

MALAYSIAN & INDONESIAN CRUISE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

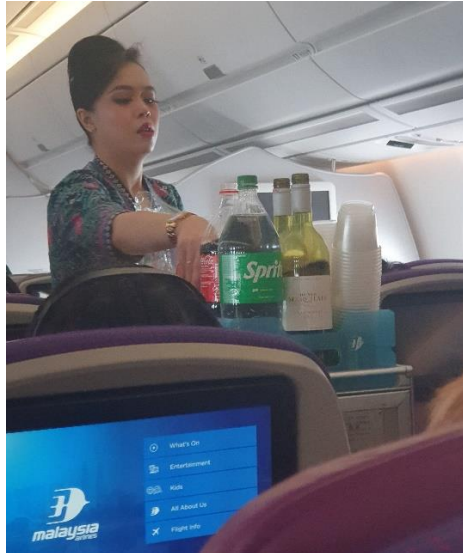
Tuesday 23 January 2024 Heathrow



Visiting: Kuala Lumpur, Langkawi, Phuket, Penang, Singapore, Jakarta, Lombok & Bali

Rick doesn't want to drive to the airports anymore, so we took the train to Heathrow, changing at Three Bridges and Farringdon for the new Elizabeth line. It took four hours! Our night at the Hilton we booked using our Tesco vouchers went well. Next time we are going try Heathrow Cottages B&B as they are only ten minutes away from the airport, you can leave your car there and they run you to and from the airport.

Wednesday 24 January -Kuala Lumpur



It was an almost twelve hour flight but Malaysian Airways were brilliant. The slender, cabin stewards wore amazing outfits and looked really beautiful with their hair up, red lipstick and false eyelashes. Once we arrived in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, we took a Grab cab who have taken over from Uber and are very cheap.

Thursday 25 January – Kuala Lumpur

We're booked into the Eastin Hotel for two nights. Our room is big but in need of a refurbishment, however, the rest of the hotel seems fine.





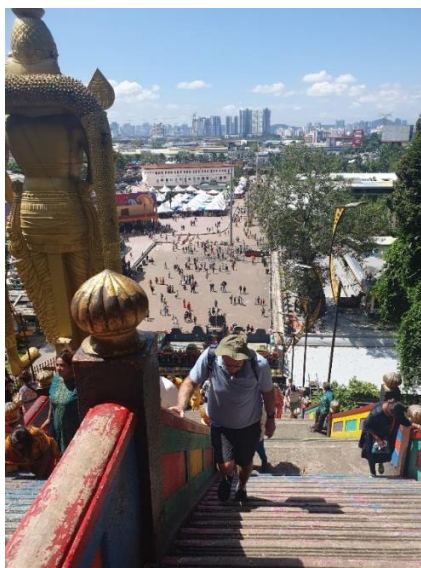
It's 30 mins into the centre of Kuala Lumpur where we bought "Hop On and Off Bus" tour tickets. We did the city route, but didn't really enjoy it as it was 30 plus degrees and took ages. The city has huge, very busy roads (they drive on the left) and an elevated train system. There are tall apartment blocks everywhere, flashy skyscrapers and some colonial buildings. Thought we would leave the climb up their most famous landmark, the Petronas Twin Towers, until tomorrow but we got lots of pictures.

The Petronas Twin Towers are among the most prominent landmarks in Kuala Lumpur. The 88-storey chrome and steel towers are joined at the 41st and 42nd floors (175 metres above street level) by the 58-metre-long and double-decker Skybridge. Drove past the Menara Kuala Lumpur (KL Tower) which soar above KL Eco City Park at 421 metres. Aside from being one of the tallest freestanding towers in the world, it's also an important architectural marker in the city. Boasting spectacular views of Kuala Lumpur, the viewing deck is at least 100 metres higher than the Petronas Tower's Skybridge. Made a brief visit into one of the enormous malls that had floors and floors of total crap but also some interesting food places. Between motorways and tall buildings there is a lot of green scenery, lots of palm trees too.

Disastrous meal at the hotel, they had no understanding of gluten free. If the breakfast is not good we may change hotels.

