

## Tuesday, 1 March - Bandung, Yogyakarta

With regrets that we could not stay longer in this mountain-view paradise, we had to be ready at 6am for pickup by a Bluebird taxi. Packing after a one-nighter is always a drag. It was a pleasant hour's journey down to Bandung with less traffic. Rail check-in was easy and a relief to be in the quiet, secure zone of the small but clean and colourful central station. Porters galore, to try to get 50c for whatever little assistance they can give. In our case our baggage is so well arranged that we'd rarely need help. We travel with the two long-distance sports type bags on corner rollers and two back packs that ride on them if needed. In hindsight we could have gotten to the train station an hour later but traffic and check-in uncertainties meant it was far better to be safe than sorry. The executive class was clean and comfortable. We met a Dutch couple who are travelling with their youngest daughter and who are in Indonesia to visit their older daughter who is studying human resource management in Bali. There was also a Swiss couple with a baby boy, who are visiting her relatives as her parents were originally from Bandung. These were among the first English conversations we had had since we entered the country. Train travel in executive class means that although it's very affordable for us at \$40 each for the 7.5 hour trip over the 400kms.

Pulling out of the city of Bandung, there were houses on both sides just next to the tracks - maybe squatters' dwellings - most were made of strong materials (concrete, brick, tile roof) although some were made of tin that looked like from excess or second hand building materials. As we moved out of the city, the view was a lot nicer with the rice paddies, fish ponds, fruit and vegetable farms, tropical rainforest and rivers. Yes, this was a good choice of transport to mix up the sensations, and we were very lucky to meet such interesting co-travelers. Peter was able to chat at length in Dutch with Walter who had an interest in history and was keen to read the biography of Ernst Kelling relating to the land through which were cruising.

We didn't have to go to the restaurant carriage. Railway staff brought a food trolley and took orders for hot drinks. A cleaner came around to collect rubbish every so often.

We briefly got off the train in Bandjar just to film Peter getting off the train, inspecting under it and then getting on the again just like his father did when he was 14 as shown in the digitised film / movie file we have that Peter's Dad took in 1939 that we've been showing to everyone interested.

Arriving in Yogyakarta (pronounced Jogjakarta or Yogya for short) we were met by our driver from The Phoenix Hotel displaying our name outside the train station. We should have caught a taxi for \$2 instead of the \$12 we paid the hotel, but that's tourism. The hotel is an absolutely beautiful example of Dutch colonial architecture, which is a European building with Javanese decor - lots of wood carving and batik. We had a welcome from hotel staff with native sweets and a ginger and soda water drink.

After getting settled in our room, we set out to the main road to find a laundry. Our dirty clothes would have cost us the equivalent of \$40 but we found one in an alley for \$4 by asking directions from a tailoring shop. They also gave us directions to a tour office where we booked a car with driver for the following day - around \$50 for 10 hours. Peter ended up ordering a custom-made woolen suit from the tailoring shop for around \$135. There's a lot to be gained by walking the streets and asking questions, even if some are dumb questions, you have to take some chances and put your pride in your pocket. Indonesian people are humble, helpful and happy and as long as you look them in the eye with kindness and smile, anything is possible. That's tourism !

Unfortunately, because of Reyne's upset tummy, she had to pass on the spicy Indonesian dishes. Peter, out of sympathy, did the same. Peter had the best sleep ever in our quiet room overlooking the swimming pool at the back. No traffic noise can be heard.

### **Wednesday, 2 March - Yogyakarta**

Our driver for the day picked us up at the hotel, and drove us to the Borobudur temple where we saw by chance again the Dutch family that we met on the train. We shared an English-speaking tour guide with them since there was no available Dutch-speaking guide. The Buddhist temple was built in the 9th century on a hill from lava rocks that were placed next to each other without mortar. It has a square floor plan with gates facing true east (entrance, birth), west (exit, death), north (charity) and south (knowledge). There were 7 levels, (1 = desire, 2 to 5 = reality, 6 and 7 = transition). Level 6 has the domes with diamond-shaped holes (symbolising instability and stress). Level 7 has the domes with square holes (symbolising stability). The domes have feet symbolising people living next to each peacefully on top of which is a level of lotus flowers followed by the dome and then the rod. At the top of the 7th level is a big dome with no holes. All the domes has a Buddha inside but the one at the top is not complete because it is waiting for Buddha's return. A number of Buddhas around the temple don't have heads because they have been stolen by opportunists before the UNESCO declared it a world heritage. It had been in ruins when the Dutch arrived and they commenced restoration.

Next to the Sultan's Palace (Keratin Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat) is the family residence of the Sultan of the Special Region in Java. We were met by a ready volunteer guide who explained everything in reasonable English. It was built by Prince Mangkobumi in 1726 between 2 rivers. Unlike his predecessors, the current sultan has only 1 wife even though he has 5 daughters and no son and, therefore, no heir. The celebration hall original building was made of bamboo but later on renovated by the 8th Sultan whole chose and imported the tiles and columns from Groningen, Holland. The coronation hall with 24 carat gold leaf decorations has unfortunately some bats nesting up in the ceiling. We passed the first university (faculty of law), erected after the war. Another building was for the faculty of political science. The emblem of the Sultan has the wings of the garuda (Indonesian eagle).

Back at the hotel as usual it rained in the arvo but first Peter got in a swim, he has to get value for money. No need to wander the streets at night looking for a restaurant as the Phoenix's is more than adequate.

