

Friday: Lodtunduh

On our final morning in KL, I went out with Inge-Marie and bought some light cotton leggings which I figure will be useful on our travels and also changed some Ringits into dollars and rupiahs (Indonesian currency) It was sad to say goodbye to Hans Peter and Inge-Marie; they have made us so welcome inviting us to share their lovely home, even at a time they have so much to do, completely refitting out a new apartment for Christmas guests ... lots of them! Hans even insisted on taking us to the airport.



Flight 3 hours, left 20 mins late and arrived on time, just before midnight, getting visa accomplished in 1 minute. Now south of equator for first time. Stayed at Best Western, close to Kutu Beach where all the tourist action is! Knew we were somewhere special when beautiful young men wear flowers behind their ears and talk about English football! Walked on sweeping beach with surfers out away, awaiting the big one! Then away north to Ubud, the artistic and cultural place to be. We are in Lodtunduh, just

south of Ubud, now gone native, after the sophistication of KL living, in a traditional thatched wooden home, enclosed downstairs accommodation and partially open-air kitchen, bathroom and bedrooms, set amid jungle-y gardens which look out over emerald green paddy fields. Idyll slightly marred by fertiliser sprays strapped to backs of people tending! Yes ..it really is like living in paradise! Another memory to covet!



A local driver took us in to Ubad last evening, where we wandered the market and streets, and had a meal, were even invited to do some salsa! Today we

are chilling – just having Augustian and Monika over for a meal. It is now half eleven and already really hot and getting to point in the day when you need the plunge pool at regular intervals. The place even has a good wi-fi connection, even tho' we seem to be so rural.



We had a lovely evening with our two artist friends who seem to be back to serious work mode here in Bali. Monica is near to completing a video installation and Augustian is painting. It seems that a couple of his paintings are in one of the houses in this T-House Development. It seems that they have not worked any more on their Buddha Bags project –

using recycled fabrics to create shoulder bags which are a cross between craft and works of art. Monica told us she had seen him dancing in the style of his birthplace, Sumatra, and was knocked out by the performance which she videoed and has promised to show us. He also dances here in Bali and is highly dynamic and athletic. The girls from the village cooked for us in our kitchen and the meal was excellent. We hope to see them again before we leave.



Saturday

A busy, busy, day out and about as tourists ferried about by our driver, Suwesem. We travelled north, out of Ubud and up towards the mountainous north, through jungle and picturesque paddy fields. Our first stop, the Water Temple. It seems that an arrow from the God, pierced the earth here and a fresh spring of water flowed from where the arrow fell. We had to wear sarongs and scarves to enter. Apparently, just a week ago, Barrak Obama was here and stayed in the palace high above the temple. We saw the spring of holy water – ‘No coins allowed to be thrown!’ and also pilgrims bathing before making offerings. A holy man, all in white, sat under



a canopy, the faithful behind him. As he rang his bell, lesser holy men went up to the altar while the pilgrims prayed. The place had a very special feel – no wonder this was the place the President of the US of A was brought!

The next stop was for coffee, but with a difference. We walked around the plantation, where different trees grew and then watched the coffee beans being roasted and stirred, oh so patiently, over a wood burning fire. We were treated to three cups of coffee and three teas but told that the very best coffee would cost \$5 .... which one inevitably felt obliged to try. This very, very special brew came from a coffee bean that had passed through the intestine of a weasel like creature which consumes the coffee berries and this, apparently adds hu-u-ugely beneficial enzymes?! The beans, we were assured, remain intact and are thoroughly washed and washed again before the roasting process. It tasted fine – a strong-ish mocha tasting coffee and I guess not much different price-wise to a Costa in the UK, but that is pretty pricey here! We were so impressed by the place, and the engaging young man who explained all to us that we ended up spending far too many rupiahs in the shop.





