

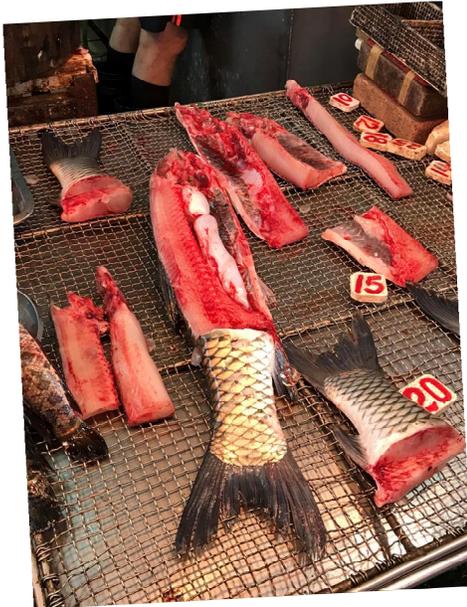
Travel Journal – Hong Kong – October 3-6, 2017

Tuesday, October 3 & Wednesday, October 4: 3-hour flight from Fort Lauderdale to Newark. 3-hour layover. 16-hour flight to Hong Kong. 12-hour time difference. Two days gone. Need I say more?



Thursday, October 5: Full day tour with Bill, a retired Wall Street lawyer disgusted with law and now living in Hong Kong giving tours and taking photos. We rode the Star Ferry across Hong Kong Harbor, visited Buddhist temples, walked through a squatter village, walked around the flower, food and goldfish

markets and had Dim Sum for lunch. They don't believe in refrigeration here, so all the meat and fish is "fresh" and right there in the open. In the US we have dog parks. In Hong Kong they have bird parks, where men take their caged birds, hang them from trees, and talk to them. It's a very Taoist thing to do. That means you have nothing else to do except relax, take it easy and be in harmony with the world. Today was the Mid-



Autumn Holiday. All the domestic workers from Indonesia and the Philippines had the day off, so they head to the streets and literally picnic



ALL DAY *in the streets* and public bridges. That's them lining the public walkways in the photo. We ended the tour by going to the top of Victoria Peak overlooking all of Hong Kong.

Friday, October 6: Skipped the terrific breakfast served in the hotel and went on a morning food tour. We visited six restaurants and ate pineapple

buns (they don't have any pineapple in them but supposedly look like pineapples; you be the judge, I don't see it), rice rolls, tofu custard, dumplings, moon pies and bamboo noodles. The bamboo noodles don't have bamboo in them, but are made by beating the dough with bamboo. We also learned a lot about the local culture, including that some of the very poor elderly people live in cages no larger than a what a large dog would be kept in at a pet shop in the US.



Pineapple Bun

With Love, Lori and Stephen

Travel Journal – Hong Kong – October 7-8, 2017

Saturday, October 7: We didn't have anything pre-planned for today, so we decided to go to Macau, an autonomous region on the south coast of China, across the Pearl River Delta from Hong Kong. A



Portuguese territory for hundreds of years until 1999, it's now famous for its giant casinos. We took the TurboJet, which is neither a turbo nor a jet, but a hydrofoil-type boat that takes about an hour to get to Macau from Hong Kong. It's not quite a *slow boat to China*, but it's not the fastest boat we've been on. We headed for the old town of Macau with a tour guide, Sunny, that found us

at the ship terminal. We toured around for a couple hours before having lunch and heading

back to Hong Kong. At night we had a tour with Bill, the retired Wall Street lawyer, throughout Kowloon. That's



the area across the Hong Kong Harbor from where we were staying. It's the more working-class area of Hong Kong. The tour was marketed to

experience the dark side and underbelly of Hong Kong. The streets were packed full of people and some of the streets were lined with brothels. Check out the sign in the photo on the right advertising the "Manly Comm Bldg." No doubt what's in there.

Sunday, October 8: We again didn't have anything pre-planned for today since we had to board the cruise ship in the afternoon, so we headed to Lantau Island, the largest of Hong Kong's islands which lies at the mouth of the Pearl River. The attraction there is the bronze



Tian Tan Buddha, a 34m-tall statue on a hilltop reached by a 20-minute cable car ride. We climbed a couple hundred stairs to reach the base of the Buddha, walked around, and then returned to downtown Hong Kong to collect our things and boarded our cruise. Tomorrow is a day at sea, so time to relax.