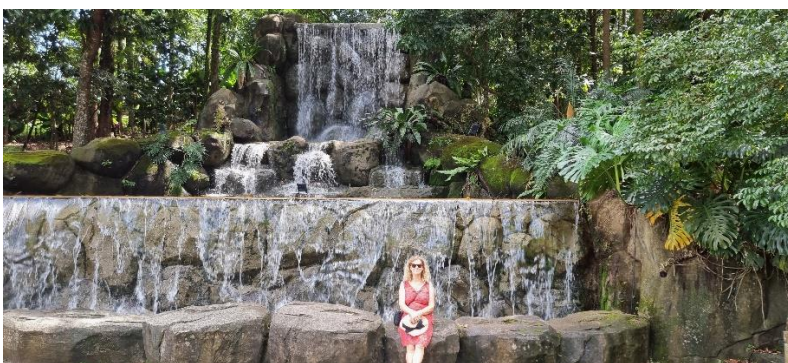
Friday 26 January – Kuala Lumpur

The breakfast was really good, there was a mixture of Western, Malaysian, Japanese and Indian cuisine.





Today we visited the Batu Caves which are a 400 million-year-old limestone hill with a 100-year-old temple incorporated within it. It's best known as the focal point of the annual Hindu festival of Thaipusam which the last day actually happened yesterday . The celebration attracts thousands of visitors who come to see the colourful spectacle of devotees who pay homage by carrying ornately-decorated kavadis (frameworks) combined with various metal hooks and skewers, which are used to pierce the skin, cheeks and tongue. The roads to the caves today were gridlocked with some being closed off. Our taxi driver had to let us off about 500 metres from the entrance. It was tricky stepping over and alongside open sewers and so much rubbish. There were restaurants where you had to step across open sewers to get in. The caves were really worth the effort, however, trying to get a taxi back was difficult because the roads were so busy and we had difficulty getting Wi-Fi. We struck lucky when a young Norwegian chap let us share his taxi. He's just started working with a company that makes electronic chips and is here for five months training. He purchased a local SIM card with unlimited data for only £5 for 5 weeks. Enjoyed our visit to Perdana Botanical Gardens but couldn't face another bus tour so went back to the hotel for a swim.



We missed out on seeing the huge shopping malls, Chinatown and the markets but never mind the hotel Japanese restaurant was a great success, a first for us. It's a Muslim country and they kept plying me with green tea to counteract the effect of two glasses of wine.



Saturday 27 January – Port Klang, Norwegian Jewel

Happy Birthday Mum who is 88 today. Jen has convinced us to book a more luxurious hotel for our 4 nights in Bali as she was horrified to find the place we had booked was only £33 a night. The morning just whizzed by but we managed a little time by the pool. Our Indian taxi driver was a fountain of knowledge and was pleased that we have an Indian Prime Minister. He said it's difficult for Indians and Chinese here to get into Universities as 80% of places are given to Malaysians. There are more public holidays here than anywhere in the world. They have lots of Kings and a new big King every five years. Although the Kings should not be political they do appoint the Prime Ministers. People like the Kings because they are often seen in restaurants and are very generous to the people there. Our poor taxi driver faced miles of traffic at a standstill for his return journey.

It's "goodbye" to Kuala Lumpur, the city of sky scrapers and motorways, and "hello" to Norwegian Jewel.



Cocktail Time

The Norwegian Jewel is a lot smaller than our previous cruise ships, on our last Mediterranean cruise to celebrate my 70th, we pushed the boat out and had a Concierge cabin that included lots of extras. Back into the cruising routine, cocktails by the pool while listening to the music. More cocktails before supper and disco after. Sat next to a Brit ex Fireman and his wife who emigrated to Washington to start up an English

B & B. Over the years they have fostered 81 children, adopted 2 and had 2 of their own, they now live in Alicante. Good start to our cruise!

Sunday 28 January – Langkawi

Langkawi is an archipelago of 99 islands in Malaysia. It comes highly recommended as Jen and Hayden honeymooned here. It's a tropical paradise with stunning beaches and lush rainforests. The pace of life is slower making it feel calm and relaxed. There aren't many high rise buildings and everywhere is lush. It was affected badly by the 2004 Tsunami.



