

Indonesia SW Florida Friendship Force Journey

Tues Mar 26 2019. We traveled from Florida to San Francisco to Singapore. We hopped on a shuttle to our Ramada Hotel near the airport. Eleven of us spent the night and headed to SFO in the a.m. Our group departed SFO around 10 am, arrived Singapore 17 hours later – 6 pm local time the next day (having crossed the International Date Line). We were tucked into our hotel bed by 10:30 pm and ready for a good night's sleep (although many slept on the plane). Our flight followed The Great Circle Route, which took us over Alaska's Aleutian Chain, continued southwest and skirted the southeast coast of Japan! Upon arrival in Singapore, we picked up our baggage, and met the shuttle operator, who took our group to the Oasia Hotel Downtown at 100 Peck Seah Street. <https://www.oasiahotels.com/en/singapore/hotels/oasia-hotel-downtown> The 13 of us rested at the gorgeous hotel with its 'green' exterior. Temp was about 90 with extremely high humidity. Summer in Florida!

Fri, Mar 29, Singapore is an amazing city! Bright lights, gorgeous gardens, wonderful people! The first day some of us walked to the Marina Bay Area to explore the iconic Sands Hotel owned by the Las Vegas Sands Corp. This is an iconic structure consisting of three very tall, multi-storied, towers with a long boat appearing to sit on top of the three towers. The boat contains an infinity pool, palm trees, bars and restaurants. What an engineering marvel! Then we moved on to see the super trees in the Botanical Garden by the Bay! Breathtaking! We entered the Merlion Park where we were greeted by a Merlion. The Merlion is a sculpture with the body of a fish and the head of a lion. It is the national symbol of Singapore. The afternoon was the Buffalo City Tour. Our shuttle passed the Civic District, the Padang, Cricket Club, historic Parliament House and the National Gallery Singapore which consists of the former Supreme Court and City Hall. We stopped at the Thian Hock Ken Buddhist Temple before driving past Chinatown, Little India and the National Orchid Gardens in the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Singapore Botanic Gardens!

Sun, 31 March. Time to say goodbye to Singapore with a great breakfast buffet. Our shuttle took us to Changi airport at 11:45 for flight to Jakarta, Indonesia. We wandered outdoors after final packing and stopped in the pool area on 27th floor. This is quite a gorgeous and luxury hotel. We had a quick flight to Jakarta and shuttle took us to the Bandara Intl Hotel near the airport. Not fancy but had a great buffet, a beautiful pool and very nice views from our rooms. We had a nice sleep at the hotel.

Mon, 1 Apr. Tom (Poedyo) Wigny, president of the club and host coordinator, gave a wonderful presentation and we all felt very welcomed. Tom spoke very good English as he had been an English translator for Chevron; some members were English teachers and were very enjoyable to listen to. We took lots of pictures and ate lots of food. Temps were very hot. The fans helped. Of course, we had mosque music going on thru out the night, who can forget that? Another adventure! Tom warned us to bring earplugs. The call to prayers started with dueling mosques at 3:30 am!

Home Hosts: Terri, Stan, Susan, Cathy & Bev with Poedyo Oetomo (Tom); Carol & Chris with Wiwiek Astuti & Totok Afiato; Jack & Jo with Endang Wigati & Gatot Kartono; Michelle & Marcia

with Bambang Guritno and Rien Samudayati; Lisa & Nancy with (Avin) Khoirul Nadir & Khotibah (O'ot)

Mon, 1 April, On drive from airport, we passed fields of nearly mature sugar cane and small villages. The roads were mostly two-lane and crowded with cars, trucks and motor scooters. Most of the residential and commercial development was third-world style, with small buildings close together. Tom's guest facility was different. It included acreage with great number of fruit trees and animals. He was a gentleman farmer in retirement. There was a large porch on the guest house that was probably 15 x 60 feet. There were 30 members of the local Friendship Force club waiting to greet us with great enthusiasm. The local club had assembled another huge cornucopia of local delicacies, desserts and fruits for us. But first there was the welcoming program where the organizers were introduced.

