

Friday, 26 Feb - Bandung

Destination Bandung, the capital of West Java. It's where Peter's Dad, Grandparents and his Dad's cousins had holidayed and later lived before the war. Peter brought with him some materials depicting the old times of the 1920's to 50's separated by the imprisonments by the Japanese for 4 years between 1942 and 1945. This made the whole trip so interesting for Peter. We had received from Holland from Marty Kelling only a couple of weeks ago in Sydney materials depicting life in the 1930's in Bandung. We also had a video file on USB of old tech Bell and Howell super 8 Kodak Safety Film Peter's father had made when he was 14 years. Peter's grandparents and their 2 children (Peter's dad and auntie) often travelled by train from Surabaya Bandung for holidays with his dad's cousins' family, the Kellings, living in Bandung. The Kellings holidayed and stayed with the Grullemans' in Surabaya. The film showed relatives traveling by steam train from Surabaya via Banjar and Tjibatoe to Bandung in about 1939, then a film of the wedding of Peter's grand-uncle, Gerard Zijlstra - showing pre-wedding social, church ceremony and reception at the old Kelling house we would visit in a few days. Peter was keen to give a copy of the file to anyone interested at hotels, railways and museums.

We also had with us a biography of Peter's Dad's cousin, Ernst Kelling (born 1925), written by his brother Marty. We have over the last 10 years seen and kept in touch with these relatives, now elderly, and living in Holland. The biography tells of Ernst Kelling's adventures as children around Bandung then during and after the war with respect to POW camps and release. It gives an insight into the terrain, Dutch culture and thinking of yesteryear colonials. It contrasts to today's Indonesia i.e. after the war (1942 - 1945) and independence (finalised 1949). Our time in the Bandung district was largely tempered by Peter's quest for touching the lives and times of his relatives.

Bandung is the 3rd largest city in Indonesia. It is in a valley surrounded by volcanoes. With an elevation of 1,312 metres, the mild climate, factory outlets and natural attractions bring in tourists by bus and plane even during the wet season. Landing after our 80 minute flight from Surabaya we experienced the start of the chaotic weekend on a Friday afternoon. After failing to find a Bluebird taxi (apparently the most reputable in the country), we found a policeman that spoke English, who helped us get into a taxi with a negotiated price (which we later found out was almost twice what we should have paid. There are police outposts in busy places. A policeman even helped us cross a busy road in Surabaya). We needed to get to the La Oma Hotel in Lembang, 30 Km up in the mountains north of Bandung (temperature is 17 - 27 C). We thought the trip up was mayhem with the volume and speed of motorbikes seeming greater than Surabaya – perhaps it was that the streets were narrower - or both. What a relief when we finally arrived! The hotel was an oasis in the street with stately open areas and many beautiful Javanese carvings and items of furniture. Our room was clean and had a side window which overlooked part of the green and moist gardens. We met Lorens the duty manager who spoke English and could relate to the stories Peter was telling as we showed the 1939 film on the big TV at reception. The ladies in reception had little English and were clearly devout Muslims indicated by their dress; they were very nice to us. It's quiet most of the time but you need ear plugs for the 4:30 AM call to prayer from a nearby mosque.

Saturday, 27 Feb - Bandung

Sendi, a nephew of Etti, Peter's former accounting student in college back in Sydney, arranged a family friend Monsier as a driver in a modern 7 seater and took us to interesting places such as the volcanic crater of Mount Tangkuban Perahu (last eruption 2015) and Ciater Hot Spring. Sendi is 23 year old, who is into robotics in his engineering degree course, and a committed Muslim, spoke fluent English and explained the history of the Dutch (Belanda) and Japanese caves (all the signs are in Bahasa). Peter is still usually the only white person wherever we went and young ladies and men asked him to have a photo with them. Our day culminated with a visit to the former family residence of Peter's uncles (the Kellings) whom we recently met in Holland. The house, which is now a railway museum and youth arts centre, is under renovation. We were not able to get inside but the guard kindly let us take photos outside and helped us with contact details of the administration manager and the new location of the artifacts in Semarang Central Java where we expect to be in our travels in about a week. On the way back to Lembang, we stopped by the

Bandung Central train station to confirm Tuesday's booking. Peter gave a copy of the 1930's video file of his family's train trip and wedding in Bandung on USB to the staff for the manager's attention. We finished with dinner at La Oma with Sendi and Monsier in appreciation of a wonderful day.

