



...arrived

From the Ferry we walked up Chulia Street with many hotels (on Google) but again some did not seem to exist and the others were fully booked. But then in a side street (off Love Lane) there was the little Star Lodge...and an elderly guest (Philip, British, 84) saw us coming and praised his favourite Guesthouse and then Peggy took a room for 3 nights with a little bargain (perhaps the boss being Chinese or also thanks to a good word by Philip?) After a short apéro we walked out for a 1st turn in the vicinity....



Chulia Street



Star Lodge



British Pub

..... a British Pub, British street names e.g. Carnarvon Street, Kapitan Keling Mosque, Yap Temple, Armenian Street..... On the way back we saw a small food street center off Chulia road and had food from 2 stalls and some beer. At the 1st stall



Carnarvon Street



Minaret



Yap Temple



Armenian Street



Peggy chatting

.....we were sent away because of the beer (Moslem), at the 2nd because of the plate from the first stall! We still just hung on to finish, playing stubborn, and then went to an Indian take away and bought the 2nd part of dinner to eat at our hotel. Now we realised that we are no more in Thailand and that we have to live with it. In the end we had a cup of tea in the lounge and Peggy met another habitué of the house, an old Chinese (80+) called Eddie while I was chatting with Philip. Now 8pm, time for retiring (we had not been sleeping for 36 hours!)

Wed. 05.2	Georgetown (Penang)	Sightseeing (day 1 of 3)
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Easy morning enjoying 2 coffees (hot water available). Then we decided to visit Penang Hill expecting a nice view and having a nice 7 km walk to the funicular station. Quite a long walk with many more things to see than just the big Octopus Pedestrian Bridge, the Nagarathar Temple, the Negeri Pulau Mosque, a giant lezard at a small river and the Arulmigu Sri Ruthra Temple.



Octopus Bridge



Nagarathar T.



Negeri Pulau



Giant Lezard



Arulmigu Sri

As we approached, Peggy noticed a huge Pavilion perched on a hill in the distance. She knew that it was the famous Buddhist Kek Lok Si Temple, whereas I had no idea, not even that it existed! But when I understood at last, it was easy to change our plans as the site was merely 1km further than the funicular station (The hill tomorrow, perhaps?).

The Pavilion with the Guan Yin Statue overlooks and is part of the Kek Lok Si Temple compound, an immense cluster of temples, pagodas, gardens and pavilions. It was an amazing experience and it took us over 2 hours strolling and climbing stairs even up to the top of the biggest 7-storey Ban Pho Tar Pagoda.



Approaching



View up to Pavilion



Big Arhats



Big Pagoda



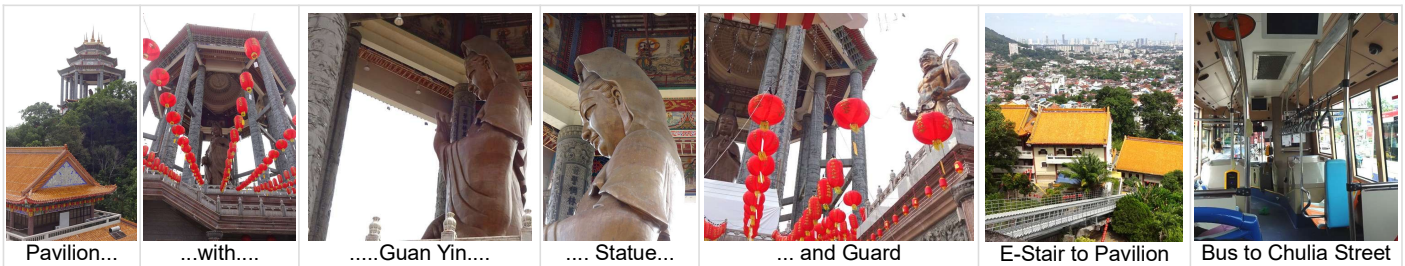
Big Bell



View from Ban Pho Tar Pagoda....



..barefoot



Pavilion...

...with....

.....Guan Yin....

.... Statue...

... and Guard

E-Stair to Pavilion

Bus to Chulia Street

There were so many things to see, also on the way back to street level! Now we felt a bit tired and it was very hot too and so we decided to take the 201 bus back to Chulia Street near our Star Lodge. Bought beer at 7-11 and then had Apéro first, immediately getting involved in socialising. For dinner on the terrace, we bought nice take away from the Indian at Chulia/Love Lane Corner and did not miss out on his speciality, a succulent vegetable pie!