With Love, Lori and Stephen

Travel Journal – Vietnam – October 9-12, 2017

Monday, October 9: So much for relaxing day at sea. The seas were rough with 12-20 foot swells, supposedly remnants of typhoon that passed through here few days ago. I ran on treadmill this morning and spent lots of time bouncing between side supports. The ship is nice. Each suite has butler that does laundry, shines shoes and writes travel journals for guests. We took nap during day since we were so tired from Bonine. Lori had massage and we had terrific dinner in specialty restaurant.

Tuesday, October 10-Hanoi: Arrived in Ha Long, Vietnam this morning and moored in the bay, an area filled with islands rising from the sea. We tendered to shore where we had a private tour guide arranged to take us to Hanoi, the Vietnamese capital and historic city of scenic lakes, tree-lined boulevards and parks, French Colonial architecture, traditional homes, historical monuments and revered temples. Hanoi is a three-hour drive with a huge gift shop located precisely half way where we stopped for shopping and clean restrooms. After making our obligatory tourist purchases of local artwork we proceeded to Hanoi where we arrived in time for lunch. We ate at a local Pho restaurant made famous by Anthony Bordain in his Hanoi episode where he had lunch with Barak Obama. After lunch we toured the city, stopping at the Hoa Lo Prison, more infamously known as the Hanoi Hilton, where American pilots, including John McCain and Pete Peterson, were held as POWs during the war. We drove around the French Quarter and Old Town sections without getting out of the van since it was raining, and ended with High Tea at the 5-star Metropole Hotel. The most fascinating part of our visit to Hanoi was the driving. The streets have no lanes, no traffic lights, and no stop or yield signs, so cars are on both sides going in every direction, all while dodging motorcycles and scooters that are also coming from every direction. Every second is a game of chicken, and our driver played the game well. Amazingly, accidents are very rare, as everyone understands the rule that there are no rules.



Wednesday, October 11-Ha Long Bay: Today we took a Junk Boat tour of Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that ranks among Vietnam's most celebrated attractions due to panoramic vistas of fragmented limestone outcroppings, sheer cliffs, huge rock arches and picturesque coves and islets. This turned out to be a water-sport for us, as the rain was so bad at one point the harbor-master shut down boat traffic in



the bay because it was raining so hard. It eventually let up and we continued the cruise around the area that includes over 2,400 islands.



Thursday, October 12-Hoi An and Danang: Today we were those tourists that get off the big coach bus, spend a few hours in a place, then get back on the bus and head back to our ship. From the port of Chan May we travelled by coach to Hoi An, a 300-year old picturesque river town that has remained

unchanged since its heyday as an important trading port in southeast Asia. What has changed is the addition of throngs of tourists and the shops that sell all the crap they like to buy. We walked around this UNESCO World Heritage Site in the morning, went to lunch at a tourist restaurant featuring a Vietnamese food buffet, then continued to Danang on the



way back to the ship. Danang is a “developed” city that attracts a lot of tourists from undeveloped countries including China and Korea. It’s the



location of China Beach where American troops first landed for the Vietnam war. We visited the Hindu Museum which displays sculptures of the Cham people of Vietnam. Tomorrow is a day at sea as we head to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon.

With Love, Lori and Stephen

Travel Journal – Vietnam – October 13-16, 2017

Friday, October 13: Today we had a full day at sea without any port stops. So we ate all day aboard the ship.

Saturday, October 14: We arrived in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, this morning and had a full-day private tour with Long. We met two guys named Long today, and both introduced themselves as “Hi, I’m Long, but I’m not very tall.” Must be a common name and a standard height. Ho Chi Minh City is a super-



charged city of sensory overload, with over 5,000,000 motor scooters in use. Still called Saigon by most residents, this is Vietnam's

largest city and the engine driving the country's current economic resurgence. Construction is happening all over Saigon, with modern office and apartment buildings going up everywhere you look. The city still has its ornate opera



house and its old French city hall. The broad colonial boulevards leading to the Saigon River are other remnants of the French colonial presence. The Chinese influence on the country is still very much in evidence in the various pagodas we visited as well as in the city's Chinatown. Nevertheless, the modern office towers and international hotels that mark the

skyline symbolize Vietnam's fixation on the future. We visited many places including the Reunification Palace, previous headquarters of the South Vietnamese government before surrendering to the North; a Lacquer Factory where we made our obligatory purchases of local handicrafts; the main Post Office which for some unknown reason to us is high on the list of sites to see in Saigon; the War Remembrance Museum, where the government of the winning side of the war presents their version of history which is decidedly anti-American and in contrast to the feelings of the general public; a couple of Chinese pagodas with live monks praying and incense burning; and a Banh Mi shop that makes sandwiches from French baguettes and numerous mysterious meats, including “mostly pork” and possibly dogs, horses and monkeys. Andy and Steve had a couple bites each, then



decided we didn't need to finish the sandwich just because we spent \$1.80 on it.