During our tour our guide told us about the Langkawi Mafia – it's the monkeys who are everywhere and love stealing anything they can. Weddings are big affairs when it's not unusual to invite as many as 1000 people and if you are really important, maybe the whole island. We visited an Eco park and a rubber plantation but it's a dying industry as car tyres are now only 10% rubber.



Quite a bit of time was spent at the Mahsuri museum where we were treated to some local music. Mahsuri who was a very beautiful woman was a victim of treachery and jealousy and sentenced to death in 1819. As she died she laid a curse on the island "There shall be no peace and prosperity on this island for a period of seven generations". The museum was surrounded by rice fields and they also had some typical houses that were made without any screws or nails. They could be taken apart and rebuilt by the sea during the winter for fishing and by the fields in the summer.



Rishi is going down well with the Asian Indians. Also Rick asked a guy from Florida what he thought of Trump and he thinks he's a waste of space but thought Rishi was good. We caught up with the man who sat next to me on the plane. They took a private tour today and the cable car broke down whilst they were at the top. They were panicking like mad as they were without passports and we were going to be in a different

country tomorrow. The boat will leave without you if you are not back on time but they managed to make it with 15 minutes spare.

Monday 29 January -Phuket - Patong

Phuket is the biggest island in Thailand with a total length of approximately 30 miles and 13 miles wide. The island is mostly mountainous with 60% of it covered in forest, rubber and palm oil plantations. Tourism has replaced tin mining which had been a major source of income since the 16th century. We anchored offshore at Patong Beach, well known for its night-life and cheap shopping. We had to be tendered in to take our Highlights of Phuket tour.

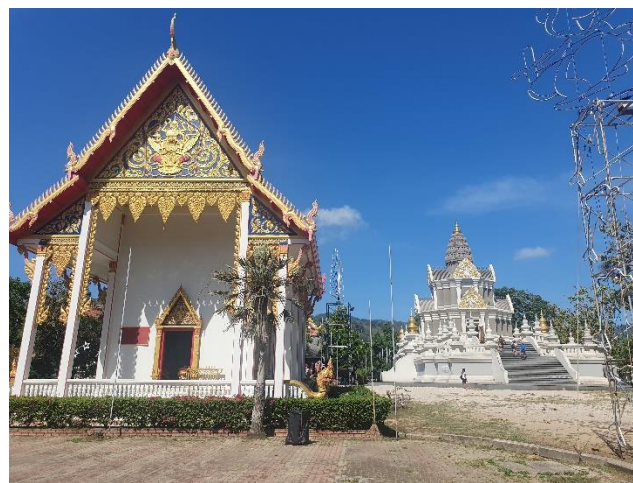
Our guide today was called Pop , he was very safety conscious and obsessed with toilet stops.



First stop was Promthep Cape , the most popular sunset viewpoint in Phuket.



There were literally hundreds of elephant statues surrounding a small shrine dedicated to the Hindu god Lord Brahma.



The Chalalong Temple was dedicated to two monks who led the locals against an uprising by the Chinese tin miners in 1876. This is the biggest temple so far, lots of ornate floors and outer temples.



Cashew Factory



Another Rubber Plantation – rubber sheets drying

The Saphan Hin Shrine is a colourful Chinese shrine by the sea. I'm getting all these shrines and temples muddled up.



We ended the tour with a trip around the old town that was originally settled by traders from China, India and Portugal in the 16th century. The fusion of these different cultures is evident in the town's architecture. I think that's enough culture for a while. The island is home to many high-end seaside resorts, spas and restaurants. Patong, the main resort town where we are moored has many nightclubs, bars and discos, mustn't forget the massage parlours that are everywhere.

Tuesday 30 January – Phuket still

We should have gone into town last night but I can't believe I saying this, after dinner we watched the end of Beauty and the Beast. We've given ourselves a rest day, no temples!



Lots of the damaged buildings and attractions from the 2004 Tsunami have been restored. There are a lot of new hotels, apartments and houses being built maybe because Phuket is also now a popular retirement destination.

Great to be back on the boat enjoying cocktails and listening to the music.