Tue, 2 Apr, Today was a very busy day. We had breakfast with our host at his home on the open air porch. Five of us were hosted by Poedyo Oetomo (Tom). We had another guest every morning, a turkey that like to hear himself and a rooster that liked for us all to hear him. Also at 3:30 am the loud speakers began calling the people to pray. This sound could be heard all over the valley.

Our hosts drove us to the downtown Malang Town Square (Alun Alun Kota), where we visited the Tugu Monument built in 1946 and City Hall, both of which were imposing colonial structures from the period of British rule. We stopped in park to see children having lunch. Next we stopped Eng Ang Kiong Temple. From the temple, we visited the Kampung Warna Wani, which had been a slum. The buildings were run down, unpainted and in a state of disrepair. A college student had the bright idea of painting the buildings bright colors. He contacted a local paint company and got them to donate the paint. After painting, the residents gained more self-esteem, and did a better job of maintaining their neighborhood.. This allowed us to look up and down the river, and photograph the multicolored buildings, many of which had interesting murals painted on them. It was a steep climb back to the main road, but we made it!

We had lunch at a nice dining hall with many antiques on the walls. The antiques included typewriters, sewing machines, sad irons and early 16 mm movies projectors.

Thur, 4 Apr, Today was a special day with a trip to the Batu Secret Zoo in Batu City, East Java with orphans and students of Desa Inggris, the English school.

<https://jtp.id/batusecretzoo/?lang=ING> When we arrived at the zoo, we were met by Ani, one of the teachers from the Desa Inggris school. She was accompanied by her students who ranged from 5-10 years of age. A student was assigned to each person in our Friendship Force group.. It was a great zoo and the kids were so sweet!

We visited a small plant nursery- where the owner was creating pots from coconut fibers for an organic feel in pots. She showed us how to make them and gave us one.

Fri, 5 Apr. After enjoying our special breakfast at the De Dauna guesthouse, we walked around the corner to a local man's dried fruit and vegetable business. We bought some snacks and

tried his products, very tasty. We traveled to a museum that explained the origins of the city of Malang. Then we visited a market center where small business owners were selling wares. For fun we did the pedicabs ride to the restaurant and we had a great meal! In the evening half of us went to hear Tom and his band play, and the other half went to attend a wedding reception with Sis. That was an awesome experience!!!

Sat, 6 Apr, This was our last day with Malang club. We breakfasted with our hosts and then traveled to the farewell party at the Juliette Beach restaurant and event venue. It was another wonderful Indonesian meal. Jack and Jo both were at a doctor and unable to make it. We had a wonderful program by 2 young ladies (Tom's granddaughter and her friend). They did the eagle dance. From the farewell we headed home to finish our packing for our trip to our next homestay.

Sun, 7 Apr, our Malang hosts drove us to the Abdul Rachman Saleh Airport Malang to take the Garuda flight to Jakarta and then another Garuda flight to Banjarmasin. We arrived about 6 pm and the FF Banjarmasin club was there to meet us. We went on to the welcome party. We ate a quick, early dinner and then headed to our hosts homes.

Home Hosts: Susan & Cathy with Yanti & Moses; Bev with Aida Musilmah & Rosehan; Lisa & Nancy with Noor Hasanah; Michelle & Marcia with Darwin & Poppy Noviana; Chris & Carol with Dian Rachmawati & Freddy Saconk; Stan & Terri and Jack & Jo with Aniek Harmadji; Host Coodinator Jean Syarif and Jordy Pratama Jack & Jo and Terri and Stan had a very special our home with Aniek: we had our personal barista every morning. This was quite the life of luxury for us.

Mon, 8 Apr, At about 9:30 am we met at a place that makes sasirangan (Kalimantan batik). We were shown the process from drawing the design on to white cotton fabric using stencils, sewing and putting rubber bands on the design areas and several rounds of dyeing in natural dyes. While there we enjoyed a snack made from sago or banana, steamed in a banana leaf package. They were very tasty. We also visited their store where several of us made purchases.

