

Singapore Slings

We decided to book this holiday via Secret Escapes, the trip was travelling on the Eastern Oriental Express from Bangkok to Singapore with two nights in both cities. The flights were via Dubai – coffee in the Dubai airport £4 a cup; we passed on that and had water.

Outward overnight flight was at 815pm; Airbus A380 with 6 to 700 people on-board, it does take your breathe away when this monster takes off. We settled in and watch a few films, meals etc, had a 10 minute nod the entire trip (about 16 hrs) and arrived in Bangkok early evening next day with trepidation; meaning how vast is this city, plus traffic which was continuous night and day. Our pre-organised transfer took us to Hotel Dusit without delay. The distance to the city centre is similar to Heathrow to central London but they had a four lane motorway albeit tolled, there was a train service if you arrange your own holiday. Although going to this a poor country, we soon woke up to it all, they are poor and live in tin huts with the contrast of the rich, supposedly like us?

So, we're here, out on the town or an early night; which would be sensible however, as we had only one full day we ventured out under the guidance of the Peter and his 'Speedo' friend from the room next door. They said no worries in the city; out of the hotel turn left and you're in the road of the night markets and food stalls, meaning cooking food on the road side, well the abnormity was unreal to us and we didn't return back until midnight.

Next morning 10am we woke up! Hurry otherwise we miss breakfast. Our adventure for the day started by a well planned 'planted' gentleman to catch tourist just leaving the hotel and giving you some advice of the city. "Take the Tuk tuk for 40 barts and he will take you to the river cruise dock, the cruise is 2000 barts; the other boat trips operators are 3000 barts, they will give you an hour trip around the canals and drop you off at the Golden Buddha temple palace". (50 barts is a £). Strangely enough the Tuk Tuk driver was waiting for us 'around the corner'! So for 80 pence we were living the dream! Oh, if your hair was wet it would dry in 5 minutes of high speed travel! Like the Bond films the Tuk tuk went down narrow alleyways weaving in and out of clothes lines and stalls then deposited us at the boat station; and no one chasing us with a gun.

We had the entire 'long boat' to ourselves, one of those with a massive diesel engine mounted high up at the back with a long drive to the prop in the water. We were whisked off at speed in the main river and into the canals until we were stopped by the river traders, "would like to buy a carved elephant, Buddha or buy a beer for the driver", we passed on them, and oh we were given life jackets; no clips to buckle up! However it wouldn't from drowning it would be the poisons in the polluted river.



In the canals of Bangkok



The Temples for worship every 100m

After the river trip we landed at Wat Prakaeo (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) and the Grand Palace, below. Ps I've taken these names off a map and don't ask how to pronounce them.



We now needed an ATM 'cash' to take us on the next Tuk Tuk. To the Zoo which Rob had suggested however, the elephants were on holiday and there compound was habited with yellow necked gyraft but it was JCB! The tigers were also on vacation. Upon return home Rob meant the zoo in Singapore not Bangkok – give it a miss if you ever go to Bangkok! Oh; the Tuk tuk driver didn't have change and was desperate to find someone without letting us out of his sight, and the other 'con' out there is they want you to go to there sponsor en route to have a suit made or buy gold etc – the answer is don't go there. After the zoo we took another Tuk tuk ride to Wat Benchamabophit Temple, then another to Victory Monument WW2.



The final trip was on the Skytrain back to our hotel; with some station food – fruit waffles yummy, we watch the traffic and people go bye. The fare was only 31 barts each, didn't need an Oyster card and only 60 pence! 'Boris'
Had a shower and back out on the streets for food and took a wander around the local park across from our hotel; like central park NY apart from 3 to 400 jogging around

plus 3 aerobics classes in each corner with 300 participants all exercising! It was 34°C and humid, we kept up with them!!

After this we enjoyed the local food but from 'a restaurant', didn't feel we wanted any tummy bugs the next day on the train. We went shopping, plenty of shows on offer!!

Boys and girls type!



View from our hotel (Dusit) the traffic never stopped, the street market down and first left with skytrain overhead. Goodbye Bangkok, go again; yes.

