

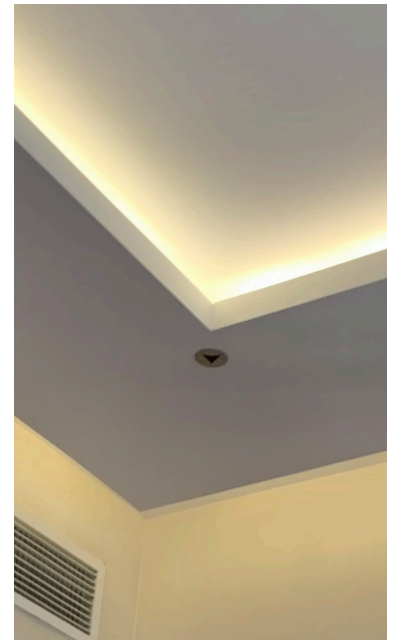
Hello Everyone,

Some of you all know I just returned from an amazing trip to Southeast Asia. My daughter has been living in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for 3 years due to her husbands work. She has wanted me to visit since she arrived there but I just wasn't sure I could do such a big trip. It takes about 30 - 33 hrs from my house to her condo and around 24 hrs of flying and that's a long time. I found a friend that could do it with me so off we went the end of January returning the first of March...We flew from Orlando to Dubai where we had a connecting flight so decided - why not stopover and see that area. Emirates Airlines is wonderful and had a car pick us up and drive us to Abu Dhabi first so spent 3 nights touring that city.



We met a camel keeper on the beach where we got to pet the camels and he served us tea under his tent, put my feet in the Arabian Sea and toured this beautiful Mosque...then back to Dubai we went...This city seems to be all about money and is really expensive. To ride to the top of the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, cost \$150 U.S. dollars. I am happy with the photo I took of it but...I did ride to the top of the Palm Jumeirah where you look out over all the man made Palm Archipelagos which is amazing and the price was much less...Took a desert safari to a Bedouin Camp in the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve where I tasted Camels milk - I figured I had to do that since I drank so much goats milk growing up. Also got to ride a camel. Dubai is an Islamic country. An interesting thing I learned is that in all the hotel bedrooms there they paint an arrow

somewhere on the ceiling pointing to Mecca. Islam is the main religion in the United Arab Emirates and the arrow shows people which direction to put the prayer rug down and then knell to pray. Prayer rugs are also in each room. I also learned the temperature gets to 125° in summer. I guess



they have learned how to be in air conditioned places most of the time. Its time to leave Dubai and take my next flight to see Shani and Kuala Lumpur...

We got to stay with Shani and Tim for a month. Malaysia is such an interesting huge city which I didn't expect. This is a view from dinner one night of the Presidents Palace and most all of Kuala Lumpur in the background. I am standing in front of the tallest twin towers in the world - The Petronius Towers...beautiful views...



How special that the Chinese Lunar New Year took place on Feb. 10 this year and lasted for 15 days. It is also the Year of the Dragon so all of us born in 1940 are Dragons which seemed to be pretty special this year - an auspicious symbol of power, wisdom and good fortune. Every night firecrackers would go off and we could hear it for a few hours from the condo balcony. The skies would light up with all the cracking and popping. I felt like they were celebrating ME!!! Everything was decorated with red, gold, oranges and beautiful lions and dragons...



Shani volunteer teaches at a school for refugee children so we got to go visit and help one day. I loved doing this and I wanted to bring every one of those kids home with me. Since it was Chinese New Year she had a lesson about that and then they got to do the noodle toss. This is called Yusheng or Prosperity Toss. After the tossing everyone gets to eat the noodle salad. So much fun for the kids. I took all the children a Crayola zipper bag with a box of crayons and a notepad inside. Shani tells me they are still using their surprise.



We toured a Chinese Temple where I got to hold up long sticks in a container and then drop all the sticks at once and one will stand higher than the rest. That stick has a number on it. You open a little drawer under the counter that is your number and take out a piece of paper where your fortune is written. We did the noodle toss too at our lunch...so fun...



A little 5 day trip to Hanoi, Vietnam was such a highlight of my trip. I have never been to any city that compares. It was sensory overload of so many sounds. The news is broadcast every morning from speakers all over Hanoi, the hawkers, the scooters, cars, motorcycles, buses - it is a cacophony of sounds all at the same time. No rules of the road either. No stop signs, no traffic lights, no nothing. Its just start to walk across the street, don't look either way and hope you make it to the other side. Each vehicle seems to gear their speed to your walking speed so once you start you have to keep walking to make it over...the traffic is constant...



We did tour the Hanoi Hilton...it is now a museum and a sobering one...as I walked through it I was remembering Dennis Vancenovsky and Denny Colburn even though they were not prisoners there, they were killed in Vietnam. So here are my pictures...The entry door, the walled-in yard with jagged glass pieces and barbwire all along the top of the wall that made it impossible to escape, and I am sitting on a concrete bed where prisoners



were shackled by their ankles...ghosts of the past kept creeping in my thoughts...Vietnam is a socialist republic controlled by the Communist party...



We also took a one night cruise out on Ha Long Bay which was just magical. The water is emerald green - I'm used to blue water...



It was a small boat with only 10 cabins and the crew took such good care of us catering to our every whim. We slowly went through all these Karsts and shopped from a little boat passing by.



Now we're back in Kuala Lumpur and its time for Elephants and Monkeys. First we went to an elephant sanctuary. We got to feed and pet and watch big elephants and baby elephants. What a treat...



Shani's driver is Indian Sikh from Punjab, India so he took us to the Batu Caves which is a Hindu Temple. Beautiful flower necklaces are sold before entering the temple grounds to be offered as a blessing in the temple. A huge golden statue guards over everything and monkeys are running everywhere. So many steps to get up to the main temple so I passed on this but did climb some of the steps before turning around. Here are some of my pictures...



An interesting ritual of shaving the head in the Hindu religion is done at these Batu Caves. Babies, men, women, anyone I guess does it. It is believed to bring good luck and prosperity to that person. It was a bit upsetting for me to watch babies but their families were so happy.



Santok, Shani's driver, invited us to his house so his wife could teach us how to make chapati bread which is an Indian dish. We had tea, chapati and delicious pastries his wife had already made. This family is Punjabi Shikh from India.



Islam is the state religion of Malaysia. All Malays are Muslim. There are many beautiful Mosques here and we toured this one...



The call to worship happened while we were there. All the men go down to the front and kneel to pray. The women are only allowed to stand in the back to the left of the picture. The prayer chants begin and at some point the men all lean down to the floor until their head touches then rise back up and this is repeated several times. Muslims are required to pray 5 times a day facing Mecca. These calls to worship are broadcast through the streets through speakers. This was done in Abu Dhabi and Dubai too.

A quick flight to Singapore gave us one night there to do that beautiful city. Very modern and clean and learn a little bit about it.



Marina Bay Sands...



Gardens by the Bay...



Singapore Sling...

There is a fruit grown in Malaysia called Durian. It is banned in most public places, restaurants, markets, transportation, etc due to its very potent smell. The odor last for days so even the people that do sell it wear gloves. Well...of course I got talked into tasting it - because it tastes awful...



Shani neglected to tell me one important thing. Most of the toilets in these countries are holes, not western toilets....soooo I was in for a very big surprise the first time I went to use a bathroom. The first picture is one in Dubai and was clean but nevertheless a hole. Three stalls were holes and one was western...I waited. The next picture was in Kuala Lumpur...Most were very uninviting to say the least and worse than this one. The outhouse I grew up using was looking mighty good. The third picture shows two signs so you could choose which door to open. Which would you pick?

