

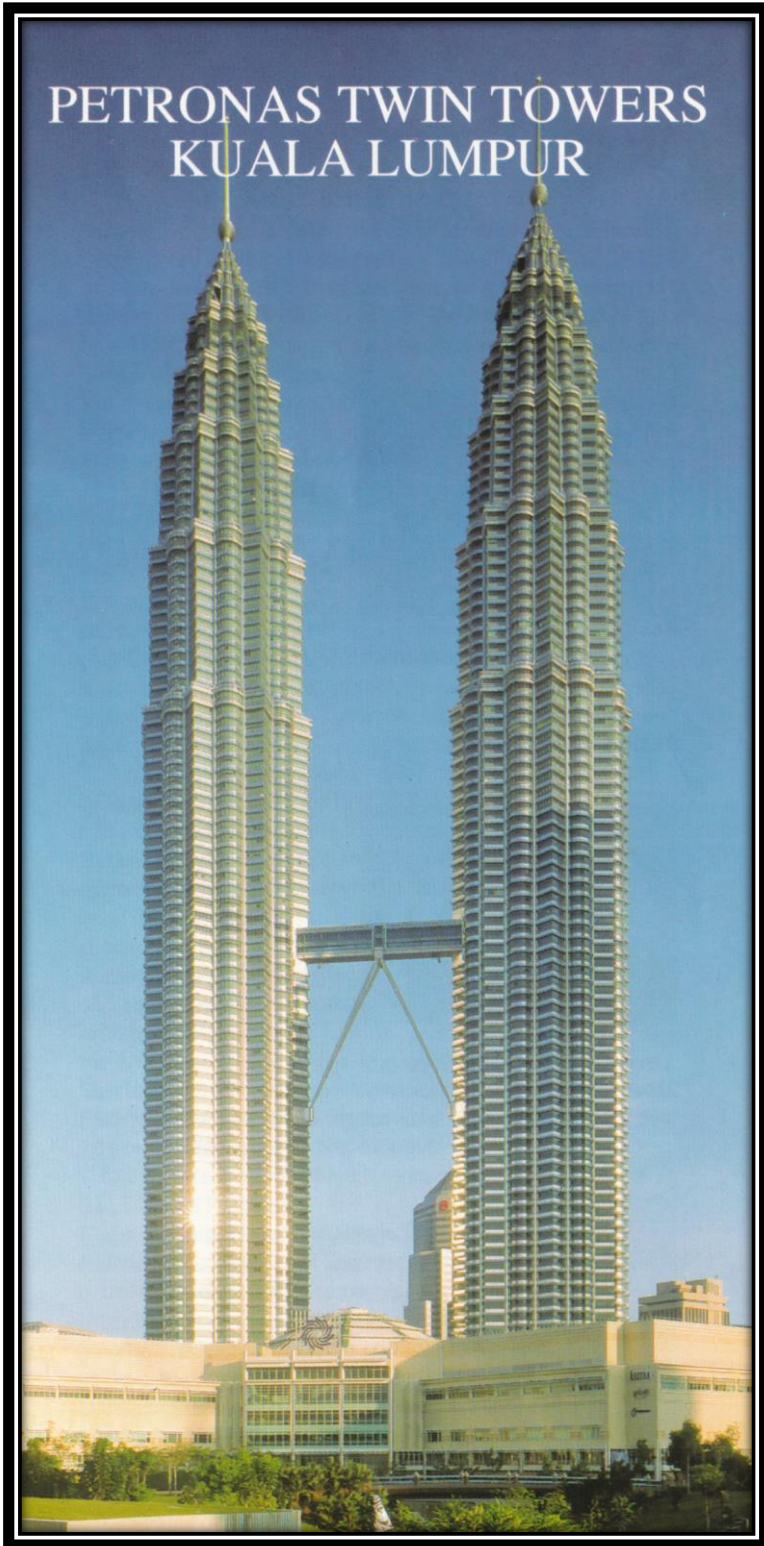
A RECORD OF  
MY MALAYSIAN TOUR

20 SEPTEMBER – 24 OCTOBER 1991

A VISIT TO THE LAND OF THE SAFFRON SUN AND MOON

MARK SMITH

PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS  
KUALA LUMPUR



**DEDICATED TO:**

**Ramlin Bin Hashim**

**Wan Mahniwati Z.A**

**Wan Abdul Samad**

**Khazari Bin Mohamad Zain**

**And**

**Sarizan**

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# PART I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Planning the Trip**

In planning my trip to Malaysia I decided from the outset that I would buy a tour guide and keep a daily diary. I am glad I did because this enabled me to proceed in an organised manner through a country which has such a range of eye-opening experiences that it would be impossible to remember them all without such assistance. My photographic record and my diary have enabled me to treasure a memorable set of experiences. The diary and the photographs have formed the basis of these notes. The list of additional references has enabled me to put some flesh on the bare bones and given me enough information to savour the experiences into old-age.