The Eastern Oriental Express! 3pm next day we were picked up from our hotel and taken to the departure lounge at the station, a few drinkies and chatting with fellow passengers we boarded.



This is it

Scenes (their homes) leaving Bangkok from the observation car



We left Bangkok that evening 22 carriages drawn by a diesel, 56 guests onboard plus staff, master chef and entertainers ie the piano man. The train can take 150 so we were a third full.



We headed off on the route towards Burma and the bridge over the River Kwia, we stayed over night in a siding. There is a storey about this river as it's the Mae Klong renamed Kwia! Its complicated meaning is not the actual river; they renamed it since the film. Sir Alex Guinness comes to mind at this point in our lives.

The largely fictional film plot is loosely based on the building in 1943 of one of the railway bridges over the [Mae Klong](#)—renamed [Khwae Yai](#) in the 1960s—at a place called Tha Ma Kham, five kilometres from the [Thai](#) town of [Kanchanaburi](#).

According to the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#):

"The notorious Burma-Siam railway, built by [Commonwealth](#), Dutch and American prisoners of war, was a Japanese project driven by the need for improved communications to support the large Japanese army in Burma. During its construction, approximately 13,000 prisoners of war died and were buried along the railway. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 civilians also died in the course of the project, chiefly forced labour brought from Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, or conscripted in Siam (Thailand) and Burma. Two labour forces, one based in Siam and the other in Burma, worked from opposite ends of the line towards the centre.



We all had a tour on a raft drifting down stream with an excellent explanation of how the Japanese started this war. Below was the plan of attacked basically to secure raw materials for their industries. The attack on Hawaii was on the wrong day due to the International Date Line!



After the museum at Kanchanaburi we visited the war graves of the service men, their bodies were exhumed from the mass burials sites in the jungle where they fell and given this cemetery of remembrance.

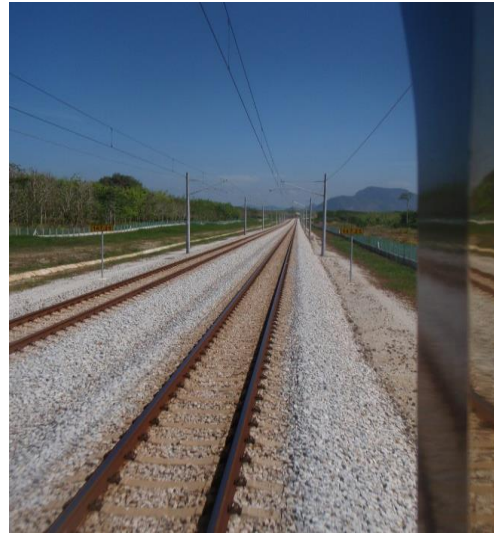


The Orient train carriages have been around for a while and in 1992 they were rebuilt to the splendour we see them today however, the track they run on is 'metre gauge' ie 1000mm between rails, UK and most countries use standard gauge 4'-8 1/2" so with the poor rail tracks in Thailand its not the pleasant sleep you would like; and to be honest not many people had a decent nights sleep the whole journey. If its not the carriages throwing you about it's the air con, but when you get into Malaysia the tracks are new but the train travels on at 65-70 mph, but, the narrow track and the dated boogies (suspension and dampers) don't give you any better ride or sleep. I've

said enough! Make your own judgement but with expensive mouldable ear plugs you maybe ok but the ones they issue are as much use as a chocolate tea pot.



Thailand track



Malaysia track, total travel 1300 miles

The next gripe, wine and sprits yes you expect to pay for the service, the first wine on the list was 197 dollars dropping down to about 40, I thought Singapore dollars but no US\$, so the cheapest wine was £27 a bottle, Gin was 12\$ - £8, glass of wine 11\$ same price as beer, my bar bill was 85us\$. As they don't have any internet it's the roller/carbon copy across your card, a week later and still nothing on my cc account.

The food onboard was excellent through out along with breakfast in bed, couldn't fault it. Ie the style, quality from top class London restaurant.