Sunday, 28 Feb - Lembang

Being Sunday, we decided to chill out in the La Oma Hotel instead of battling the traffic which swells even more due to holiday-makers from Jakarta coming in for the cool air and get away from the even more ridiculous traffic in the capital – something we had intended to by-pass but had a brief encounter with on our journey home a couple of weeks later. There are some benefits of the horrendous traffic in Indonesian cities. It teaches people to be patient, take turns and help each other. We haven't observed road rage or collisions and cars/bikes rarely have dents. Drivers use the horn only when another vehicle is either an inch too close or to warn someone of potential trouble. The heavy traffic gives opportunities to people making a living directing cars turning right (they drive on the left) or getting out of driveways/car parks, helping into/out of parking or helping people with umbrellas when they get caught in a sudden downpour. All for just a tip of 2,000 rupiah (around 20c.). Street vendors everywhere sell food/drinks to people caught in traffic; a big cash economy. Many don't pay taxes but then there are no unemployment benefits nor age pension.

We laid around the upstairs lounge reading for an hour or two, allowing Peter to further delve into the biography in preparation for the next day's touring. Peter had a swim in the hotel's 50 metre pool where Jim, the owner, and some of his friends (Lily, Ferry, Nita, Sofyn) from Bandung were swimming. Lazing in this huge cool pool was a privilege, and to be able to chat at length with these folks about our trip and their visits to Australia. Peter also enjoyed the spa and sauna with them while Reyne chatted with Nita and Ferry. We joined them for dinner that night but Reyne had to leave abruptly due to a bad tummy. The dreaded Indogestion has struck !

Monday, 29 Feb - Lembang, Bandung

Reyne's tummy seemed to have settled down and, although she had a slight fever and was feeling weak and sleepy, she was ready when Monsier picked us up at 9:30 to take us to Bandung attractions. First stop was Udjo to watch the Anklung performance. Since the next show was 2 hours away, we had time to go for a photo in front of the Gedung Sate (the provincial governor's office, a stately remnant of Dutch architecture) and explore some outlets in Jalan Riau. I didn't see anything I liked. We returned to Udjo in time for the performance where the audience is made up of students and we're the only foreigners. The headmistress of the Anklung performers and a teacher sat next to us. First were puppet shows with background music performed by a band using various traditional marimbas and drums. Next was a circumcision performance where the boy was carried on a seat by 4 men while various boys and girls danced around him (presumably to distract him from the pain). Then an audience participation where we were invited to dance around with some girls. It was fun ! An anklung was then distributed to each person in the audience and we were taught how to use it. Each anklung represented a note. We both had the note "re". A teacher gave hand signals for each note so that we knew when to play our anklung and made beautiful music together. Last stop was shopping in some outlets at Ruma Mode, where Reyne bought some shirts for the boys.

Back at the La Oma Hotel, the party that the owners organised for their granddaughter was in full swing. The theme was "Alcatraz" where they wore prison costumes and had had ghoulish paint on their faces. We originally promised to perform but were not in the end welcome to do so - the audience were all young and our music would have been out of place. It was just as well as Reyne's upset tummy came back with a vengeance after a small dinner at the party. We packed and moved to another room at the back of the hotel to be away from the noise of the party but the noise of the bikes from the street would have made sleep impossible. We contemplated moving to another hotel in Bandung but the owners, Jim and Susi, kindly offered one of their luxury villas next to their house up in the mountains surrounded by gardens with a magnificent view of Bandung and very quiet ! Still it was a poor night's sleep due to Reyne's tummy problems. If we ever come back, that would be the ultimate place for a villa – high up on the quiet slopes amid gardens and fields.