Mural beside Star L



Dinner on the Terrace



Indien Veggie Pie!

The rest of the evening we were socialising in the lounge. Peggy with an old Canadian Chinese, Eddie from Hongkong. I got into a lengthy intensive conversation with Andrew, a 53 year old world traveler from London, who has been to many places except that he has hardly seen anything of England yet.... Philip 84 was around too Before going to sleep we heard fireworks until deep in the night perhaps early Thaipusam festivities?

Note: I have never seen before such a hotel where all the guests from all over the world immediately become companions and some even friends. **Philip** 85, from Birmingham, **Andrew** 53, from London traveling half of the year for half his life already, **Olivia** from lake Garda, a Syrian Lady who lives in the hotel on/off for 8 years already, **Eddie** a Chinese/Canadian 80, who had left Hongkong at age 18 and now moving between Canada/Hongkong/China etc, **Patrick** 'resembling my Robinson', 65 from Luxemburg (looking a fair bit older but very fit). He is mostly hitch hiking. There were a few other nice people around saying hello and bye. One of the receptionists is Indonesian and lived in Bali before she separated.

Thu. 06.2 **Georgetown (Penang)**

Sightseeing (day 2 of 3)

Easy morning with coffee in the room. Then when I was getting more water from the lounge and chatting started again. We decided to have an easy day and dedicated our sightseeing to the Jetty areas and the city.

First we walked to the Kapitan Keling Mosque again and then we had a closer look around the area we had visited the 1st evening: Acheen Street Mosque, Cheah Kong Si Temple but also the many street-arts murals for which Georgetown has a reputation.



Close to the Hotel



Near Acheen Mosque



Sun-variable



Armenia...



... Street

Then we went to look at the various 'Clan' Jetties (starting with Chew-then Tan-, Lee- and Yeoh-Jetty). Nice harbour views and even Chinese temples e.g. Monkey God Temple at the start of Chew Jetty and Hean Boo Khean Kuan Yin Temple at the end of the Yeoh Jetty.



Monkey King



Chew Jetty



.. with Street A.



Gate to Lee Jetty



Hean Boo ... Temple

Then we continued to the Queen Victoria Clock Tower after passing the historical Railway Station. Next was the Fort Cornwallis but there was not much more to see than a few walls and guns. Then walked the Esplanade Walkway to the Penang City Hall, the Cenotaph and the Esplanade Food Hall where we had a real Laksa.



Hist. Railway Station



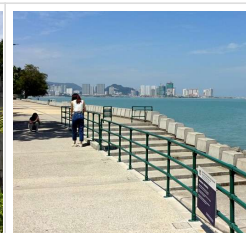
Clock Tower



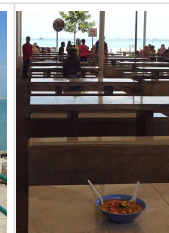
Fort Cornwallis



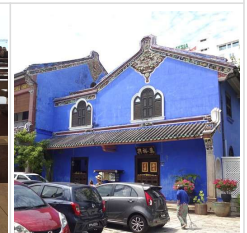
Penang City Hall



Esplanade Walkway



Laksa



Hist'l Blue Mansion

Then we made a detour to the Blue Mansion with the aim to go once more to a food street we had yesterday morning near the fly-over at Penang/Burma Street to buy take away dinner.....after fun with Mr. Bean, a chat with Marilyn and a toast with Mona Lisa, we came back home with 2 kinds of fish (Muslim) and Samosas (Indian). This time we had dinner in the room. Conversations later in the Lounge, mainly with Andrew.



Fri. 07.2 **Georgetown (Penang)** **Sightseeing (day 3 of 3)**

Easy morning, no chatting....Then walked to Gurney Bay Park enjoying the view over the bay also seeing all sorts of mansions, high-rises of all shapes and also decayed ruins of an old school.



After the park we visited the 2 beautiful temples at opposite sides of the same street closeby, the Chaiya Mangalaram Thai Buddhist Temple and the Dhammi Karama Burmese Buddah Temple.



Now hungry, instead of walking 2km to visit the botanical gardens, we had street food fried rice and Singapore Noodles. On the way back along Burma Street we also made a quick turn at the Buppharam Temple then continuing on Burma Street where Peggy bought some goodies from a street stall and then some more similar to yesterday. We were back home before 4pm, time for apéro before having our picnic at the room.



