

Our house sit in Cairns drew quickly to a close this month. We became familiar with all the northern beaches from Trinity to Palm Cove, as we alternated the walks with the little canines.

We packed in a lot when son Joe came up from Brisbane. After our adventure on the Bloomfield track, we followed up with a day trip to Kuranda and Barron Falls. Very disappointed in Kuranda where we learnt that the council does not encourage picnickers at the request of the shop holders. Undeterred, we had our own little bbq lunch, but I don't think Kuranda will feature on my "top of the pop" list now. Unfortunately Barron Falls were no more than a trickle, and then I learnt that if you are on the train, they "turn on the falls" when the train passes. Lake Placid was pretty, another lunch venue, before we drove in to Barron Gorge. That was way more impressive! Highly recommend the Armor and Artillery Museum. So many tanks to look at. We also enjoyed the walk up to Crystal Cascades, a very pretty, and little known area of Cairns.

Our house sit hosts returned from Tasmania in time to a) lend us a suitcase, b) drive us to the airport and c) have a Chinese birthday dinner for John. The long awaited trip to Indonesia was finally upon us, along with the ceremony to celebrate Leon (John's son) and Melly's wedding

The flight to Brisbane was uneventful and over pretty quick. We were surprised how quickly we were able to pick up a taxi and get on our way to the hotel in Kingsford Smith Drive. I could not believe the amount of road works there, especially right outside the hotel. The taxi cost us an extra \$15.00 just to do a block to turn around, and was still not able to drop us at the door. Dinner in Italian restaurant, dessert at the Hamilton Hotel, then off to the Longreach Suite at our hotel for sleep

Up early the next morning for our international flights. Singapore airlines really know how to feed you. We already had breakfast at the airport, brunch, lunch and afternoon tea on board, all before Singapore airport, then dinner on the connecting flight to Jakarta. Our short stop over in Singapore allowed us time to hike it to the beautiful butterfly house in the transit lounge, where of course, there is a cache. Our first ever out of Australia, and we were able to perform some first aid on it.

I have been very nervous about this trip for a long time, sure that something would go, but all was all smooth sailing through customs then we were met by the Lovely Lili and the Adorable Ahun, her cousin. (Lili is one of the bride's sisters, and lives in Jakarta.)

We arrived at our hotel to find our room cancelled but that was quickly sorted by Lili. A quick visit to a supermarket for some biscuits and cheese for supper, then off to bed bed. We were surprised at the supermarket that we could buy **RITZ** biscuits, **BEGA** cheese, fruit from Australia, many things undefinable and beds!



Day 2, breakfast not exactly what I call western breakfast as promised, but I managed to find some weak

milky tea, toast and something that tasted like strawberry jam. John on the other hand, relished in the hot spicy selection. The lovely Lili was due to pick us up at 11.00, so we cautiously took ourselves for a gentle stroll around a rather large and busy block. We were stopped by several security guards asking if we might be lost, but we were OK, I don't think too many people go walking in Indo especially westerners.



When Lili arrived, we asked her to arrange for a tuk-tuk to a local museum, where there was a cache. Tuk tuk ticked, we arrived at the Syahbandar Tower, where were greeted by Catur, the tour guide.

Built around 1839, the tower was constructed by Nederland to guide the ships which were coming for spice trading at Sunda Kelapa Harbour. Catur was keen to show us the watchtower and museum, but we briefly lost him to attempt to find the cache. Approaching GZ, his head appeared over the wall. "You looking for game?" so we assumed he knew what we were looking for.



He then offered to show us his museum, but it was too hot, so he offered to take us on boat into harbour. Now he had our interest! John bartered, agreed on price, then Catur took us into watchtower, which had an amazing view over the old harbour.

I thought we would never get the cache, but eventually he said to John, "up there" and sure enough, there was a tell tail eclipse tin. Finally we had out second cache out of Australia.



The next part of our adventure was very exciting. We walked with him down a narrow lane through slums, past humpies, shacks, and makeshift houses. Over drains and dykes made from scraped up rubble and rubbish. This is how some Indo people live!



Down a narrow plank to a rickety boat. (Not sure what our travel insurance would think about this.) Put put put, off we went down the dirty waterway, rubbish floating all around, huge rusty fishing boats towering above us, a bit nerve racking when plastic wrapped around the small motor out in the harbour, but we returned safely, happy that we had the experience.

This is the real old Jakarta that we wanted to see.

Not shopping malls, of which there are many, and the locals appear to love. Lili told us she had never done what we did this day.





They love their shopping malls

After collecting John's son Adam from the airport, the four of us then jumped on another flight to Pontianak in West Kalimantan on the island of Borneo. It was great to meet up with our new Indo family, and we were quickly swept up in dress and suit fittings for the wedding.



