

3/12/07 Day 56 – Port Kelang – Monday, 12 March 2007: As we approached Port Kelang we could see the shore was covered mostly with a dense mangrove forest. The day was sunny, warm (90 degrees F) and hazy.



Heavily loaded container ships were frequently passing us in the sea lanes.

We docked at the Star Cruise Terminal at Port Kelang about 8am. The map on the right shows Port Kelang



in Malaysia where the Amsterdam was docked. Port Kelang is the gateway to Kuala Lumpur the capital of Malaysia.

The terminal building was new and inviting. Here is a view of the terminal from the Amsterdam. Also shown is the stern of a Star Lines cruise ship tied up on the other side of the dock from the Amsterdam. The Star Line runs overnight gambling cruises out beyond the Malaysian national boundaries where gambling is not prohibited.

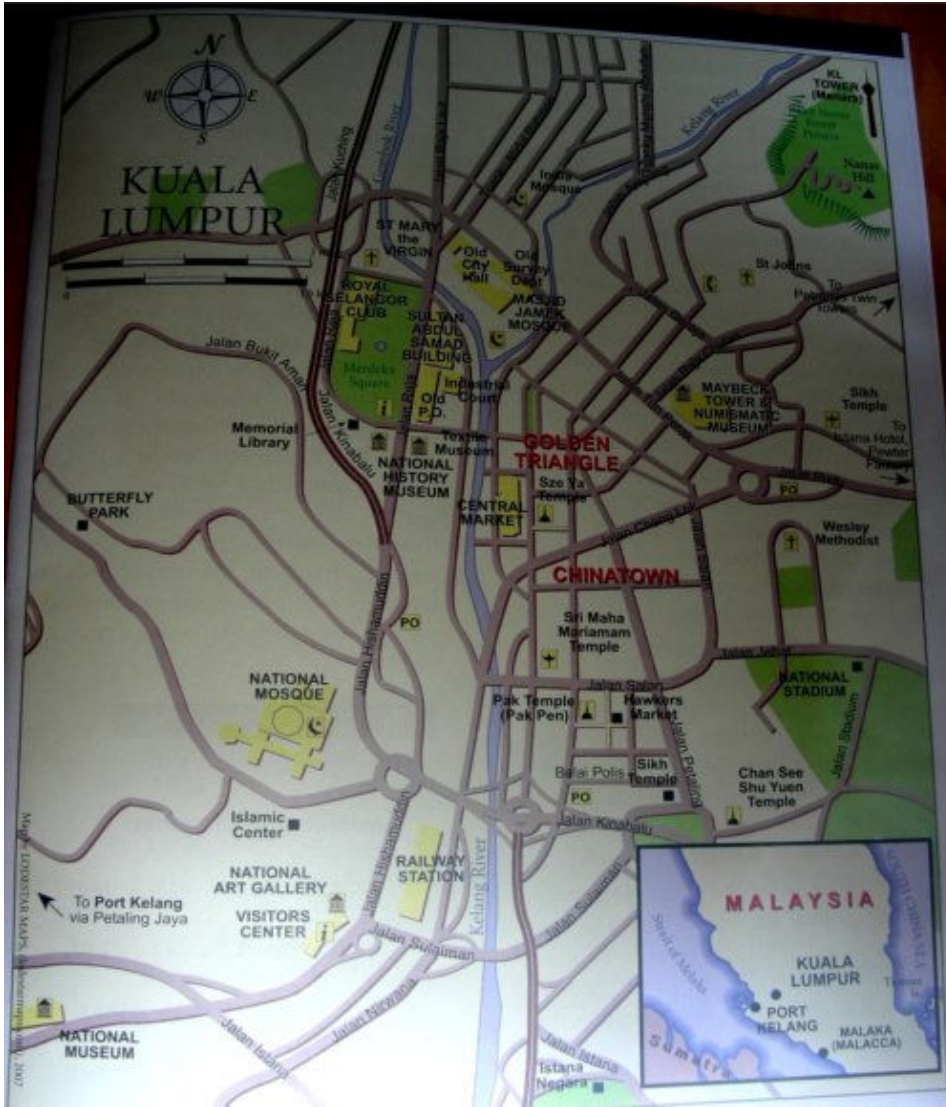


The primary purpose for the Amsterdam coming to Port Kelang was to give us passengers an opportunity to visit Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. Port Kelang was typical of most of the maritime facilities that we saw in

Malaysia. It had a lot of new construction and appeared to be busy. Here are some photos of the surrounding port facilities visible from the deck of the Amsterdam.