Wednesday 31 January – Penang, Georgetown

We were docked in Georgetown, the capital city of Penang and its main transportation hub. Difficult to believe, but I read that the city has a relaxed pace of life, as restaurants, small shops, and malls don't fully open until around noon. We fought our way through the hordes of taxi drivers wanting us to take a trip, it was a nightmare as some were quite insistent. First impressions were that it was a bit run down but there were lots of old, interesting colonial buildings. The free “hop on and off bus” didn't seem to materialize, I didn't like the feel of the place and wanted to go back to the ship. Rick suddenly came over all assertive and booked a 3 hour taxi tour.



Our driver only had a smattering of essential English, we were most amused when he made neighing noises as we drove past the horse racing course. He showed us the apartment building where he lived and kept talking about the rich people in his funny high pitched voice. He took us to a Batik factory which really was just a shop. Next door was the coffee and tea shop where we got to taste the different flavours, it was nice so we bought some. We drove by the suburbs full of new tall buildings and then went to the top of the mountain in a cable car which has recently been modernized. The way up was really fast and there was lots to see at the top. Rick loved the monkeys, I saw one pull a gorgeous baby from what appeared to be a pocket. There were a variety of cultures on display within the heritage area, such as Muslim, Chinese, Indian and European. Everything was clean and well maintained with lots of trees not like the old part of the city.



We gave our taxi driver the all our left-over currency, about £8 and he thought all his birthdays had come at once, he was delighted. I'm pleased we did a tour, it was a fraction of the cost of a cruise excursion,

however, we didn't get much information – a few neighing noises! Cocktails, lovely meal followed by disco.

Thursday & Friday 1 - 2 February - Singapore



The ship sailed in port late afternoon on the 1st. Many cruisers had booked "Singapore by Night" and others did their own thing. We decided to take advantage of the empty boat and have a leisurely evening. There wasn't much entertainment but we couldn't go far wrong popping up to the Spinnaker Bar where there is always live music or a themed disco.

The next morning we were a bit lost coming out of the port as there weren't the usual touters thrusting their trips in front of you. We were hoping to book a "Hop on and Off Bus" but instead had to walk a way to the nearest MRT station to take a train to Raffles. The last time we were here we visited Raffles Hotel Long Bar to have a Singapore Sling, eat peanuts and throw them on the floor in the traditional way. The highlight today were The Orchid Gardens, they were amazing and extensive. Everywhere is lush and tropical and so clean and orderly. The nearest bus stop to the cruise terminal was a 40 minute walk in the hot sun. It was so hot and my feet were sore. Back on the ship relaxing by the pool was cut short by the rain, we've been lucky with the weather so far, its been 30 degrees plus every day.



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, we've been seeing a lot of that. 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 unauthorised 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.

Despite all that, it's my favourite place so far.



Saturday 3 February - At Sea



It's really difficult getting a sunbed in the shade but we managed to find one away from the swimming pool area, it was also a bit quieter. Rick and I were playing Deck Quoits when I tried to remove what looked like bird poo but then when it got stuck to the rod we thought it was a lump of human poo. They had to close that part of the deck off while someone came to clean it up. Turned out it was chocolate!

Sunday 4 February - Jakarta

Jakarta is the capital city of Indonesia and home to over 10 million people with diverse ethnic group backgrounds from all over Indonesia. During the day, the number increases by 2 million with commuters making their way to work in the city. Most come in by train but the roads are packed with cars, scooters and tuk tuks. They started building a metro in 2022 and it should be completed by 2028. Many come to the city looking for work but if they do not have a skill they become unemployed and that is the main reason for the high crime rate. Although there are open sewers, graffiti and homes put together with the most basic of materials I was amazed that there were so many expensive cars around.



We booked a trip to Jakarta's China town and did a walking tour through the crowded wet market to the Chinese Vihara Temple and Fatahillah Square. It's not as touristy as other China Towns but a functioning residential area of Chinese ethnicity and the largest in Indonesia. It's where the Chinese come to get their daily groceries. 10,000 Chinese were massacred by the Dutch around 1741 the rest were expelled from within the city walls and settled outside in what is called Glodok. The Chinese are well known for their trading skills and have always played an important part in Jakarta's economy. Chinese uprisings have happened in quite a few places we have visited. Everywhere we have been so far on this trip there have been red lanterns in preparation for the Chinese New Year celebrations on 10 February.



