

Monday 6 February 2012 – Malacca & Singapore Straits GMT +8 -29° Sunny

I didn't get to sleep until about 4am and had trouble waking up but Rick was kind and brought some breakfast to the cabin. Duncan, the Bridge teacher used to play for England when he was in his 40's. He may be a good player but he's a useless teacher, he's like one of those ones at school that you were afraid of saying the wrong answer in case you looked silly. Well, today I did a classic as after we had played a game we went over the bidding with him. I only had about 3 points so I wasn't really any use to anyone but he kept saying to me "show me your hand, give me your hand, put it down here". I thought he was going to smack it so I automatically gave him my **real hand** not thinking he meant my cards. Well, even dry old Kevin went into fits of laughter and after that every time I thought about it I couldn't stop laughing. It was an even funnier moment than when playing with Julia and Brian, Duncan asked me why I played the 2. I panicked and said because it was my highest card and when he asked me why I said that I said "I just made it up". Jeff's actually improved enormously, Kevin still mumbles but they're both off tomorrow and I suppose I must have learnt something if only to do as I am told.

I said something quite profound today, Rick's reading David Copperfield and came across "My advice is, never do tomorrow what you can do today. Procrastination is the thief of time". Well, that is Rick all over whereas I am the complete opposite, "always in advance, but never ahead".

Thank goodness Kevin is getting off tomorrow as he has started to try and have conversations with us which is a nightmare. He caught up with us as he came out from having an acupuncture session, the only word Rick caught was "needle". I thought about telling him about my experience but decided not to start something we couldn't finish. I once had a session with a Chinese Acupuncturist in a tiny room in the middle of the Worthing Shopping Arcade. The Doctor's only English vocabulary was "relax" and she relied on the little Chinese Receptionist to translate. However, this day the girl had gone to the bank and left me with alone with the Chinese doctor. I was laying there in my bra and pants covered in needles when the alarm went off and an announcement was made to evacuate the building. I got off the bed, pulled back the curtain and signalled to the doctor to take the needles out but all she did was usher me back to the bed saying "relax, relax". After about the third warning I was really panicking as it could have been a fire so I insisted she take them out. I then put my coat over my underwear and rushed out with the Chinese doctor in hot pursuit. It turned out to be a false alarm but we had to stand outside for about 30 minutes. In the meantime her receptionist had returned and while I was trying to get dressed as fast as possible she kept pestering me for some feedback on my treatment.

There was no wind today and as it was very hot we couldn't stay outside for long. We had lunch in the main restaurant because I like the formality and clean, crisp tablecloths. The audience loved Tom O'Connor tonight but we thought he was a bit long in the tooth. We watched the McDonald brothers last night and although they are obviously very talented they need someone like Gary Barlow to write a song for them. These ports and countries are coming up faster than I can read up about them although because of the poor internet access I only have very limited info. However, I kept awake last night reading up on Singapore and are really looking forward to tomorrow.

Phuket to Singapore – 538 nm

Tuesday 7 February 2012 – Singapore -29° Partly cloudy



Singapore is a small country on a small island, but with just over five million people it is a fairly crowded city and in fact second only to Monaco as the world's most densely populated country. Singapore was founded as a British trading colony in 1819 and since independence it has become one of the world's most prosperous countries and one of the world's busiest ports. For many it's a welcome respite from the poverty, chaos, and crime of much of the Asian mainland. It appears to be a sterile and strict country as crimes such as murder, kidnapping, unauthorized possession of firearms and drug trafficking are punishable by death. For unauthorized consumption of drugs there is a maximum of 10 years' jail or fine of \$20,000, or both. You can be charged as long as traces of illicit drugs are found in your system even if you took some tablets before you entered the country. You can be punished by caning for illegal entry, overstaying your visa for over 90 days, robbery, molestation, corruption, trying to bribe a police officer and rape. Strokes from a thick rattan cane are excruciatingly painful and take weeks to heal and scar for life. Begging is illegal. Heavy fines are levied for jay-walking, spitting, not flushing public toilet and drinking and eating on public transport. In addition to heavy fines for dropping litter, littering offenders are made to wear a bright yellow jacket and have to pick up rubbish in public places. Chewing gum, which was banned, is now available at pharmacies for medical purposes. Tobacco is heavily taxed, and you are not allowed to bring into the country more than one opened pack. There is a total ban on smoking in all air-conditioned places (including pubs and discos), and strict limitations on where you can smoke outside as well. Pornography, pirated goods and publications by the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church may not be imported to Singapore. Oral and anal sex was only legalised for heterosexuals in October 2007 and legally practising sex workers are required to register with the authorities and attend special clinics for regular sexually transmitted disease screening. You should also avoid making defamatory comments about the government as there is no freedom of speech.



The port is enormous with freight as far as you can see in all directions but after all it is the world's

busiest port. We took the MRT (underground Mass Rapid Transit) to China Town. After reading about all those don'ts we were surprised how much we liked it. The old, extremely modern and new high rise buildings all seemed to blend in fine. Everything is clean, ordered and colourful, we just loved it. There are shopping malls everywhere. We then took the open bus top tour for S\$23 and got off at Raffles to have a Singapore Sling, eat peanuts and throw them on the floor in the traditional way at Raffles Long Bar. The world famous, elegant Raffles Hotel named after the founder of Singapore exceeded our expectations and Jen and Hayden were lucky enough to have stayed there for a couple of nights on their honeymoon. They said the rooms were fantastic but it was too expensive to eat there. We ran out of time as we have to return to the ship by 5.30pm. It was a shame as we ended up having to leave the port late evening because they took so long loading up supplies. We have to come here again as this has been my favourite place so far.