The photo on the right is of an oil and gas storage and shipment facility.



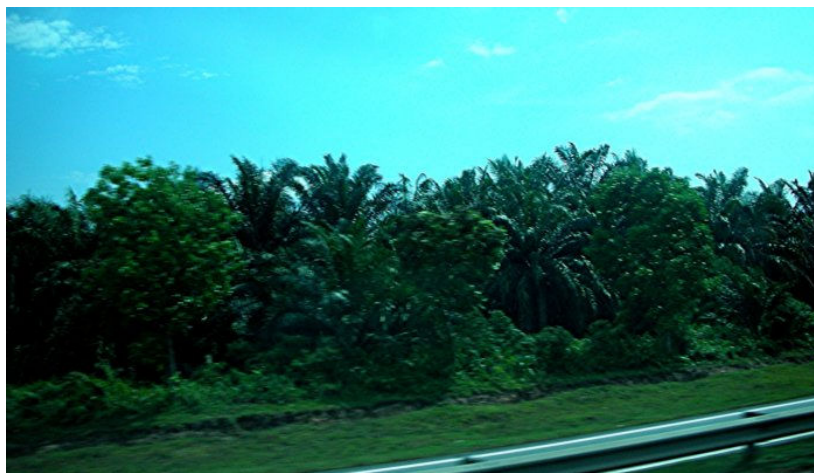


We had signed up for a tour of the highlights of Kuala Lumpur. Our tour bus left about 9am and headed out for Kuala Lumpur 60 miles and about an hour of driving from Port Kelang. Here is a map of Kuala Lumpur showing most of the sites that we visited in the city.

Malaysia is another left hand driving nation as a result of their British background. The highway from Port Kelang to Kuala Lumpur was a freeway in good condition. Our guide explained that the road was built

by private companies. There were two or three toll booth stops in the 60 miles along the way to Kuala Lumpur. She said that after a period of time the ownership of the highway would revert to the Malaysian government. Malaysia is made up of 13 states, 9 of them have a sultan leader and 4 have a traditional parliamentary government. The total population is about 26 million people. The population makeup is 60 percent Malaysian, 30 percent Chinese, 7 percent Indian and 3 percent other nationalities. The currency is the Malaysian ringgit with an exchange rate of about 3.5 ringgits to 1 US dollar. The country is Islamic but the guide claimed that religious freedom exists. Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist houses of worship can be found on the map of Kuala Lumpur. She also said that in the public schools there was an attempt to only teach the primary Malaysian language but public pressure has brought the teaching of English back into the schools.

The flat countryside on the way to Kuala Lumpur was mostly covered with mangrove swamp. The guide said the mangrove provided wood for making charcoal and along the coast the trees also provided protection from tsunami waves that have plagued the region. As we approached Kuala Lumpur we saw that lots of new apartment and condo type buildings had been put in place along the highway or construction was underway.



We spotted a palm tree plantation that ran for a couple miles along the highway. Palm oil is one of the exports from Malaysia. Our guide said tapioca is also an export. The guide also said that there is sizeable motor bike and automobile manufacturing going on in Malaysia. She may have been talking about machine parts for export to other countries but it was obvious that Malaysia is

emerging from a low tech world into the high tech world.

We stopped at an area known as China town and the guide turned us loose for some souvenir shopping. Here are some scenes from China Town of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.





The market consisted of a several city blocks with street blocked off to car traffic. The street was lined with store fronts and open air vendor stalls in the street.

The bargaining was intense. Our guide said we should start by offering half of what was asked by the vendor.

There was an interesting food for sale that we had heard of in Singapore. It is made by boiling eggs in tea. The hard boiled eggs pick up the flavor of the tea and they are a delicacy to eat. We found a bucket of



Purple Cane Tea Eggs for sale on the street. We think they were selling 3 eggs for 2.00 Malaysian ringetts (about \$0.60 USD).