On display in the market were the usual clothes, vegetables, fruit, nuts and other grocery and household items, also hot snacks and drinks. Meat and fish were displayed without refrigeration, I would have to be vegetarian if I lived there! Even on a Sunday it was very crowded with cars, scooters and other modes of transport pushing their way through. We had to shelter for quite some time while it bucketed down. The people were small and didn't look like what we call a typical Chinese, I suppose over hundreds of years here must have been a lot of mixed marriages, lots of them smoked.

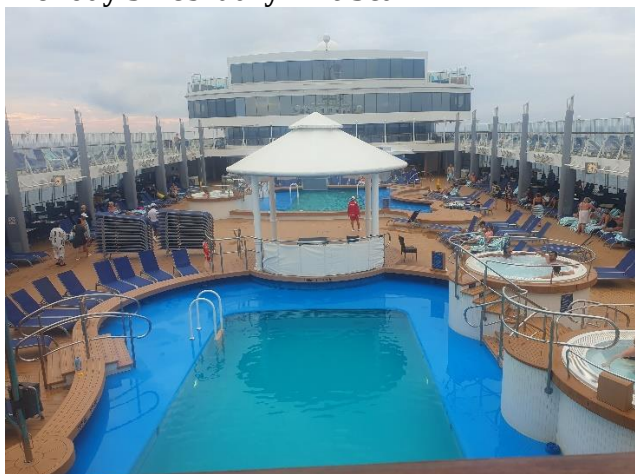


The rain had stopped for our walk to Fatahillah Square, the administrative centre of old Batavia. Most of the buildings around the square have been restored and many have been converted to museums.



Back on the boat that evening we were dining in Cagneys Steak House and I was pleasantly surprised when I was given a serving of little round rolls, I've only had bread on a couple of occasions so it I quickly wolfed it down. Suddenly they were whisked away and the main server came in a panic with a bag of gluten free bread . I was a bit nervous . The Maître D' came to see me, he had been told there had been an incident. We had a good chat, he used to play football for Grenada until he had a bad leg injury. The staff were all a bit on edge in case I had to suddenly rush off , but I was fine. It did spoil the evening a bit though.

Monday 5 February - At Sea



Another day lazing about, drinking cocktails and enjoying the music and general goings-on. We watch the “Crossing of the Equator” ceremony which was two days late and very poorly performed, We’ve seen a few of these now.

Tuesday 6 February -Lombok – Indonesia



Lombok is an island east of Bali where mass tourism is still in its infancy. The highlands of Lombok are forest-clad and mostly undeveloped. The lowlands are highly cultivated. Rice, soybeans, coffee, tobacco, cotton, cinnamon, cacao, cloves, cassava, corn, coconuts, copra, bananas and vanilla are the major crops grown in the fertile soils of the island. The southern part of the island is fertile but drier, especially toward the southern coastline.

We headed for a few hours on the beach at Senggigi. The roads were fairly quiet apart from the few towns we passed through. We saw children being taken to school by horse and carriage. Lombok is predominantly Muslim and there are Mosques in all directions, more than 7000 of them. People wearing coolie hats were working in the rice fields with some up to their waist in water in the watercress beds. Farming does not appear to be mechanised and houses and shops primitive. There was a big Dutch influence everywhere.



Senggigi is the main holiday resort and we were delighted to find that we were going to spend a few hours on the beach at the luxury Sheraton Hotel. Beautiful gardens, swimming pools, cushioned sunbeds, sandy beach but best of all Wif-fi. As it was the final evening a selection of staff were presented to us after the Bijou show .



Wednesday 7 February - Oberoi

Goodbye Norwegian Jewel and hello to Bali.

While waiting for our Grab taxi we were surrounded by young men trying to persuade us to go with them. They were so clever, they managed to get Rick's name, phone no and the name of the taxi we had booked. We had a good laugh with them and after an hour of waiting in the heat we gave in. Our taxi driver Hubert spoke excellent English and as we got on so well with him we have booked him for an all day tour tomorrow. The cruise company had booked us into Hotel Ossetel at Legian but Jen persuaded us to upgrade in a big way!



