

3/17/07 Day 61 – Cochin, India - Sat 17 March 2007: We arrived at the Cochin harbor entrance about 7am and were docked at the Ernakulam Wharf by 8am. Here is where we were located.



The Portuguese had the first European influence in the Cochin area when Vasco da Gama established Fort Kochi. Eventually Cochin came under British rule when India was a colony of Great Britain. The trade in spices is what drove the early interest in the area. Now the main exports are fish, coconut products, and rubber. The



Port area seemed less heavily industrialized than the other ports we have been in. There was a little container ship traffic and a large tanker docked near the Amsterdam.



The skyline of the city center for Cochin has a modern look about it as shown on the right.



Shortly after the Amsterdam arrived there was an Indian band and three elephants with handlers there to greet us. The entertainment went on for hours as passengers gathered at the ship's rails and enjoyed the show.





Paul was there with a plate of canapés he had delivered for the shore side festivities. He has been trying to teach us his more sophisticated life style but we have been difficult students. Paul would have been a perfect host for the TV show "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous."

The city of Cochin is built on a series of islands on the coast of the India state of Kerala. We had signed up for a tour through the channels that separate the islands where Cochin is located. There was a short bus ride (left hand traffic) and then we transferred to double decked sight seeing boats for the tour. Our tour guide's name was Daniel and he turned out to be a real jewel, much better than the average tour guide. Here he is standing in the boat after we were loaded.







We teamed up with our table mates for this tour.

Here are Roy and Gayle in the picture on the left.

Bob and Esther make up the rest of the Table 119 crowd.

Our guide explained that Cochin has a population of about 900,000 people and is less cosmopolitan than our next ports of Goa or Mumbai. He was proud of the fact that the state of Kerala where Cochin is located has the highest literacy rate in India. He claimed something like 90 percent of the people could read and write the local dialect. However, he estimated less than 10 percent could speak



English. His opinion was that while the caste system still operates in India in subtle ways the major division between classes is between those who speak English and those who do not. Daniel thought that while the British did a lot of bad things to India the good thing they did was introduce the English language which is now a valuable tool as India competes in the global market place.

Daniel offered the opinion that Western countries, like the US, were more successful than India because the citizens tend to "multi-task" while people in India tend to do only one thing and just waste time when not doing that one thing they have chosen to do. Another characteristic of India that he thought held the country back was the many languages that are spoken around the country. These are not simply accents, like the southern accent for English in the US, but completely separate languages like English and Spanish. He said that if he went to New Delhi in the North of India he would not understand the people and he would be just like a tourist in his own country. But he said the heritage of the ancient civilization in India has many positive characteristics of an advanced society. He

said that one sign of an advanced society is when old men plant trees even though they will not live to enjoy the shade. This thought struck a positive cord with us.

The boat tour took us past many of the homes and business sites around Cochin Harbor. He showed us some houseboats that are being used as floating hotels. He said they may have two or three rooms and cruise around Cochin during the evening so guests can see the lights and dinner is served. They may rent for about \$300 to \$400 USD per night so they are not for the average person in India. Here are a couple of the house (Hotel) boats.



Fishing is the major occupation of the people living along the shores of the islands we passed. One of the techniques they use employs what is billed as Chinese Fishing Nets. The Chinese Fishing Nets consist of a large square fish net, maybe 30 feet on each side. The nets are spread out by four wooden poles that are lashed together and attached to one end of a support pole. The support pole has a low pivot point at the other end opposite to where the spreading poles are attached. A rope is attached where the spreading and support poles are connected and the lifting rope passes through a pulley attached to the top of a high stationary vertical pole. When the rope is pulled the support pole along with the





net is raised out of the water and the fish that are then removed. Here is what the system looks like from a distance with the net out of the water.



Here is a Chinese Net with the net submerged in the water and only the four spreading poles showing.

The men haul in the support rope and the net is lifted out of the water so the trapped fish can be removed.



The main fishing time is in the evening and shortly after nightfall. Fish are attracted to the water above a submerged net by shining lights into the water. Little fish attract big fish and every hour or so they lift up the net and see what they caught hovering in the water above the submerged net. Daniel said this form of fishing is not really profitable any more and they mainly operate these nets as a historical demonstration for tourists. We didn't see any money changing hands but some connection incentive was operating because as the tour boats approached selected Chinese net sites the men and boys there would spring into action and haul up the net. Occasionally there would be a small, six inch long fish in the net.

We passed by some fishing boats that had brought in mackerel and other small fish caught by nets further out in the sea.



The white material in the bottom of the boat shown on the right was mackerel fish brought in to sell.







Here on the left is a truck loaded with fish ready to go to market.

Here are some of the boats that are used in the fishing industry of Cochin.







On the left is a photo of a colorful fish net repair site on the shore.

Here is a boat repair yard that we saw.



The houses of the fishing villages along the shoreline were of masonry construction and appeared to be in fair condition. Daniel said that a 1200 square foot house in this area would cost about \$40,000 USD. The lush tropical growth was everywhere. Children and adults were moving about with their daily activities and some of them took time to wave at us as we passed by.