Sunday, October 15: We left Ho Chi Minh City and Vietnam after a morning visit to a Saigon Artist Village. The village is situated on a place of land on the Saigon River, bought for \$6,000 twenty years ago. Today the land is worth about \$6 million. My guess is that the artist village won't be there long term.

Monday, October 16: Another full day at sea as we head to Bangkok, Thailand for three days and a visit with Jerry, Maxine and Joshua.

With Love, Lori and Stephen

Travel Journal – Thailand – October 17-19, 2017

Tuesday, October 17: Arrived in Bangkok this morning and had a full-day tour before meeting up with Maxine and Jerry for dinner at a rooftop restaurant overlooking both sides of the Chao Phraya River.

Bangkok is a mesmerizing blend of old and new, East and West, and dizzying contradictions. Temples and red-light districts, languid canals and permanent gridlock, streetside vendors and chic upscale eateries, all make their home together, all at the same time. We visited various wats (temples) and saw Buddha statues in every imaginable pose. We walked around Bangkok's Chinatown and checked out the sprawling labyrinthine Flower Market after eating silkworms sold on the sidewalk. We took in a show at the Queen Saowapha Snake



Farm where we watched in disbelief as the staff handled cobras and other venomous snakes found in Thailand. Then we visited the Jim Thompson House to learn all about the famed Thai silk industry. It

was a full day, even by our standards. The entire country is preparing for King #9's cremation next week on October 26. He passed away last year and the year of mourning is coming to a close. The Thai people can soon put their black clothes away and dress in something a little cooler for the hot, muggy weather.



Wednesday, October 18: Today we took a River Cruise on the Chao Phraya River and visited the Royal Barge Museum in the morning. The "cruise" part of the "River Cruise" description is a little misleading, as the boat was hardly seaworthy and the black smoke bellowing out of the engine compartment had me convinced that the tour would be cut short due to us needing to be towed in. We completed the group tour after losing two of the people in the group on another walk through the Flower Market, then met Maxine for lunch in Jerry's office building complex.



After a complete tour of Philip Morris Thailand and singing Happy Birthday (Thai-style) to one of his employees, we went back to Jerry and Maxine's apartment for Thai appetizers prepared by their housekeeper/cook, all in preparation for a food tour in Chinatown. The appetizers were a mistake, not because they weren't delicious, but how much food can one eat in a day? We found out after stops at seven restaurants on the food tour. Again, "restaurants" is a little misleading, because most of the stops were at stalls on the side of the road, famously known as "Bangkok Street Food."



Thursday, October 19: This morning we took a scenic drive to Damnern Saduak, where we boarded a James Bond boat (a large canoe with a motor on the back highjacked by 007 in one of the movies) to cruise along narrow canals to visit the Floating Market where we ate the best coconut pancakes in



Thailand. Then we went to the Maeklong Railway Market, a market that actually sits upon train tracks. As the train approaches five times a day to bring villagers to the market, the vendors clear the tracks to allow the train to

pass. After the train clears the station, the market spreads itself back onto the tracks. We rode the hot train back to the other end of the line, where our awaiting van took us back to the ship in air-conditioned comfort. We left Bangkok this afternoon and will visit Koh Samui, Thailand tomorrow where we have an Elephant Trek & Temple Visit planned.

With Love, Lori and Stephen



Travel Journal – Koh Samui, Thailand & Singapore – October 20-25, 2017

Friday, October 20: Arrived in Koh Samui, Thailand, a popular tourist destination, this morning. Koh Samui has gorgeous beaches, perfect weather (if you like it hot and muggy), and sparkling blue waters and is best appreciated by those who take a slower, more casual approach. However, our cruise was only there for 8 hours, so we couldn't appreciate much. After tendering ashore we managed to cram in a



Debi with an excited monkey on her head.