Arriving at the Oberoi we were greeted with beautifully dressed staff who put garlands round our neck. We were then given a ginger welcome drink and coffee by the sea while they made up our lovely sea view room. Our sun beds were made up with towels, wet cloths, spray and sun lotion. Every now and again they came along with sticks of fresh fruit; someone even came to clean our sunglasses. Forgot to say there was a little white flag that you wave if you need anything. It's a surfing sea not suitable for swimming but the view is great. Lots of friendly dogs. At a certain time of year turtles come to lay their eggs in the sand and the staff put them in a safe area nearby. Once they hatch, after about a month, they let the guests release them into the sea. We had a walking tour of the gardens followed by tea. Frangipani is the National flower for Bali, they smell beautiful and are everywhere. At the "Managers Cocktail Party" we got talking to a couple of Norwegians who have properties in Majorca and lots of other business interests. They seem to have been everywhere, always fly first class and gave us recommendations for local restaurants. We ate at the hotel. Lots of fireworks going off throughout the evening and night.



Thursday 8 February - Bali

Early start as set off to see an original Balinese dance. The traffic was horrendous, we had to weave in and out of the hundreds of scooters. Bali isn't what I visualized, it seemed tacky. The Barong play represented a fight between good and evil spirits. Barong, a mythological animal represented a good spirit and Ranga a mythological monster represented the evil one. A giant caterpillar with a frightening face, still not sure who he was, twitched for ages and kept clumping his wooden jaws together – quite frightening.



Next stop the coffee plantation, it was really just a display garden but it also had lots of trees and shrubs of well-known spices. There was a coffee, tea and cocoa tasting session after. We had a cup of coffee made from Polecat poo, well they eat the beans and then pass them but they are separated from their poo during the coffee making process. A few sleeping polecats could be seen in cages, look a bit like ferrets. Next door was the well-established zoo which we enjoyed, especially the elephants. However, the heat and humidity got to us and we decided to skip the waterfall and romantic supper on the beach and head for the hotel swimming pool.



Our taxi driver told us about The Bali (Saki) New Year, here it's also known as "The Bali Day of Silence". All the islands inhabitants must abide by a local set of rules. Roads all over Bali are void of traffic, even the airport closes down, no television or internet and nobody must go outside their home without permission. This year it's on March 11th but there are lots of ceremonies and celebrations that start 3 days before.

Our driver has 3 children and like most Balinese wives she doesn't work. Before Covid he sold Time Share and he was hoping to go back to that in the near future. Yesterday he mentioned he liked Britain's got Talent but he hadn't heard last year's winner, the yellow jacket Norwegian dancing to "One More Time". He had checked it out and kept playing it to us on his phone, he loved it. Back to our luxury hotel, peace and quiet.



After our swim we walked a little way along the beach. Our beach is the only one without sun beds. It was a different world from our protected hotel, so much litter and noise. A procession was making its way to the sea bearing gifts mostly food. They held a couple of what looked like dead small black chickens by their legs and threw them in the water. For a moment they looked like ducks and then they came to life and walked up the beach. All the processions' offerings were left on the beach to add to the rest of litter. In the evening we set off to one of the restaurants the rich guys had recommended, we got done by the taxi driver.



The resurrected black chicken, hotel entertainment, not often you get a bill for 2million

The restaurant was deservedly popular, Rick had 3 soft shelled crabs as a starter, it was enormous, everything is very spicy. We tried to walk back, past the mad traffic, clubs, bars, restaurants and shops. Veronica's in Tenerife is calm compared to that. Unfortunately, we had to resort to a taxi as my stomach was playing up. Thunderstorm all night, our room shook.

Friday 9 February - Bali

We couldn't face another day in the taxi and bedlam outside the hotel, however, the day seemed to fly by even though we spent most of it by the pool. Took a long walk along the beach the opposite way from yesterday to see if we could find The Osseltel Hotel where we should be staying. Legian Beach wasn't bad, some were swimming as the waves weren't as big as in front of our hotel. The beach was lined with hotels, restaurants, bars and becomes a party place during the evenings. Plenty of places to take surfing lessons. So pleased we upgraded our hotel as The Osseltel wasn't at all what we were expecting, it was a dump. Afternoon tea again with a little light music entertainment.