Next we took a two-hour boat down the Barito River passing many ramshackle houses on stilts along the river edge. We were given a box lunch on the boat (from Aniak's catering company). A rain storm required the boat side flaps be closed for part of the ride. Our destination was the Bekantan Wildlife Rescue Center <https://www.facebook.com/SBIfoundation> on Bakut Island. We took a walk on a boardwalk while a guide told us about the Proboscis monkeys that live on the island as well as some of vegetation. Five went up a tower for a view from above. Before leaving the island we were able to see some of the monkeys. We got back on the boat and went a short distance to waiting cars.

Next we went to a restaurant called de Koppel (owned by Aniak). At the restaurant we dressed up in Dutch costumes and took many pictures in front of Dutch scenery. The restaurant also had South Korean costumes and scenery. We enjoyed a very nice dinner.

Tue, 9 Apr. We visited Universitas Lambung Mankurat (ULM) Banjarmasin. The dean of the school welcomed us and the head of the English Dept talked about "A Cultural Discussion: A salad bowl and melting pot in American Diversity" included native dancers. We had a panel discussion with open questions from the students so they could practice their English. One young man talked to Stan and mentioned that he had a brother that goes to Purdue University. We were then broken up into small groups to speak with just a few students each and they asked many questions. We enjoyed the students a great deal. My favorite was, "What is Thanksgiving and why do you celebrate that?" and "How do you handle snow storms?"

Wed, 10 Today was a free day and it was decided that we would go shopping, so we were driven to a hypermart that was a full four stories high.

After lunch we visited a complex where we learned about Saung Angklung Udjo. This facility is dedicated to the continuation and preservation of the Sundanese culture. This included a bamboo handicraft center and a workshop for bamboo musical instruments.

There was a music instructor and several dozen students which demonstrated the Saung Angklung (bamboo musical instruments). The instructor and students were very enthusiastic and soon had us playing the instruments as well. The instruments were made of bamboo and were very basic, but rendered great music! Everyone participated; although the participants were mostly adults.

Our next stop was at the studios of the local Duta TV Banjarmasin station. Nancy and Terri were 'selected' to be interviewed on the live show. We participated in a program that could have been titled "The Coffee Hour". Throughout the program, a fellow dressed as a barista, made great to-do about preparing small amounts of coffee, serving it to the guests. The program focused on the visit by our Friendship Force group and what Friendship Force is. The questions centered on our perception of the local culture and how we were treated by the local people. Banjarmasin is known as a city of a thousand rivers, since many rivers converge within the city.

We traveled to Banjarbaru for lunch and experienced a torrential downpour. We were scheduled to visit the Parti Werdha Banjarbaru nursing home after lunch. However, most of our group was sick with colds and flu symptoms so we thought it prudent not to spread our germs at a nursing home. We congregated at Mrs Dewi Sudarmadji home for a lovely selection of appetizers and dinner on her patio and dining room. Many enjoyed visiting the motorcycle room. We then returned to our host homes in Banjarmasin.

Fri, 12 Apr. We met at Aniek's restaurant to catch a bus to Pulang Pisau. We traveled for over 2 hours through rural Borneo. Upon arriving we took a high speed boat to a traditional Dayak house built in 1867 that was in Freddy Saconk's family. It had very narrow, steep stairs. It was quite a challenge going up or down.

Next, we walked to the bamboo house in Buntol Village. They greeted us performing a tribal ritual putting powder on our faces and doing a tribal dance .

Sat, 13 Apr. We met at the mosque to load a bus for our transportation today. First stop was the lampit (rattan) factory, Pt. Sarikaya Sega <http://sarikaya.co.id/> . We were free to roam around

the “factory” to watch strips of rattan become floor mats. It was dark, hot and quite humid in the factory. There were no fans to move the air but the women working did not seem to mind.