The 23rd finally arrived, starting with video shoots of us helping Leon check out his suit. Melly's preparation etc.



Poor Leon and Melly had been up since 3.00am, makeup, photos in full dress and videos. So formal! The tea ceremony was very traditional, then it was off to make-up and hair studio for Mamma and me.



Mamma doesn't speak a word of English, and I don't speak a word of Indonesian, but at a beauty parlor, you don't need spoken language.



Just before 3.00pm we were driven next door to the reception restaurant, where the family and extended family sat down to lunch. Lunch done, more video and photography, red balloons released, then it was time for guests to arrive. The wedding party, consisting of bride and groom and both sets of parents sit up on a stage, while the siblings greeted guests at the door. The guests eat, then come up on stage to congratulate us all then leave. A fake cake is cut, with another little ceremony where the bride feeds cake to mother and mother in law, groom ditto to the fathers. In all its seriousness, when it was time for Melly to feed me my cake, she said "loyk at moy, loyk at moy"! She totally cracked me up in what was a totally serious event.



Pontianak is quite a city, population approximately 575,000, and it the capital of the Province of West Kalimantan. It was established in 1771 as a trading port on the island of Borneo. It is located on the equator, so a visit to this important monument was on my bucket list.

We drove with two cars to the monument, Self, John, Leon and Adam, Melly and her sisters Lili, Yunti, Ata & Baby Mavis, and Ahbet (an uncle). The monument is a popular place to visit, we took the usual pictures inside, with us standing north and south, then (we knew this in advance) went out to find the real equator using our GPS.

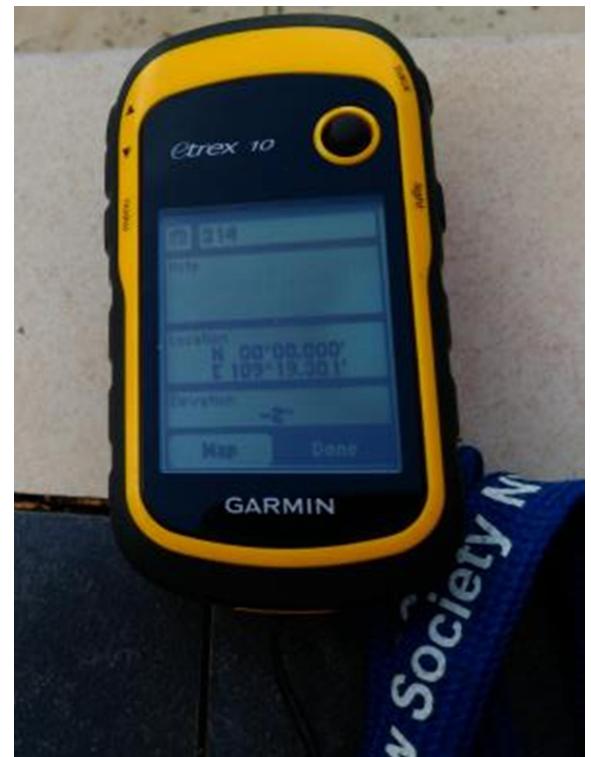
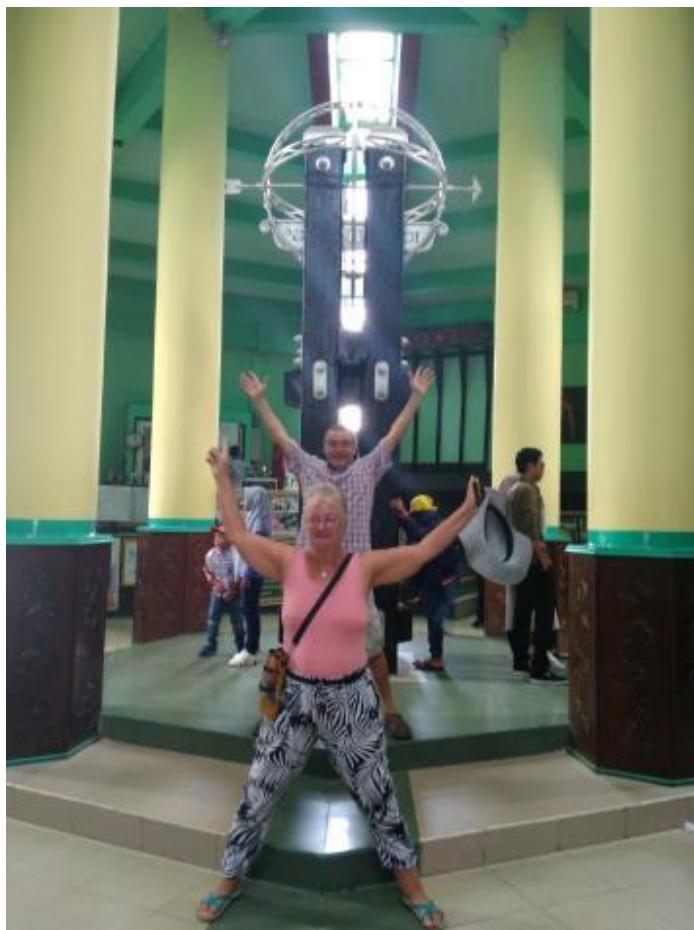
The original monument was built in 1928 by a Dutch geographer, then rebuilt in 1938 (the original is still visible in the interior. In 1990 it was renovated, along with a dome to protect the original monument,

and a duplicate monument five times bigger than the original. This was officially opened in 1991.