Just as our driver arrived to take us to Jimbaran Beach for a seafood meal while watching the sun set it absolutely tipped down. He kept reassuring us it would be dry where we are going. What a journey, we didn't realise it was so far what should have been 30 - 40 minutes took 1.5 hours. It was a nightmare and would have taken longer if our driver hadn't performed some tricky, illegal moves, overtaking long rows of traffic on the inside and outside. The traffic was manic and I can only see it only going to get worse in the future. The government is trying to encourage people to take the bus but it's so much quicker to have a scooter and weave in and out of the traffic. I was expecting a small restaurant with a few tables on the beach.

There were tables as far as you could see with music and dancing in each restaurant. There was plenty to eat and the bill was around the usual £100 mark. Bali is generally known to be cheap to eat and that's true in the bars and touristy restaurants but as we are only here for four nights we've pushed the boat out. I think what we had tonight usually feeds a family. Our driver gave the return journey to his friend as he was worried about getting back with so many hold ups. Surprisingly, no bad tummy tonight.



Saturday 10 February - Bali



Rick's Indonesian Breakfast



Preparing our sunbeds



No stressful taxi rides for us today, just chillin by the pool. Before we came I did a lot of research on places we were visiting on the cruise but I didn't do much on Bali. As we couldn't face another trip I watched a few YouTube videos on other people's experiences here. The original hotel came as part of the cruise company's package. Had I realized that we are in a real touristy area I would have asked for a hotel in the mountains or countryside. The hotel is much busier today but plenty of sun beds and only a couple in the pool at a time. I'm a bit fidgety lying about all day but Rick is in his element. I want us to feel relaxed and ready to go home. I just can't face all the noise and traffic outside the hotel grounds.

It's Chinese New Year tonight but there aren't many Chinese in this area, not like everywhere else we have been. We enjoyed our last meal here, everything has been wonderful.



Sunday 11 February - Bali



We've asked for a late checkout as we don't need to leave until 4pm, nothing is too much trouble for them. Rick paid for this hotel treat with his horse racing winnings and its been worth every penny. Flight home wasn't as bad as we were anticipating and the train journey back to Barnham went like a dream.

Reflections on the cruise

Rick loved the cruise and would be happy just to stay on the ship all the time. Our main complaint was that it was difficult finding a sunbed in the shade. The swimming pools were probably the best we have ever had. As far as Rick is concerned what's wrong with non-stop cocktails, beer and wine while working on your puzzles, reading or listening to the music and enjoying unlimited fabulous food. Limited wi-fi was a bit inconvenient but most day Rick paid £7 a day for access to his Vodaphone package. You have to watch out for the cruise service charges \$20 **each** per day and an extra \$20 **each** when we went to a speciality restaurant. We did manage to get them to half this and tipped our cabin steward independently.

The food and choice of restaurants was excellent; if you could stand all the noise the cafeteria also had a lot of choice. We paid extra to dine in Le Bistro, La Cucina and Cagney's. We didn't really need to do that as the other restaurants were very good especially Chin Chin. Each evening Vivyan came to see me to preorder and there was very little that they couldn't adapt to gluten free.

However, the entertainment was far below the standard we have enjoyed on other cruises.

It was exhausting and a bit muddling being in different countries most days. It's essential you have a mobile phone when travelling and also have good mobility. On one trip a big American man with huge feet that pointed outwards, really struggled on one of the excursions. It was painful to watch especially when we kept getting stuck behind him. The heat and the traffic got to us a bit. The ports of call were varied but what stood out was the poverty, gridlocked roads and the amount of rubbish everywhere. Favourite places were Langkawi and Lombok both had a slower pace of life and less traffic.

We will be much more careful about the pre and post cruise hotels in the packages. The Kuala Lumpur hotel was too far out of the main city and the Bali one in the main touristy section. Thank goodness Jen persuaded us to go the Oberoi, it was so amazing that we didn't really want to venture outside of it.

Next cruise planned for March 2025 where we hope to spend a few days pre cruise visiting Nashville, Memphis and New Orleans before setting off to Costa Maya in Mexico, Harvest Cay in, Belize, Roatan in Honduras and Cozumel in Mexico.