### **Organisation of the Record**

The Table of Contents outlines the organisation of my holiday record. It can be seen that I have departed from a simple chronological treatment of my visit. I have opted to treat the material on an ethnic basis rather than on a geographical basis. Partly, this is because ethnicity assumes such a dominating influence on everything a visitor sees and experiences in Malaysia. Again, ethnicity and religion are almost co-extensive terms and both are extremely important in this amalgam of many cultures. I hesitate to describe Malaysia as a multi-cultural nation. It is 'many-cultural' rather than 'multi-cultural'. The unity and harmony that the government seeks to foster cannot paper-over the divisions that are apparent to a fly-by-night visitor. Malaysia is ruled largely by Malays and almost all Malays have been converted to Islam. In effect the power of Islam controls Malaysia even though the Malays are not yet 50% of the population. Islam is the state religion of Malaysia in much the same way as Anglicanism is the state religion of the United Kingdom. Both religions are tolerant but nevertheless they are the ultimate source of political power.

### **Highlights of Trip**

Naturally it is impossible to rank the most outstanding experiences but I think it still is worthwhile to list some of those that linger longer in my memory:

- The dynamism and beauty of Kuala Lumpur '
- The British colonial legacy of Penang and its amazing cultural mix
- The warm and friendly hospitality of Ramlih Bin Hashim and his family
- The central Padang at Alor Setar
- The romantic beauty of Kuching with its legacy of the three white rajahs
- The decaying history of Malacca and the spectacular sight and sound display
- The Cultural Village at Durmai in Sarawak
- The pleasant ferry trip to the Langkawi Islands
- The Deepavali Festival in Penang
- The Festival of the Nine Emperor Gods in Chinese Taiping



- The splendour and grandeur of the Blue Mosque in Shah Alain Selanger
- The excursion into the Cameron Highlands.

To these experiences I could also add those highlights of my side trips into Thailand and Sumatra:

- A revisit to the Grand Palace in Bangkok
- Two visits to Wat Arun, the Temple of Dawn in Bangkok
- A visit to Pra Nakhorn Khiri in Petchaburi, Thailand
- The 5-day tour in Northern Sumatra and an introduction to the Batak Culture on Samosir Island, Lake Toba.

### **Surviving the Haze**

My visit to Malaysia coincided with one of the worst smoke hazes experienced in that part of the world. It affected visibility and detracted from the splendour of many of the panoramic vistas. This was especially true of Lage Toba and Penang, It gave a saffron hue to the sun and moon and hence my title:

*'A Visit to the Land of the Saffron Sun and Moon'*.



Picture Perfect: The haze makes a beautiful picture as shown by these shimmering lights on the Federal Highway last night. Street lights beating on dust particles generated a spectrum of colours, enriched by the tail and headlights of passing vehicles. The night scene is certainly more interesting than the drab days that the country has been enduring since the haze started.

NST picture by Goh Seng Chong.

## Glossary of Terms

There are important and subtle differences in meaning in the terms used in this record of tour through Malaysia. It is important to get these differences sorted out from the outset.

1. **Malay:** a descendant of a mongoloid people (the Proto-Malays) who migrated from S.W. China between 250 B.C. Later arrivals to S.E. Asia are known as Deutero-Malays who combined with their earlier cousins to produce the ancestors of the present Malays.
2. **Malayu:** favoured geographical area in Djambi, Central Sumatra, of the migratory Malays who spread throughout Indonesia and peninsular Malaya and through to the Philippines.
3. **Malaya:** the peninsula above Sumatra on the mainland of S.E. Asia. It eventually became a Federation of States (1948).
4. **Malaysia:** the federation of the eleven peninsula states and the two states of Sarawak and Sabah in Borneo. This federation was formed on 31 August 1963 and originally included Singapore (until 9 August 1965).

Thus a Malay is a person who identifies himself or herself as one of a decided ethnic origin Malays can be located in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines or in any part of the world for that matter. If they live in present day Malaysia (a political entity) they may call themselves Malaysians but usually prefer to be known as "Bumi putra" or "sons of the soil".

5. **Malaysians:** citizens of Malaysia and comprise people of diverse ethnic origins.