Later I was chatting with Philip who warned me about the upcoming Thaipusam festivities on 11th February and potential problems for the coming days to get tickets for buses and trains to Kuala Lumpur! Now I had something to chew and to get stressed about for the next few days to catch the plane at Kuala Lumpur on the 12th..... Peggy's chat with her Chinese friend Eddie now, was apparently about his current cash problems because his credit card had been invalidated..... 9pm, time to retire!

Sat. 08.2	dep 10.00 / Georgetown	via Butterworth	arr: / Ipoh	Ferry/Bus km: 3 / 150
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Ferry to Butterworth /3km, Train dep 12.10 to Ipoh 150 km, Hotel Merloon: 4°35'39.97"N, 101° 5'11.97"E

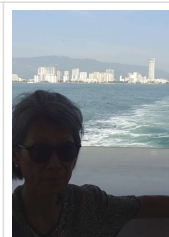
We got up at 7 and Peggy had enough time for her T'ai Chi exercises. I had a last chat with Patrick before we left the Star Lodge to catch the 10.00 ferry to Butterworth. Nice crossing again then got train tickets to Ipoh with help from a young Muslim lady at the ticket machine. She then noticed that all seats on the 10th for the onward journey from Ipoh to Kuala Lumpur were already sold out! Ohoh..

Thaipusam! Get to Ipoh first and see....!

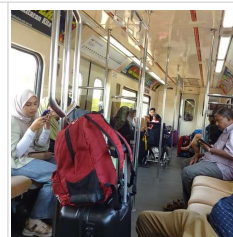
Our ordinary train (bench-rows back to windows) left on time at 12.10



Bye Patrick



Bye Georgetown



Ordinary Train to Ipoh

Soon the train became packed full with many passengers standing for 150km. After a nice ride through hilly countryside we reached Ipoh after 2pm and went to the ticket counter to look for seats for the 10th.... 'No way!' On the 9th only at 5am and the 12th hardly any seats left. So we gave up for the moment and first went to look for a room! We walked a long way over the Kinta River until we reached an area with a few Guest Houses. I sat down on a small wall, Peggy went chasing! After ½h she came back with a key in hand and the good news, that the Chinese receptionist had already booked bus seats to Kuala Lumpur for tomorrow, ready to be collected at the Bus Terminal Office! **PROBLEM SOLVED!**

Thanks Peggy! What a relieve!



Hotel Merloon

We dropped the backpacks and immediately walked to the ticket office (1km each way) before settling in our nice room to enjoy a Guinness for apéro at 6pm. Then we found a nice open place for Chinese yammy fried noodles and noodle soup with etc (ordered from photo of menu on my Tab). After a good shower it is now 10pm.



Mural of Bus Stat'n



Calming Guinness



Photo of Menu to...



..order yammy noodles

Sun. 09.2. **Ipoh**

Sightseeing

Note: In the 1930s Ipoh used to be the center of the worlds tin industry! Today Ipoh with a population of 650'000 is the 3rd largest city of Malaysia, wellknown for good cuisine and gateway to the Cameron Highlands. Perhaps worth a holiday another time?

Easy morning when Rocky called Peggy on Whatsapp to tell that he will be meeting us on the 11th February in Kuala Lumpur! What a surprise! We left at 10am for a walk to the old town where we had lovely Wonton Noodle Soup.

Then we walked a bit along the Kinta River, before turning towards the railway station to see a few historical buildings. Pity we did not follow the river until the rocky hills.



One-Ton Soup



Kinta River Bridge



Arlene House



Clock Tower



Ipoh Town Hall



Ipoh Station

Back via Little India and then strolling looking at dozens of murals all the way back.



Little India



Peggy helps...



Kinta River Br.



Near Mosque



Together better!



Happy Mother's Day



Hiding.....







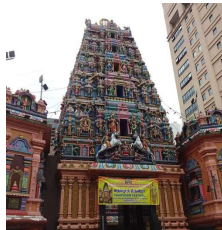

No War!

It was hot and now time for a beer, then Peggy went out for a short turn, after which I also went out once more to the old town and after 45' came back at 4pm as it was really too hot outside.