One aspect of Indonesia that Peter has great difficulty with is the way they capture or breed birds and keep them isolated in little cages. This is cruel and senseless, unless part of some superstition, and then still based on ignorance. Peter had more than one conversation with hotel management to try to improve conditions of the birds that the hotel keeps, which include an Indian Minor, millions of which live freely in Australia.

### **Thursday, 3 March - Yogyakarta**

We went by taxi to the Joglosemar bus station to book our bus trip to Semarang and then proceeded to Prambanan Temple. The Hindu temples of Prambanan don't get as much publicity and funding as the Buddhist temples of Borobudur. 67% of the volcanic lava rocks that make it up are still missing (stolen as building materials or garden ornaments when the temples were in ruins before the Dutch arrived). Unlike the rocks in Borobudur, these rocks interlock and it takes about 35 years to properly reconstruct a collapsed temple, just like a giant jigsaw puzzle. The biggest temple is dedicated to Shiva flanked by the temples of Brahma and Vishnu. There's a statue of Durga in one of the cells in Shiva's temple. She's the princess that refused to marry a Prince whom she asked to build 1000 temples in 1 night failed and who then turned her into stone, the Rara Jonggrang (slender virgin). Whoever touches her will be forever young and beautiful. Of course we had to touch her ! We wanted to get on the public bus back to our hotel but had to take a motorized becak (a bike with a carriage in front for passengers) after walking 1 Km and told that the bus stop was another 2 Km from the exit of Prambanan. The becak coast us 20,000 IDR (around 2 AUD) for the 2 Km while the bus was 7,000 IDR for both of us for 20 Km.

Having visited Borobodur and Prambanan temples, we were inspired to see the Ramayana Ballet. We had booked it the day before with the help of hotel management. We enjoyed the great acting, beautiful costumes and makeup and heavenly singing and background music. It also helped that Reyne read the synopsis beforehand and whispered it to Peter as the show progressed. It was good value for the price of \$28 per person considering the intricacies of the music, costume and drama. Only about 10 were in the audience so they would have taken a loss as there are so many support staff in all the related jobs including ushers, receptionists, cashiers, cleaners, drivers and security.

Peter had developed a problem with his skin that he diagnosed on the internet as brachioradial pruritis, a herpes type disease like shingles affecting the function of the nerve endings in the lower arms causing a great deal of itchiness, especially in the sun. So a walk to the Apoteke led Peter to buy the right cream (Capsaicin) and applied. It's a weird experience to have an itch that gets worse when you scratch it. He thought it was related to all the emotion of pondering his parents' plight in the war, similar to how shingles can be brought on by emotional shock.

### **Friday, 4 March – Yogyakarta (and reflections about war and family)**

Peter organised our flight from Semarang to Jakarta through the Smailing Tour Desk in the hotel. We then caught a motor-becak (a motor-powered tricycle) to take us to Taman Sari, where the maidens used to bathe in the hope that they would be chosen as a wife of the King but some just end up being concubines in the harem. It must have been grand. It had rooms not just for the women but also for their children (boys had a separate room from the girls).

Our motor-becak driver was very opportunistic, and good on him, offering to wait at the attractions and charge us a little extra. He then took us to the Fort Vredenburg Museum (known locally as Benteng) where there were dioramas and portraits of the Indonesian struggle for independence from Dutch rule before and after WW2. Guerrilla warfare plus lobbying through the United Nations finally gave them total independence in 1949 when the Dutch were fled, which is how Peter's parents ended up in Singapore where he was born.

The visit to the museum of Independence caused Peter many deep thoughts. Prior to leaving Indonesia permanently, Peter's Mom had worked for KLM in Jakarta between the end of the war 1945 and full independence in 1949. His Dad worked with Internatio Rotterdam in Indonesia as a tea buyer then continued when they got to Singapore for a few years, then declined a post with them in the Sudan in Africa to follow a Dutch trail to Australia with his friend Cor Kool. Peter's Mom had told him many years ago that she had as she said "lost her faith in God" during the Japanese imprisonment and abuse. This had since made more sense, as Peter's Christian faith was also transformed from evangelistic to agnostic. Peter's grandfather (Dad's side) was a philosopher and had not joined the Dutch protestant church. Little more has been learned about him from this trip other than that, from Ernst Kelling's biography, he was with Peter's Dad in the POW camp in Bandung under the Japanese. Peter's Dad was then moved to the one in Cimahi, before being moved right away to the camp in Kesilir in East Java near Jember. The intrigue about Peter's grandfather only came to the surface after his Dad's death in 1996 when Dutch relatives in Monaco found Peter and the remaining family in Australia and a meeting led to an understanding of the interesting facts formerly covered-up in family history, a topic too remote for this diary, involving religion, illegitimacy, Naval pension and possible Nazi sympathies.

Our driver took us on to the Mirota shopping area (fixed price stores) near Jalan Malioboro where Reyne went all-out buying batik. We paid the driver so we could be free to take our time.

Proceeding home we took a real becak (no motor) back to the hotel via the tailor where we picked up Peter's suit and paid the balance. The becak driver was about 45 and we felt humbled to have him pedal the bike and cart with us in it, but fortunately the road was flat. Then we walked back to the Phoenix hotel to spend our last night in its comfort and enjoy yet another delicious Indonesian meal at the restaurant.