## **Ethnic Composition of Present Day Malaysia:**

### **Ethnic Group with Percentage of Total**

- 1. Malays 46.8**
- 2. Chinese 34.1**
- 3. Indians 9.0**
- 4. Qrang Asli**
  - (i) the Senoi - (Teniar, Semat, Semok, Beri, Che Wong, Jah Hut, Mah Meri)
  - (ii) the Pro-Malays or Orange Melayu - Asli - (Temuan, Semelai, Temak; Jakun, Orang Laut)
  - (iii) the Negrito - (Kensiu, Kintak, Jahai, Lanoh, Madrik, Batek)
- 5. Dyak (Sarawak) 3.7**

(includes Iban and Bidayuh, the Melanau, the Orang Ulu, the Punams and Penams, Kayan and Keriyah, the Kajang, the Kelabit. the Lun Bawang and Bisaya)
- 6. Kadazans (Sabah) 1.8**

(Includes Muruta, the Bajau, the Rungus, Bisaya, Suluk, Lundayeh and Kedayan).

## **PART 2**

### **TOUR OVERVIEW**

#### **Malaysia, Thailand and Sumatra Indonesia**

My main purpose of the trip was to tour Malaysia but in my pre-planning and prereading I thought it wise to allow for other eventualities. I knew that a visit to Myanmar (Burma) could be obtained in Bangkok and I knew that it was not difficult to fly to Sumatra from Penang. Accordingly I took notes on the Burmese and studied the Batak people of North Sumatra and the Menangkabau people of West Sumatra just in case I could squeeze in a visit. I had also heard about the "Discover Malaysia Pass" which had some attractive features about it including a 50 per cent concessional airfare to Borneo. As it turned out I was not able to include a visit to Myanmar (Burma) or to West Sumatra.

In summary, my trip had 7 sections:

1. Peninsular Malaysia
2. Thailand
3. Peninsular Malaysia
4. Sumatra (Indonesia)
5. Peninsular Malaysia
6. Sarawak (East Malaysia)
7. Peninsular Malaysia

I actually visited three countries and, oddly enough, I visited Penang on four separate occasions!

## Daily Travel Record

DATE		NOTES	ACCOMODATION
20 Sept '91	Fri	Darwin - Kuala Lumpur	Equatorial
21	Sat	Kuala Lumpur Batu Caves Selangor Club	Kok Too
22	Sun	Kuala Lumpur - Penang Jame Mosque Gardens Carcosa Negara Museum Bridge Deepavali	Wan's home
23	Mon	Penang - Bangkok	Indira Regent
24	Tues	Bangkok Skyway's Wat Arun Cosmo - Thai	Indira Regent
25	Wed	Bangkok - Hue Hin Grand Palace, Ratchaburi	Sai Lom
26	Thurs	Hua Hin - Bangkok Water Gardens Petchaburi Nakhon Pathum	Don Inn Motel
27	Fri	Bangkok - Penang via Phuket	Metropole
28	Sat	Penang - Butterworth Georgetown	Metropole
29	Sun	Penang - Kedah - Kuala Perlis	Ismail's home
30	Mon	Kuala Perlis - Langkawi - Kedah	"Gunnang Keriong"
1 Oct '91	Tues	Kedah - Penang Revolving Restaurant	Metropole
2	Wed	Penang - Medan - Samosir Island	Duma Sari
3	Thurs	Samosir - Honeymoon Island - Simanido - Ambarita - Tomok - Parapat	Niagara Hotel

19 Oct '91	Sat	Kuala Lumpur	Griffiths
4 Oct '91	Fri	Parapat - Simajanjung - Pematong Purba - Brestagi Hotel	Rose Garden
5	Sat	Brestagi - Medan	Hotel Polonie
20	Sun	Kuala Lumpur	
6	Sun	Medan - Penang	Lee's home Equatorial hotel
21	Mon	Kuala Lumpur - Malacca	
7	Mon	Penang State Mosque Botanical Gardens Snake Temple Kek Lok Si	Lee's home  Penang Hill Hotel
23	Wed	Kuala Lumpur	Griffiths
8	Tues	Penang - Kota Bahru	Temanggong
9	Wed	Kota Bahru Kampong Kraftanagan Saban Museum Primary School	Temanggong
10	Thurs	Kota Bahru - Teranggunu - Causeway Inn Johor Bahru	
11	Fri	Johor Bahru - Kuching	Borneo Hotel
12	Sat	Kuching Fort Margherita Astana Museum	Borneo Hotel
13	Sun	Kuching Cultural Village	Borneo Hotel
14	Mon	Kuching - Johor Bahru - Kuala Lumpur - Ipoh	The Mikado
15	Tues	Ipoh - Taiping - Kuala Kangsar - Ipoh	The Mikado
16	Wed	Ipoh - Kampar - Tapah - Tanah Rata - Ipoh	The Mikado
17	Thurs	Ipoh - Kuala Lumpur	Griffiths
18	Fri	Kuala Lumpur International School Zoo	Griffiths