Our guide next walked the group of about 40 people a few blocks over to a place known as the Central Market. While crossing one busy street the entire group was spread out across the street when the traffic light turned red. There were hordes of cars and buses with the green light and straining to get going. Our guide bravely faced the traffic with her Tour 10 sign up high and held back the roaring and honking machines until her aged brood could hobble across the street. One of our fellow passengers commented that she would have been Road Kill if she had tried that in New York.

We found the Central Market more to our liking since it was an enclosed air conditioned area, more like a mall. We browsed around and, sure enough, Barbara eventually found a shirt that she liked and it was a cloth type and pattern identical to one bought by Orlin in Bali. Even though prices start out fairly reasonable by US standards you simply have to bargain it down 10 or 20 percent, at least, to retain your honor. Barbara did okay and walked away with a \$50 ringett (about \$15 USD) shirt made with batik cloth. Batik cloth is labor intensive and made by first imprinting a wax pattern on cloth. The cloth is then dipped in a dye and only the cloth not covered with wax takes on the dye color. The cloth covered with wax remains with the original color. The wax is then removed and the original cloth color forms the pattern that was traced out by the wax. In use it looks like a usual print cloth except that when you inspect the back side of the cloth the imprinted pattern is just as brilliant as when viewed from the front side of the cloth. Normally print cloth patterns are dull when viewed from the back side. Since the back side of the cloth normally doesn't show batik cloth doesn't seem like a big deal but it apparently has some marketing appeal and so it is made.

Here's Barbara in her new batik shirt.



Our bus tour then proceeded to a series of Muslim Mosques. They were beautiful but to our uneducated eyes the significance, if any, was lost. Here are a few photos of what we saw.





Another mosque in Kuala Lumpur

The 13 states that make up Malaysia gained their independence from the UK in 1957. That is why in the year 2007 they are celebrating 50 years of independence. Malaysia is a Muslim country and the Muslim religion is integrated in some way into the government. The photo on the right is of the National Muslim Mosque in Kuala Lumpur. If you look closely you can see a portion of the blue roof. It has the folded shape of an umbrella. The guide told us that the decision makers for the Mosque design rejected having the traditional dome shape in favor of this new shape which symbolizes the umbrella of the Muslim faith which welcomes all mankind. Unless there is a hint of coercion in that philosophy it gives some hope for the future as the world tries to deal with the Muslim religion and terrorists. We saw no signs of concern for terrorist activity in any of the Muslim countries we have visited. Bali, in Indonesia was trying to resuscitate their tourist economy after a couple of deadly terrorist events but we didn't see that they had fielded a military security force in response to the terrorists.



After visiting the mosques we went for an authentic Malaysian luncheon at the restaurant known as Restoran Serimelayu. The restaurant had a huge dining room set up for about 3 bus loads of tourists (about 120 people). We found an empty place setting at a table and made our way through a buffet that seemed to have an endless variety of well prepared and presented ethnic food. By careful selection we got exactly the degree of heat we wanted in our spicy Malaysian meal. Here are some photos of the buffet:



Yes, in the photo on the left is a roasted pig filled with rice for the buffet!



The restaurant had a banner promoting Malaysia's years of existence so Barbara used this opportunity to show that her Oak Ridge Library card had visited Malaysia.



On the way out of Kuala Lumpur we stopped for photos of the 88 story tall twin towers known as the Petronas Twin Towers. Construction of the towers was completed in 1996 and they have become an icon of Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia. In fact, the twin towers appear on the 5 ringett Malaysia paper money. Here's a photo of the famous towers.

The bus took us back to Port Kelang in about one hour. We were impressed by the thoughtfulness of the Amsterdam when we saw that many of the uniformed stewards were waiting for the buses with wheelchairs. They provided a welcome relief for the passengers who would have difficulty walking the distance through the terminal building and out to the ship.

At 6pm the ship pulled away from the dock and as we were eating our dinner. We headed north up the Malacca Strait to Georgetown in the Malaysian state of Penang. The number of small fishing boats in the water is incredible. At night the lights of 4 or 5 small boats are visible nearly all the time as we sail up the Malacca Strait.

