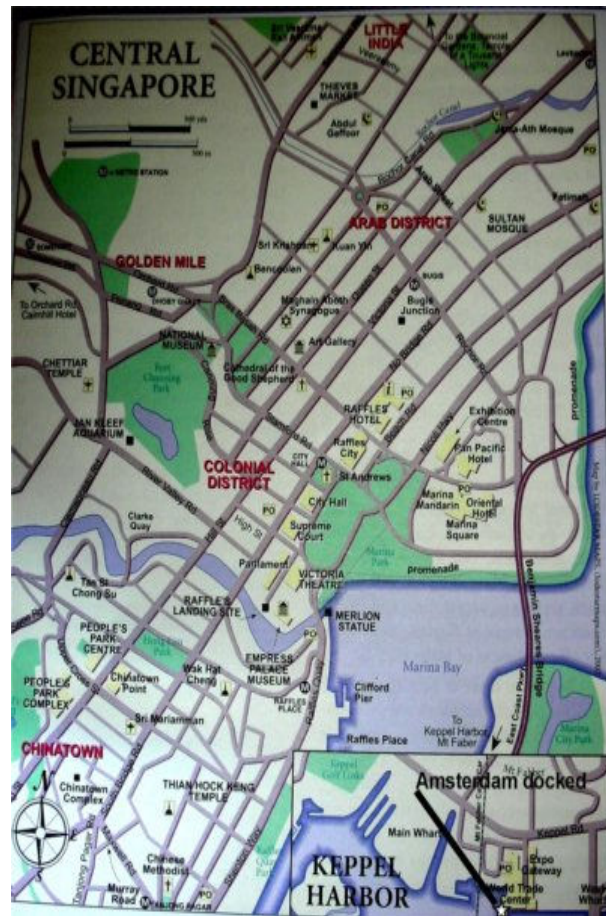
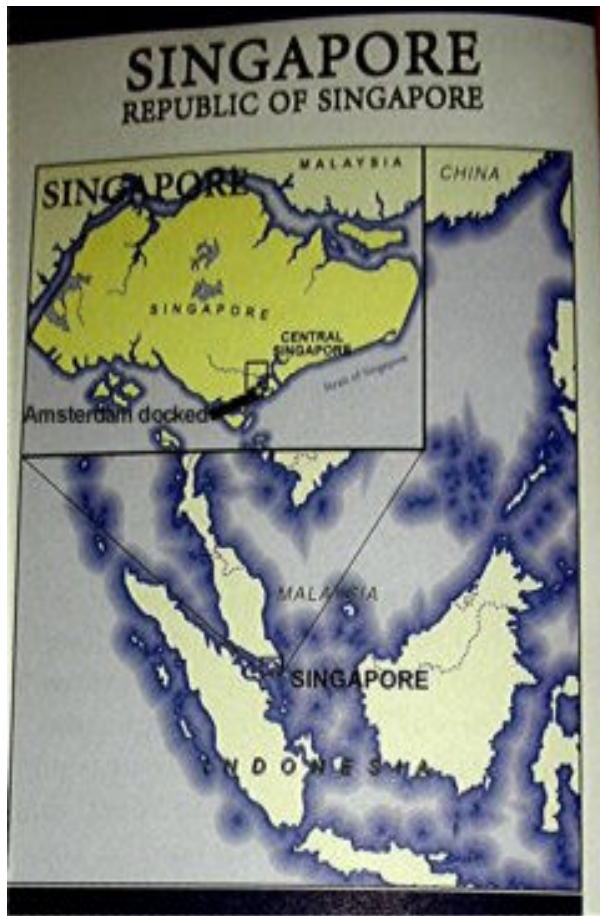


3/11/07 Day 55 – Singapore – Sun, 11 March 2007: We docked in Singapore, Keppel Harbor about 7am. It was a warm day with broken cloud cover. Here is the location of Singapore and the ms Amsterdam.



The port area of Singapore was clean and showed all the signs of a vigorous economy. Here are a few photographs of the scene around the ship after we docked.

The cable car system in the photo on the right passed through the tall building and proceeded to the top of Mt. Faber in a city park.





Apartment houses in the port area. High rise buildings of Singapore are in the distance.