19 Oct '91	Sat	Kuala Lumpur Phean Hou Art Gallery Shah Alam Museum National Mosque	Griffiths
20	Sun	Kuala Lumpur Genting Highlands	Griffiths
21	Mon	Kuala Lumpur - Malacca	Palace Hotel
22	Tues	Malacca - Seremban	Hotel Milo
23	Wed	Seremban - Kuala Lumpur	Griffiths
24	Thurs	Kuala Lumpur - Darwin	Home

### **Cities and Towns of Peninsular Malaysia Visited**

It is worth repeating that it would have been impossible to accomplish as much as I did, particularly in the time and money at my disposal, were it not for the "Discover Malaysia Airline Pass" and the fact that I travelled alone.

### **Some Facts and Figures**

(i) Mode of Transport

During the trip I was fortunate to undertake travel using a range of transport facilities:

- Airplane (I had no less than 13 separate plane flights)
- Train (Kuala Lumpur to Butterworth with Keretapi Tanah Melayu)
- Ferry (Penang - Butterworth and Kuala Perils Langkawi Island and Lake Toba)
- Express Buses and Tour Coach
- Local Buses
- Taxis
- Private Cars
- Motor Bike
- Funicular Railway (Penang Hill)
- Trishaws
- Canoes

(ii) Distance Travelled

I have estimated that during the 35 days of my trip I travelled approximately 15,000 kms. This includes the flights to and from Darwin. I visited three countries and 12 of the 13 states of Malaysia. I did not go to Sabah.

(iii) States of Malaysia Visited

<b>State</b>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Other Cities Visited</b>
Federal Territory (Wilayah Persekutan)	Kuala Lumpur	
1. Selangor	Shah Akim	Petaling Jaya
2. Malacca (Melaka)	Malacca	
3. Negeri Sembilan	Seremban	
4. Johor	Johor Bahru	
5. Perak	Ipoh	Kuala Kangsar, Taiping, Tapah
6. Pahang	Kuaritan *	Cameron Highlands Ringlet, Tanah Rata) Genting Highlands
7. Penang	Georgetown	Butterworth
8. Kedah	Alor Setar	Langkawi Islands
9. Perils	Kangar	Kuala Perils
10. Kelantan Kota Bharu		
11. Terengganu	Kuala Terengganu	
<b>East Malaysia in Borneo</b>		
12. Sarawak Kuching		
13. Sabah *	Kota Kinabalu *	

(\* Did not visit)

(iv) **Highest Peak**

On the Peninsula Gunung Tahan (2190m or 7184ft) is the highest peak.

(v) **Rivers**

The three largest rivers are the Perak, the Pahang and Kelantan.

(vi) **Flora**

Malaysia's national flower is the hibiscus or "Bunga Raya". The morning glory, yellow allamanda, bougainvillea, tulip tree, yellow flame tree and the world's largest flower, the rafflesia, form part of Malaysia's interesting flora. There are 1500 species of orchids and 26 types of rhododendrons, 60 types of oak and chestnuts as well as 80 species of fig trees.



(vii) **Fauna**

Animal life abounds in remote jungle areas and includes tigers, leopards, elephants, bears, tapirs, deer, oxen buffalo, rhinoceros, crocodiles, squirrels, and a now rare orangutan. Monkeys and gibbons, flying lemurs and a wide variety of snakes and pythons inhabit the jungle forests. There are over 450 species of birds in Malaysia including several kinds of kingfishers, hornbills, eagles, warblers, bulbuls, sunbirds and black eyes. The sale of edible birds' nests of the swiftlets of East Malaysia is a lucrative business. There are some 150,000 species of insects in Malaysia including some much sought-after butterflies. Fish is part of the staple diet and an excellent aquarium at the National Zoo in Kuala Lumpur displays a wide variety of edible and exotic species.

(viii) **Economy**

About half the workers of Malaysia work in one form of agriculture. Major farm products include coconut oil, copra (dried coconut flesh), palm oil, pepper, pineapples, rice and rubber. Malaysia produces almost half of the world's natural rubber and almost one third of its tin. Iron ore and timber are important primary products. Terengganu have brought wealth to the eastern seaboard. Fishing is a major industry. A visit to the tea plantations of the Cameron Highlands is almost compulsory for the tourist.

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