Daniel said the population was 85% Hindu, 10% Muslim and the remaining 5% Christian, and other religions. Among the Christian denominations, Catholics are the most numerous. We passed by a beautiful Catholic Church on the waterfront of one island.

While touring around Cochin we spotted our Amsterdam neighbors, Tom and Jane with Tom taking our picture from another tour boat. Another friend, Graham, on the left with dark glasses and camera keeps an eye on us.



Cochin is home to one of India's navy bases. We saw a light cruiser moving swiftly into the bay after it had fired its five inch guns at the mouth of the harbor. The ship appeared to be in top condition with some of the uniformed crew standing at attention on the deck. The warship sailed quickly past us and the Amsterdam which was nearby at the time. This may have been a nice little show for all the cruise ship tourists in town and frankly it was a good





looking navy ship. Here is a picture of it with some of the tour boats, like ours, in the bay.



operators trying to do it at the same time.

There was a real melee when it came time for all the tour boats to dock and discharge their passengers. They all seemed to be scheduled to arrive at the same time. There were no collisions but it took very skillful operators and lots of yelling between boat crews to get their boats in to the dock with all the



In the afternoon we decided to take a taxi into the old part of Cochin and do a little shopping for carpets and a carved wooden elephant. Earlier in the day our friends from the [www.cruise critic.com](http://www.cruise critic.com) message board, Dorothy, George, John and Patricia shown on the right had made a very successful shopping trip by using one of the so-called Tuck-Tuck three wheeled open air taxi cabs.

The two couples had each been able to get one of the three wheeled taxis to take them shopping and return them to the ship for a total of ten dollars each. Dorothy had bought a large wooden elephant with inlaid decorations for \$135 USD which was

much lower than vendors on the dock were selling them for. We got directions from these four adventurous souls and headed out with our Amsterdam neighbor, Trudy, who was looking for a nice carpet. We contracted with a central taxi coordination station on the dock for a taxi. The price for an air conditioned taxi to take the three of us around town for four hours was \$15 USD. We took the deal and in the end threw in a few more bucks as tip to bring the total cost to \$22 USD. After we had returned to the ship in the evening, Dorothy ([www.cruise critic.com](http://www.cruise critic.com) name Bluewhale) playing her instinctive mothering role and message board leader called our cabin just to check and see if we had made it back safely.

The taxi turned out to be a very good arrangement because we could stash our purchases securely in the trunk while the driver watched the car and we continued shopping. We had the driver take us to the area near the Jewish Synagogue identified as "Good Shopping" in the map of Cochin above. George and Dorothy had recommended this part of town for our outing. Trudy was dedicated to the task of getting just the right silk carpet (light colored with a little bit of pink) for her hallway at home. She had her best price firmly in mind and engaged her bargaining genes to the maximum. Here she is playing the part of the discriminating customer (note obligatory cup of tea) with the wily rug merchant doing his best to make the sale.



In the end they reached agreement on a purchase and the dance was concluded.

We stashed Trudy's carpet in the taxi and went on to our quest for a carved wooden elephant. After passing through several shops we finally found the elephant we were looking for. Our tour guide earlier in the day had said about 10 percent of the Cochin population could speak English and that estimate seemed about right as we tried to communicate with the various clerks in the shops.





We ended up paying about 6000 India rupee (\$150 USD at 40 rupee to the US dollar) for this little guy carved from rosewood and inlaid with white and tan colored bone decoration. It's hard to be rational about this kind of purchase but usually it is possible to justify by thinking of the hours of labor and skill it took to create it.



We continued browsing around the so-called "Jewtown" part of Cochin and found the various shops fascinating. Spices were one of the primary attractions of India for the early European merchants and we came across a well stocked spice store.



We are ignorant about spices but we were impressed by the number of different types and beautiful display shown on the left.

We finally called a halt to the shopping spree and headed back to the ship in our taxi. The taxi ride around Cochin was thrilling and we were glad to have our seat belts tightly cinched

down.



The driver honked the horn whether or not anyone was in front of us and he was aggressive about moving through the crowded, left hand traffic streets. Here are some photos of the passing scene showing typical neighborhoods we passed through and the flow of traffic.



This lady on the left manages to wear her sari while riding on the back of a motorcycle.



Gasoline costs about \$4.50 USD a gallon in Cochin and plenty of people apparently can afford the cost. We were pleasantly surprised to see that, at least in Cochin, the streets were not filled with beggars as we had been warned might happen in our travels through India.

This picture taken through the taxi windshield showing well dressed people was typical of the passing scene.



We made it safely back to the Amsterdam for dinner.

After dinner there was a show in the Queen's Lounge featuring two dancers from India who demonstrated some classical India facial and body movements that express human emotions and actions. They put on an act that told the story of an evil sorcerer who tried to seduce a prince but was finally vanquished by the prince. Here they are in their costumes with the short prince in traditional green face color that appears to represent royalty.

