**Southeast Asia Trip**

I had been looking at this trip for a couple of years. The original plan was to take a 10-day trip from Singapore to various countries in the area. I was going to go last year but I waited too long and it was sold out for the desirable period during the annual plant shutdown at Northrop-Grumman. This is an area that we wanted to visit since there are several interesting countries and cultures there. We ended up taking the 13-night cruise from Singapore on the Sapphire Princess and then flying around Indonesia.

I have been interested recently in becoming a member of the Traveler’s Century Club, a group where the criteria is visiting 100 of the countries or areas on their list of 340 places. This list is not the same as the members of the United Nations. From that list, we visited nine of them: Taiwan, Singapore, Sabah in Borneo (province of Malaysia), Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia islands of Sumatra, Java, and Kalimantan in Borneo. We were unable to visit Cambodia, Laos, Brunei, and Sarawak.

The air trip there was on EVA airlines, so we stopped to change planes in Taiwan (that counts!), on the way to Singapore. I thought that Singapore looked like the most modern city in the world. The street vendor mango was the best that I have ever had. The city is famous for the variety and quality of “hawkers” selling street food. The climate in this region is decidedly tropical since it is very close to the equator. The botanical garden had a large variety of colorful tropical flowers, especially orchids.

The Sapphire Princess cruise had stops in Kota Kinabalu, Nha Trang (tender), Ho Chi Minh City (port), Bangkok (port), Ko Samui (tender), Singapore, Penang, Kuala Lumpur (port), and back to Singapore. We then took the ferry to Batam Island, flew to Jakarta for 2 days, then to Pangkalan Bun. We were met at the airport by the Borneo Ecotours. They provided a 5-star super deluxe houseboat trip just for us to the rivers of Tanjing Puting National Park. There were several orangutan feeding platforms. We saw 30 orangutan, 60 proboscis monkey, 5 gray monkey, gibbon, bat, beetle, bird, boar, butterfly.

On the map of Borneo, it should have been reasonable to go to Kuching in Sarawak from Pangkalan Bun. However, the roads are poor, rain is an obstacle, and it did not make any sense to fly to Kuching and back via Singapore. It was even more difficult to get to Brunei. The recommended route is a double ferry from Kota Kinabalu, and then air to Kuala Lumpur. No method was good, so I gave up and just flew back to Jakarta and then back to Singapore for the return flight through Taiwan to Los Angeles.