And on further north we travelled, to a beautiful lake set amid volcanic mountains 2000+ft. This was our lunch stop where we enjoyed a splendid buffet overlooking the lake. I have never seen an active volcano before, and although I saw no smoke or steam there was evidence of the lava flow down the hillside. And we are lucky to see the lake – many tourists come here to mist and rain. Here, where the temperature borders on the temperate, every other

house has orchards with wonderful stalls of exotic fruits set outside.

Onwards and downwards to the next temple, a temple dedicated to women and marriage. Having bought a couple of sarongs at the Water Temple in which we were wrapped correctly as we had made a hash of it! Belts necessary over this and Nick had to don a funny hat! We were then crossed over the road to the temple by guards with whistles and red flags. This temple overlooking lake impressive, but



not so much as previous one and we didn't linger too long and travelled back through the amazing green Bali countryside – trees and paddy fields to our final stop of the day, the Elephant Temple. Here, an ancient carving 10<sup>th</sup> C, allows you into a dark, holy cavern with three altars. Before, doing this you cleanse yourself (just hands and face) in a pond, the area around filled with lotus blossom! A great end to the day.



.....and into Sunday

Having experienced all these Hindu-Balinese style shrines and the rapt worshippers, I remain perplexed about their strange, vast array of extraordinary Gods and Demons. Particularly, as I have picked up a book here in our T-House - a biography by the Australian writer, Morris West, 'A View from the Ridge', documenting his life in faith. Here is a 20thC man towards the end of an amazing life – 11 years in the Catholic Church preparing to take his vows, then travelling and writing, one failed marriage and one successful one, a father and grandfather, a challenger of the hierarchical autocratic church, but still a man of deep faith. And here in Bali I see such a different faith practised. Here, the faith appears to come up from the people and West is deeply critical of how the RC faith is imposed from above.

Back here we enjoyed a quiet evening where the heat and humidity increased and sleep was difficult: here we have fans rather than a/c. The rain in the night was not enough to reduce the humidity and we'll be plunging in the pool a few times today, I think.

and Monday.....

Another quiet day on Paradise Ranch....even less blue sky than yesterday but increasing humidity and the torment of mozzie bites on ankles and up to my knees. The night before last, it was an excruciating effort to stop scratching and I had to get up and prowl round for what seemed like hours, but that's how it seems with night time afflictions! Our mozzie stuff from home is entirely ineffective and I left the best cover-up clothing back in Kuta. Now any half suspicion of an innocent bug (there are plenty here!) landing on me and I react violently! Last night not quite as bad – I wrapped myself in a sarong and covered under the mozzie net, not prepared to risk further attacks. We have had some gentle rain at night but nothing to clear the air.

Yesterday Monica turned up in the afternoon – it seems she has personal issues and needed time to air them. It was good to talk further and learn something of her history. We were all hungry and sent out for pizza and salad – sort of late lunch and early tea.



This morning went for breakfast with Gill and Fred, Australians who actually own one of these homes and spend eight weeks (her) and sixteen weeks (him) each year – that is when they are not back home, or on their boat on the French canals or on safari in Africa!!! Wonderful fresh fruit and banana pancakes with palm syrup – the standard Bali brekkie.

It is interesting how one arrives at a sympathetic place and feels 'in tune' with the surroundings. This house is owned by a Dutch artist whose father was the Dutch Ambassador in Indonesia, with a grandfather whose art is documented in a book here, the work looks really interesting –I wish I could read Dutch. But the bookshelves are great – one of the best poetry anthologies I've come across, Karen Armstrong's book on Buddhism and the Morris West book mentioned yesterday. Then today I read a James Thurber short story and have consequently resolved to read lots more of him. Thankyou T-house, Lapuka.



..... and finally at 1.45pm the distant rumbling of thunder and the sky so dark that reading an impossibility and we enjoyed a solid half hour of heavy rain, some driving in the open areas upstairs. Great! We look forward to supper, cooked by the village girls and the teksi ride south and onwards.