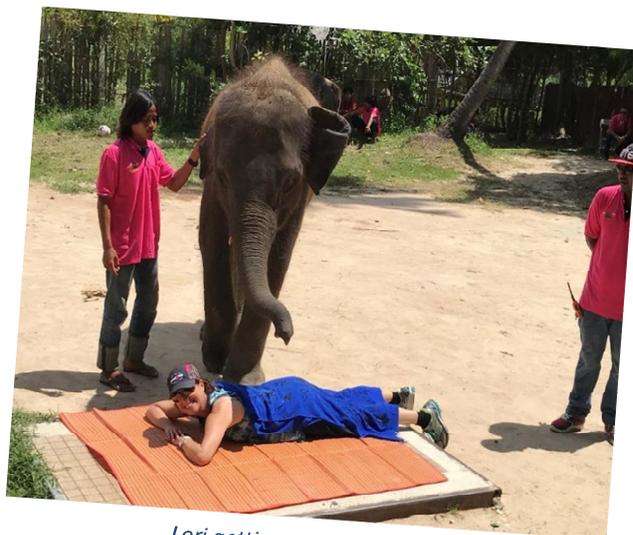
trek atop an elephant; a demonstration of how they get monkeys to pick coconuts in Thailand; a show with elephants dancing, spinning rings on their trunks, playing harmonicas, playing soccer and giving massages (Lori got one); a quick Thai papaya salad cooking lesson in a hot room with a broken air conditioner (apparently not unusual in Thailand); and a visit to the Big Buddha Temple which used to be a place for meditation. Now that there's a causeway to the temple and an airport nearby with flight patterns directly overhead, the area has become a popular tourist market and not much meditation happening.

The only prayers are from vendors praying for more

cruise ships to come calling.

We left Koh Samui around 4pm for another day at sea tomorrow.

Saturday, October 21: Our last day at sea. Another day. Another five or so meals.



Lori getting massage.

Sunday, October 22: Arrived and docked in Singapore this morning. Singapore is a sovereign city-state that lies one degree north of the equator. That means it's hot, all the time. It's a global commerce, finance and transport hub and has some of the best architecture I've ever seen. After walking around the well



air-conditioned shopping mall attached to the hotel and cooling off for about an hour, we were picked up at noon for a Food Tour and Neighborhood Walk around Chinatown. Back in 1972 Singapore did away with all the street food stalls typical in other Chinatown neighborhoods in Southeast Asia and located them all in Hawker Centers where they could regulate for proper hygiene. Couldn't have all the visitors getting sick from street food if you want to become a major tourist center. We had at least a

dozen different dishes and washed them down with beer. Lots of beer. They drink a lot of beer in Singapore, or at least on this particular food tour. At night we walked around Gardens by the Bay. We visited the Cloud Forest, which contains lush vegetation of the tropical highlands and a tall waterfall in a soaring, contemporary greenhouse, and watched a light & sound show in their Supertree grove. After that we had dinner at Marina Bay Sands, a huge hotel/casino/shopping complex built about six years ago.

Monday, October 23: Started off the day with a bike tour around Singapore. After that we walked around Orchard Road, the main high-end shopping area in Singapore, trying to stay in air conditioned stores as much as possible. After that we walked around the Muslim area of Singapore on Haji Lane and Arab Street. Appropriate names for these streets.

Tuesday, October 24: Went to the ArtScience Museum housed in a building resembling a lotus flower. Then we went to the top of the Marina Bay Sands to the bar overlooking the city and overpaid for drinks and snacks, but didn't have to pay the observation deck entry fee. It would probably had been cheaper to just pay for the observation deck. It was a bit hazy, as usual in hot and muggy weather, but the view was great. Then we went back to Orchard Road and Chinatown, where we shopped and bought another suitcase to bring all the shit we bought home in. Dinner at Palm Beach restaurant for their famous Chili Crab. Traveled all the way to



Singapore to eat in restaurant named Palm Beach.

Wednesday, October 25: It's the last day of our trip, ending in Singapore. We're flying out tonight with a change of planes in Dubai at 3am local time. Total flight time is about 25 hours. That should be fun. Probably just hanging out today, but wanted to get this out before I left. Looking forward to seeing you all when we get back. Thanks for following our trip if you were bored enough to read all the journals.

With Love, Lori and Stephen