The equator monument is no longer on the equator line.

It has moved slightly southwards, and there is another line outside the monument that shows the recorded position in 2005.

We found this imaginary line using my caching GPS.





Pontianak's weather does not change much during the year, June/July our max was around 32 degrees with minimums around 28. September to November appears to be their wet, and no difference between summer and winter.

If we saw few westerners in Jakarta, we saw even less, other than our little family group of four in Pontianak. We were treated like celebrities with children, teens and adults all wanting selfies with us. Little children were shy, the children and teens giggled, but the message was always the same "selfie please".

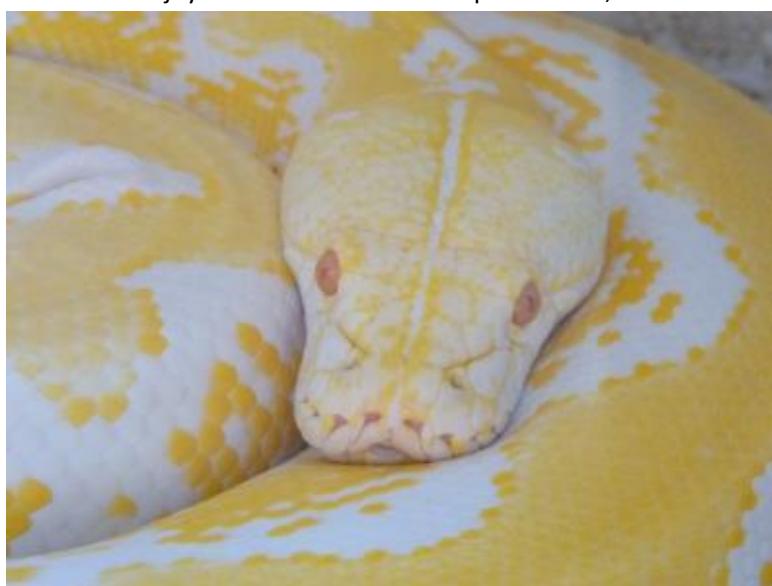


Don't know what ever happened to all those pictures, probably an inundation on Facebook!

There was one day with three cars and all the family, we drove for 3 hours (152 km) to Singkawang, to visit the beach and the Sinka Island Park (Tanjung Bajau Singka), where there is a recreational park, swimming pool, mini zoo and Fantasy Island (read “theme park”) all based around a small hill.



We enjoyed the view from the top of the hill, saw animals in dubious states of accommodation in the zoo, and the boys all had a swim in the ocean.



We ate street food for lunch – John’s shout, 17 for lunch cost us about \$40.00!

Another night we all went to Melly's parent's house for a bbq. The family sat around on the floor outside their house with small fires with grills on top, cooking sate chicken, prawns and mud crabs.

A very happy family gathering for all, John and Uppin (Pappa) drinking Bintang over ice.



You must realise that Pontianak predominately is a Muslim city, so it is impossible to buy anything other than beer. My duty free whiskey was rationed and I had no wine for over two weeks!

The Muslim Ramadan finished while we were in Ponti, so a great party was about to happen for their New Year. Fireworks nightly, kites flying daily.

That was OK, but a new celebration was the firing of cannons over the river – from sun down to sun up – every night for a week! Needless to say, we were a bit sleep deprived that

week.

Back in Jakarta for our last week, we soon developed Bali Belly, and John a chest cold. We put the Bali Belly down to the week of eating street food, and the cold to the smog in Jakarta. There were a few days where I could not stomach any food, and eventually we found a few outlets of western food and fruit.

We were amazed at how much the Indo girls ate. At breakfast, it was nothing for Melly and Lili to consume four or five plates and bowls of food – each. The buffet for breakfast ranged from raw fruit and veggies, noodles, chicken porridge, hot spicy soup, deep fried stuff (???). Then there were pastries – croissant with chocolate dipped, cakes of all description. Bread for toasting, peanut paste, honey and other strange condiments. Then I discovered the Egg Station, where you could get an omelet or fried eggs made to order. (yay!) I was surviving on eggs and toast, Imodium for my Belly, Nexus to combat indigestion, along with the pain killers and anti inflams for my back and knee!