There were lots of cranes and container storage facilities in the Singapore port. Singapore is the second largest port (Hong Kong is the largest) in Southeast Asia.



In the center of the photo on the left is the Merlion Statue sticking up above the trees. This is a statue of the mythical animal, part lion part mermaid that has come to symbolize Singapore. Sort of like the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen, Denmark, harbor. We could see this





much of it from the deck of the Amsterdam.

In most ports our US Passport was kept by the ship and we got authority to go ashore from the local port authorities. In Singapore we also got approval from the port authority but they also required everyone to carry their passport ashore. We had to retrieve our passport from the ship's office where it was normally filed. Singapore has the death penalty for anyone convicted of trafficking in illegal drugs. This fact is prominently displayed in the immigration card they slip into every visitor's passport.



We had signed up for a tour called A Taste of Singapore. We caught our bus about 8:30 and started the tour by driving to an open air shopping street where we bought a couple of silk shirts. The traffic drives on the left side of the road in Singapore. That's part of the British influence still remaining from the colonial days which started in 1819 and ended after WWII. The local currency is the Singapore dollar but they took our VISA credit card and US dollars (at 1.55 Singapore dollars to 1 USD).



The streets of Singapore are cleaner than the typical streets we have seen in Hong Kong, Vietnam and other cities. Singapore imposes fines against anyone found defacing or otherwise polluting the environment of Singapore.

We went next to a nearby tea shop in China Town where we had a demonstration of how to prepare tea. There was an extensive presentation about the four types of tea that come from the tea plant; Black (roasted leaves), Green (top leaves), White (top stem) and Oolong (bottom leaves). The green tea has the most polyphenols and therefore has the most health benefits according to our presenter. The polyphenol content of green tea is about the same as in red wine which is supposed to be good for the cardiovascular system. The shop was selling the different types of tea. They were expensive. For example, a 12 ounce box of green tea cost about \$40 USD. It was no-doubt exquisite tea but we passed the opportunity.



The bus then took us to the Little India section of Singapore. People with Chinese ancestry make up the largest part of the Singapore population but they have a significant Indian population also. The Indians were brought to Singapore by Sir Stamford Raffles in the 1800s to work at clearing the land for the development of the British colony. The Little India section had crowded narrow streets filled with open air and street front shops.



Gloria and Don check out a Singapore tee shirt in Little India. The tee shirt was decorated with all the things that are forbidden to do in Singapore which has strict laws.

We saw a mixture of old and new buildings. Here is a typical street scene in Singapore.



A big difference in the street scene between Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and Singapore was the lack of motor cycles in Singapore. We were astounded by the swarms of motor cycles in Vietnam but we only saw one or two in the day we spent in Singapore. We neglected to find out the price of a gallon of gasoline. However, from the general appearance of the city and people walking around, the absence of motorcycles probably reflects the higher overall economic conditions of the city folks in Singapore rather than simply lower gas prices.



The next stop on the tour was the Raffles Hotel. This hotel has international fame because of its long history in the region. An early owner attracted European clients by bringing in a chef who cooked Western style food in a region where only oriental food was normally available. The hotel is also acknowledged as the inventor of the gin and fruit juice drink known as the Singapore Sling. The Hotel is a beautiful structure painted a brilliant white.



Inside, the hotel has a nice open and airy tropical feel about it. Our tour included a Singapore Sling drink in the Long Bar Room followed by a luncheon. We joined with Don and Gloria Bell for our Singapore Slings.

The luncheon was served at a long table and turned out to be good but it took a long time to serve. We finally broke free with about 45 minutes to spend wandering around Singapore near the Raffles Hotel. A large new shopping center called Raffles City beckoned to us and we browsed through it. It was four stories of modern storefronts and food courts with a concierge posted at the door to help you locate what you were looking for.

We finally had to board the bus which took us on about a 15 minute ride back to the ship. On the way back we caught this fleeting shot of the Singapore skyline.



We got back to the ship and it got underway about 7pm. The shoreline of Singapore and Sumatra across the Malacca Strait was lined with refineries and other industrial facilities. It soon was dark and the shoreline on both sides of the ship was ablaze with lights from the communities and industrial sites along the shore.

The shoreline eventually darkened and we turned in for the night. Tomorrow we stop at Port Kelang in Malaysia.