Pudding



hold on hat, and don't lean out of the window

We had a stop in the afternoon on the third day at Butterworth station then a coach trip over the 8km bridge to the island of Penang where we spent an hour or two in George Town, I heard a familiar sound of Big Ben yes it was mini one with the same chimes, given to George Town by Victoria and Albert, those Beckhams get everywhere! Then a few more Temples and walked around the town. We elected to return on a ferry after a few drinkies in the Eastern and Oriental Hotel as you do.



All the decorations on the roof are constructed from the thousands pots sent from China glazed only on the outside then 'dropped', the pieces are used like mosaics to construct those lions and dragons we see on the roofs, very interesting.



Drinks in the E & O hotel

our chariot at Butterworth station Malaysia

Once back on board we settled into the spirits again with a couple of Singapore slings as our arrival was the next morning in Woodlands, Singapore. En route we passed thro' Kuala Lumpur and had a glimpse of the twin towers lite up at night then stopped in a 'disused station' to refuel with water and diesel. Our Italian, Malaysian, Thai, etc piano man gave us a quick tour of the KL station as we needed to stretch our legs.



Singapore slings



Original V&A post box with new door



Woodlands Station Singapore, 22 carriages

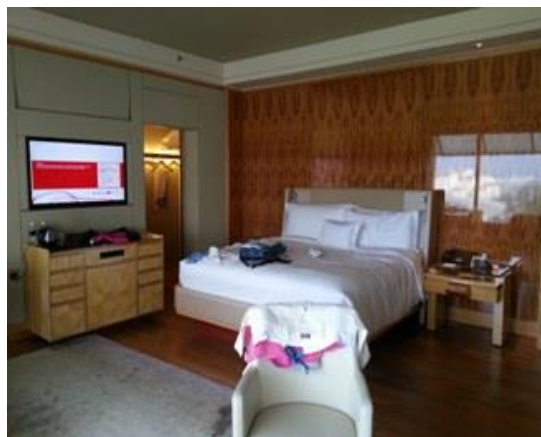


Kuala Lumpur station

Only two passenger trains travel on this Malaysia line, one is us (E&O) the rest is freight!

Bangkok to Singapore, 3 nights with minimalistic sleep and good company came to an end. Eventually our transfer taxi arrived and we had a tour of the island via Orchard Street; which Teresa remembers from 13 years ago as a small shopping centre one side and gardens in bloom on the other, now LV, Prada, and all the usual expensive shoppies for those who indulge, but, the flower beds were still there. The Ritz Carlton hotel, lots of boys and girls at the entrance wishing to assist us and now the reception desk, would up like an upgrade sir; no thank you I said and in the next breath 'sorry Sir and Madam' your room will not be ready until about 3pm; its about now noon! We had an upgrade FOC after a few words! Unknown to us Allen and Jill (on the train with us) were put in a similar position and took an upgrade, I think it was about 90\$ but I had US\$ in my mind when it may have been S\$. are well we got a room.

Our room! bath by the window, bed meant for four, and the room size was larger than Teresa's house, oh, powered blinds for the windows with controls by the bedside, enough said.



I know; but you have to do it now and again. And I have a new sewing kit.

That afternoon we walked around part of the F1 track and a few other waterside paths, 'tested out the lifts and escalators' (being a lift man) in shopping centres, and came back a slipped into that bath!

That evening we walked to Clark Quay for a meal and took in the sights.



Looks like Albert again



Our hotel left in front



Yep they have one too

Unfortunately time was against us so we headed off in the afternoon to Raffles hotel for a famous Singapore sling. Guess who was there; our train partners Allen and Jill so we had couple more slings!

As Allen and Jill had an upgrade room (same as ours) it gave them free use of the restaurant on the top floor and; could invite a guess or two, that evening we all dined together and obviously I drunk too much wine. Next morning we had a 6am early call to catch the flight home, I didn't want any breakfast!!



view from the top



Teresa at the chocolates again! Allen and Jill also caught on camera.

Safe ride home; didn't like the Boeing 777 from SG to DXI but maybe my head had something to do with it. The A380 touched down at Heathrow and we had the quickest airport exit I've ever had, one problem SG 38°C LH 8°C

23-03-15 MG