At 18.30 we went for a small dinner across the road and had rice, bitter melon (Fu Gua) and pork! Later on I had to wait for a short thunderstorm to pass, before I could go to get Guinness for our dessert in the room with some Wu Kok (Taro) and Green Rice Paste Balls back at the hotel. In bed early today!

Note: I think we were both a bit worn out today and a bit on letting go towards the nearing end.

Mon. 10.2	dep 13.00 / Ipoh	via Kuala Lumpur (TBS Terminal)	arr: / Kuala Lumpur (Sentral)	Bus/Train km: 240
Bus to Kuala Lumpur, TBS Bus Terminal 230 km, KTM Train to Railway Sentral 10km, Hotel: 3° 7'53.30"N, 101°41'14.16"E				
<p>After too little sleep we got up at 8.30. After breakfast Peggy did not really feel like moving to look for brunch before taking the bus, so we left the hotel at 11.30 only to catch the bus to Kuala Lumpur at 1 pm. I recall that I was insisting to buy something to eat on the bus as I was worried we would arrive late in KL and I think Peggy got me some noodles.....</p> <p>The bus left on time but after we past the first hills, still in town, the bus turned North to the main Amanjaya Terminal, 12km North. Then got twice off the motorway for pick-ups at other small terminals, then a traffic congestion. Lost time by now: over 1h!</p>			 1st Hill already	 Comfortable Bus
<p>At 5pm, rush hour, we seemed to reach the target, the Railway Station Sentral but then, just at the branch-off into the Station Center, the bus did not turn in but continued slowly south, endlessly, to an unknown place and finally stopped at 6.30pm at the TBS Terminal, 12km from KL Sentral. It was getting dark and I was unprepared, desperate, and totally overwhelmed and I started to panick....! Then Peggy, when leaving the bus asked a young Chinese bloke of the same bus (in Cantonese) what we could do. He said 'follow me' and took us to the KTM platform, paid our fare 2*6.50 RM (he refused Peggy's cash return) and with the fast rail we were back to Sentral Station within half an hour!</p>				
<p>Now, he did not let go before he had taken us out of the huge station compound and shown us the way to some budget hotels closeby! There were several guesthouses around but the first 6 or 7 Peggy looked at were fully booked* but then the 2nd-last, the South of the Clouds Hotel, with a very helpful Chinese receptionist and also a nice lounge, had just one room left, a good room (though no windows) for 90RM. ....once more 'a last minute rescue' for a good ending of our trip!</p> <p>We were still on time to enjoy a nice Indian buffet nearby with some beer bought in a shop next door!</p>				 Chinese Hotel
<p>Note: Fully booked hotels were certainly a consequence of tomorrow's Thaipusam Festivities, the Batu Caves near Kuala Lumpur being the main site. We still had in mind to visit the Batu Caves on Tuesday We'll see!</p>				

Tue 11.2.	Kuala Lumpur	Sightseeing				
<p>We had hot water for our coffee and then we left at 9.30. Started walking along the Klang River in direction of Chinatown for a sightseeing tour with the first target at 4km: the Petronas Towers. On the way we passed many more high-rises, e.g. the Merdeka-118-floors / 679m, the 2nd highest building in the world and then the TV Tower: 421m!</p>						
		Klang River	Merdeka-118	TV Tower	Petronas 'Temple'	.... 451m
<p>We were hanging inside and around the Petronas Towers (251m) for 1 hour and then walked another way back to Chinatown passing at the North of the TV Tower which was more entertaining than the former way. We entered Chinatown by the Pedaling Street Gate. At the other end of Chinatown we visited the Chan She Shu Yuen Temple with lots of remarkable decorations. On the way back we passed Kwai Chai Hong, a backstreet, with lovely murals and then the Sri Maha Mariamman Indian Temple (welcome panel for Thaipusam). Now we had to go back to the hotel to meet Rocky and just made one more stop for a look at the old Railway Station before reaching our hotel at 15.30 (6h).</p>						
		Monorail	Pedaling Gate			
						
Pedaling Street...	with Merdeka	w.Chinese Murals	Chan She Shu Yuen T.	Peggy at Hairdresser	...murals	Sri Maha Mariamman
						
Old Railway Station	Waiting for Monorail	Bukit Bintang Str.	Alor Food Street	Settled at the	Wow! Restaurant!	

