

Wednesday 8 February 2012 – At Sea on way to Sihanukville, Cambodia -29° Partly cloudy

There's a fresh influx of jet lagged passengers. Lisa and David joined our table last night and they maybe 20 years younger than us! Lisa is also coeliac so we had a catch up on all things non gluten. Rick went to see the Beatles cover band last night and said they were fantastic, they even had encores which is a first here on board. Celia and Clive are our new Bridge partners, they are real beginners and for a change we had to help them. Kate Aide's session was okay but didn't really tell me anything I didn't know already. Excuse the pun but she goes straight in for kill, no introduction, starts on time and finishes on the dot, comes across as a bit arrogant. Rick had another session on "History of the Guitar" and is keen to take it up again. His guitar has been sitting untouched behind the sofa for at least 10 years after his last fad.

As long as you don't need to use the iron in the Laundry it's okay and a great place for gossip but it's surprising how fussy ladies are about their washing. Suddenly I have become the Dot Cotton of the Arcadia Launderette and am advising ladies on how to get rid of black streaks on their washing and what program to use, how to maintain the dryer, whether to use conditioner, etc, etc. Then at the 5pm class in the gym, because the instructor is not firm enough with his instructions, I am having to tell the class what equipment we need and how many repetitions.

This is the difficult bit, I could say what I liked when emailing but I have to be a bit careful when putting it on the website. David wasn't impressed with the Beatles cover band and said it was just like listening to the record. This didn't go down too well with Hilly and Stuart and I think the age difference is showing. David mentioned about several properties he has and Stu asked Rick if we had a swimming pool at our French House. Well, of course we fell about laughing so he took it as a "no" and then said if we didn't have a swimming pool perhaps we have a vineyard. I suppose when you say you have a share in a French property it sounds quite grand and everyone thinks you have acres of ground to go with it.

We've started taking the Malaria tablets which cost us £90 and now we have found that we don't really need them as we won't be there when it's dark. I got a few mosquitos bites the other day which I put down to the sheet I laid on while having my Thai massage on the beach. I scratched one and got blood all over the bedspread. Rick's been reading the contra-indications and one of them is hallucinations. The night I had the bites I had a terrible dream that all these black insects came out of the mattress and developed wings and then started to bite me.

Maurice Grumbleweed entertained us tonight, trouble is that I have heard most of the jokes before from emails. Do you remember Ed Stewpot Stewart, well he's been on board since Southampton. We gain an hour tonight which makes a change so we will have a lie in.

Singapore to Sihanoukville, Cambodia 238

Thursday 9 February 2012 – Sihanoukville, Cambodia -27° cloudy with a breeze



Cambodia's 100 year French rule ended in 1953 when it became independent, it then prospered for a while until the Vietnam War. In 1975 Pol Pot and the Communist Khmer Rouge took control of the country. During this brutal regime, intellectuals and professional people were executed, temples destroyed, industries closed down and people from the towns forcibly moved to labour camps in the countryside. At least 1.5 million Cambodians died from starvation and disease or were murdered. Perhaps this is why Cambodia population of 14.8 million today and has fewer than 4% people over 65 and 50% under 21. The Vietnamese entered Phnom Penh in 1978 but during their 10 year stay the Khmer Rouge continued to have a powerful influence. It wasn't until Pol Pot died in 1998 that Cambodia began to achieve some degree of stability.



Today, we were in the port of Sihanoukville, the second biggest city to the capital of Phnom Penh that is 115 miles away. Although still very underdeveloped it has in the last few years attracted some foreign investment to develop not only the growing tourist industry but to also increase its capacity as an international port. The main factory for the Cambodian national Angkor Beer is here. Some of the passengers went to a nearby village and visited a school. Several said that this was one of the best tours they have had so far but it was heartbreaking to see that in the village some of the babies didn't have any clothes and the older children just had the clothes they were standing up in. Others, who like us went into Sihanoukville found it hard to cope with being harassed to buy something or take a taxi ride. The roads were full of mopeds and bicycles and the local accommodation was mostly primitive. Coke bottles full of petrol are sold from little stalls all along the roadside. We took a Tuk-Tuk to Ochheuteal Beach for \$10. As soon as we arrived the ladies with their little baskets wanted us to have a massage and the little girls wanted us to buy their souvenirs. It seems that once they get you they hang around until you give in. The girls were sweet and we were amazed how well they spoke English. They ask where you come from and said "Lovely Jubbly, Fish & Chips". We laughed and then they asked about our families and their names. They found us some sunbeds with umbrellas and I just gave in and said okay give me the massage now to get it over with. Two other ladies then started on Rick who wasn't going to have anything to do with it as he is not into that sort of thing. Then they said they could take all the hair off his back as it would make me love him more. He eventually took the lesser of two evils and had the massage, one lady at the top and another at his feet. After his massage they started on his feet and when that finished they wanted to get the hair out of his ears. They are very keen on removing your hairs by twisting cotton over them. It was all good natured and we ended up also giving the girls some money. We've been told not to give anything to beggars and there was a man without legs dragging himself around so I gave him a banana and an apple. There were a few new hotels in

the resort but we were brave and ate in the bar where our sunbeds were. We had a plate of grilled seafood and rice but had to eat it quickly on account of the number of flies there were around. They are such lovely people, one of the waiters brought his baby out to show us. It was quite breezy with big waves to jump over in the sea. There was always something to keep us entertained as ladies came round with enormous prawns and squid that they could barbecue in front of you and others were carrying baskets of fruit on their heads.



Back at the ship for the Sail-away Party where the Cruise Director sang and got everyone going. He's full of surprises, we already knew that he was a dancer in his early years and a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society but we didn't know he could sing. He was enjoying himself so much that he whisked a lady up and started to dance around the deck before she could let him know that she just had a new knee replacement!

Hilly and Stu must have eaten upstairs tonight so we had to try and bond with Lisa and David. I now think that Lisa can only be about 30. She belongs to an amateur dramatic society and is very outgoing whereas David is quite hard work but perhaps that is because he says he is shy. They have lots of parties at home where they have a cinema that can seat 30. He does all the cooking and tidying up at home while she sips wine in the lounge. Considering they have only been on the ship

3 days they seem to have spent an awful lot of time in the launderette. We swapped funny launderette experiences as they and the lifts are the best places to gossip. Early night as back in Thailand tomorrow and have an early start.

Sihanoukville to Laem Chabang

238 nm