We managed to convince the girls to take us to MONAS, a national monument in the city. Built from 1961 to 1975 under the direction of President Soekarno the 132m tower symbolizes the fight for Indonesian independence from the Dutch.

I wanted to visit, as there were a number of caches there (obviously we wanted to see the monument as well). We found the caches, and joined the others inside the monument.

I needed to go to the toilet (badly) and John walked me over to where the Ladies were. Once inside, the realization that there would probably not be a western toilet, the heat, and my Bali Belly, and I was down!

Sitting half way up the stairs, in a total state of confusion, dizziness, and sweating profusely, I proceeded to pass out.

I have nothing but praise for the beautiful Muslim ladies who helped me, who called in John, and proceeded to take me to the top of the queue where there was, in fact a western toilet.



Our short lived visit to Monas was then finished off with a drive in the car with the nice friendly POLISI back to the carpark.

All the locals waived to us, convinced we must be some one really important.



We visited “Padang” and I was drawn up onto the stage to dance with other members of the audience and Padang dancers. This was probably the closest we got to an Indonesian village in our two week visit. If anyone remembers EXPO 1988 in Brisbane, recall the pavilions, well, this is about the only way I can explain this mini park.

Another day, a quick visit to the Roman Catholic Cathedral in the city, where a wedding was in place, a quick visit to an equally beautiful Buddhist temple then on to a park called Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park).

Like most places we visited, it was bustling, food stalls, people everywhere. We found the lake which is built with islands representing the Archipelago of Indonesia and surrounded by villages buildings representing all the different regions within Indo.





Whole families travel on the scooters, we saw one with two adults, and three children!

The traffic in these Indonesian cities is horrendous.

Traffic seems to flow all day and night, scooters and motorbikes rule, and apart from that there are no rules. Just drive with one hand on the horn and you will survive.

Seatbelt and helmets are not compulsory, and it is downright dangerous to walk across a road. Even when pedestrian crossings are supplied, no one takes any notice.



Petrol is capped at 70c per litre, but there are not many service stations, so, like many other street stalls, there are wagons on the side of the street selling petrol at 75c per litres. If you pull up, they just decant it into a jug and fill your tank!



We saw many Buddhist Temples and two Catholic cathedrals;. Would like to have visit a Mosque, but it was not considered wise.



We got “whoop whooped” by a police bike



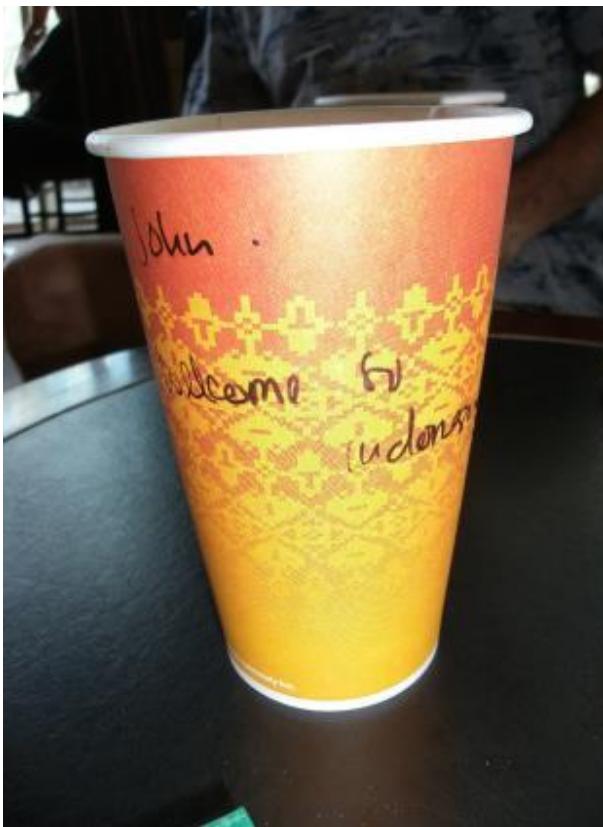
And saw monkeys in the street (just don't feed them please)



Our time came to an end; we had a marathon flight home, Jakarta, Singapore, Brisbane, Cairns. No or little sleep, close to 20 hours in transit. Glad to reach Cairns and terra firma.

Now, on to our next adventure – Cape York!!!

Eating our way around Indonesia (just for something different)



Starbucks Coffee



Restaurant Quality Chicken and Rice, Spring rolls and Chilli



Street Food Stalls



Inevitable noodles with an egg topper



Wedding Party Buffet



Mud crabs ready for the BBQ



A decent coffee, finally at Uncle Ahbets Coffee Shop



Indonesian Breakfast



Western Lunch