Rocky arrived from the Airport before 5pm and took us right away to the monorail to Bukit Bintang, inviting us for dinner at the famous Alor Food Street. We got off at Bintang station and then strolled through the Alor Food Street, with lots of people gradually arriving looking for tables or buying yammy food at the many food stalls! Rocky ordered Satay Sticks, Spare Ribs, Bitter Melon and devillish fried Fish with rice and it all went well with the Royal Stout.

The fried devil fish was so yammy and crispy that, again, I ate the whole fish from head to tail, bones including! Great atmosphere and of course we were very happy to have Rocky's company!
 Note: The Name of the Restaurant: W.A.W (sounds Wow!)... for Wong Ah Wah Restaurant!
 Later we made a turn in the evening atmosphere around the very busy and colourful shopping area which, I thought, even exceeds Hongkong's Times Square. Then Rocky took us back to the Monorail and we returned to our hotel by ourselves, whereas Rocky joined his friend at another hotel and they will continue to Penang tomorrow.

It was a splendid evening to keep the memory of Kuala Lumpur as an attractive city!

Thank you Rocky!



Hall of the Pavilion

Wed 12.2.	dep 17.30 / Kuala Lumpur	Via Int'l Airport (KLIA-1)	End: Plane to Istanbul	Bus km: 60
Airport Bus from KL Sentral to Airport 60km				

During coffee we decided to visit the Batu Caves on our last day and of course by train. We then packed and left the backpacks at the Hotel. We went to the KTM Sentral Station and took the next train to Batu Caves at 10.35 (13km). The train arrived at 11am directly beside the rocky walls of the hill. The Batu Caves are of course THE big touristic Destination, but whereas yesterday the site was overcrowded by thousands of Thaipusam Worshippers, today it seemed to calm down to recover its breath!

We just strolled from view point to view point, enjoying without being hindered or disturbed by crowds of people. The main attraction is of course the big Batu Cave with its access by an enormous stair passing beside the large Murugan Deity Statue to the awesome entrance to the cave. Once you are inside you are captured by the stunning dimension of the main vault and the diversity of side vaults with temples and shrines.



To Batu C.



Hanuman



Stair to Cave & Murugan Statue



.....



Entrance to



...main Vault and Temple



Stair to open V.



Way out...



Beggar...



Way down



Sultan Abdul Samad Bld



Sultan Abdul Samad M.



Lion Fight in..



... Chinatown



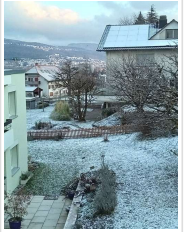
Rosary Church

Our visit lasted 2h and we took the 1pm train back to Kuala Lumpur but got off at Bank Negara Station to visit the Independence Square with the impressive Sultan Abdul Samad Building and the Sultan Abdul Samad Mosque before watching a lion fight in Chinatown on the way to the hotel. Near the hotel we had a dish of fried rice with pieces of yammy dried salted fish. Then picked backpacks and off we were to the bus terminal for the 17.30 Airport Bus. In rush hour again being very slow for the first 45' stuck in busy hour traffic. We reached KLIA1 Terminal 1 just after 7pm....long wait till departure at 23.45 by Turkish Airways.

Note: After 9pm I received several WhatsApp messages about Eric's health status requiring hospitalisation with little hope for the outcome(just before his 97th) last message received just before boarding...



Merdeka

Thu. 13.2	Start: Plane to Istanbul	via Istanbul Airport, flight to ZH, train to Biel	End: Ipsach Home
<p>Long very uncomfortable and boring night since I cannot watch films on the seat diplays because of my hearing deficiency. Now I have just written the last 2 days diary text at 6am Malysian time. Challenging transit in the enormous Istanbul Airport with one huge security center platform where they did not like my walking stick and tried to take it apart, then handed it back to me because they could not put it together again. Of course I got upset and told them to fix it. Peggy pulled me away I will try to fix it at home...</p> <p>Smooth flight to Zürich, easy train to Biel and Bähnli to Ipsach. Very tired and suffering being back to winter cold and dark....</p>			 <p>Next Morning</p>

Epilogue Part 4

This part of the trip concluded successfully our journey, with a 'chill-out active rest' in Georgetown and the highlights with Rocky at Foodstreet in Bukit Bintang and the last minute visit to the Batu Caves. We were both tired and saturated but somehow I was already longing to continue to Melaka and do it once more! **Well! I did it at home!** Today is the 9th April and it took me 8 weeks, almost every day, to write this report