Next stop was Banjarbaru, the government buildings that Aniek’s grandfather built, where we had lunch with the mayor of Banjarbaru. There was a short formal program. Then the mayor asked us to watch a video about the “food, fashion, and fun” in Banjarbaru. We had a lovely buffet dinner.

After a quick stop at the floating market (in the rain), we went home to freshen up for the farewell party.

The farewell party was held at <http://pawontlogo.com/>. The food was wonderful and each of us was served a giant prawn, deliciously prepared in a local tradition. It was beautiful! Music, singing and dancing followed! The evening ended with farewells, goodbyes and well-wishes.

Sun, 14-Wed 17 Apr,. We were up at 6AM and out the door by 7 am so we could catch our plane to Jakarta.

In Denpasar, Island of Bali, Indonesia, we were met by a van that transported us to the Prama Sanur Beach hotel. We rode about 45 minutes and noticed right away that the traffic was not nearly as bad as what we had encountered in previous areas of Indonesia. There were not the swarms of motor scooters vying for space. The previous locations that we had visited in Indonesia were dominated by the Muslim faith, but our guide informed us that Bali was predominately Hindu.

Denpasar is the capital city of the island of Bali and is the main gateway to the island. Sanur is a separate city within the larger megalopolis area and is a beach city on the Indian Ocean. The grounds included a huge swimming pool, a number of restaurants and rentals for bicycles, sail boats, catamarans and surfboards. There was a reef a short distance offshore that protected the entire hotel beach from the open ocean waves. Numerous signs indicated escape routes in the event of a tsunami.

Apr 15, Mon. At 8:30 am, our group of 9 FF members loaded into a van for a tour to the eastern Bali Highlands. Our first event was a presentation of the Barong and Kris Dance. The Barong play represents an eternal fight between good and evil spirits. The Barong is a mythological lion-like creature, representing good; and Rangda is the mythological monster representing evil. This play is considered ancient Balinese, predating Hindu influences.

Barong the mythical lion-like creature Rangda and Barong.

One of the stops was at Goa Gajah or Elephant Cave, located near Ubud. In addition to the cave there are fountains and a bathing pool included in the complex. Although this site was less than 20 miles north of our hotel in Sanur, it was about a one hour drive, through city streets and moderate traffic. It is believed that the cave was built in the 9th century; however at some point in antiquity it was abandoned, lost to time and covered by jungle and accumulated soil.

The cave itself was rediscovered by Dutch archaeologists in 1923, but the fountains and bathing pool were not discovered until 1954. Although the exact origins of the cave are uncertain, it is believed to have been built as place of sanctuary and spiritual meditation.

From the Elephant Cave, we proceeded higher into the mountains and drove through heavy rain for a considerable distance before reaching the village of Kintamani, about 2PM. As we approached Kintamani, we drove along a very sharp ridge for a

considerable distance. The ridge was quite narrow, only allowing for a two lane road with houses and commercial buildings clinging to the cliff on either side of the road. It became evident that we had traveled along the ridge of an ancient caldera, with elevations dropping off a thousand feet or more on either side of the road!

This was the upper ridge of the ancient Gunung Batur volcanic caldera, and is a common stopping place to view the Gunung Batur region. Kintamani is also known for Pura Tuluk Biyu's 1,000-year-old "Rites of Peace" stone tablets and the Kintamani dog. We ate at a local restaurant that overlooked this ancient caldera. Mount Batur is located near the center of this ancient caldera, and is itself an occasionally active volcano, having last erupted in 2000. Mount Batur has a perfectly inverted cone shape and soars to over 5,500 feet. Lake Batur lies in the valley floor at the foot of Mt Batur. We had lunch at a nice restaurant that provided magnificent views of the ancient caldera, Mt Batur and the pretty lake at the base of the mountain. Upon leaving Kintamani, we descended to a considerably lower elevation and stopped at a coffee plantation. It was still sprinkling, but the staff greeted us with umbrellas and guided us through beautiful walkways, under a leafy forest canopy that led into the depths of the plantation. After a short distance we came to a series of huts where they were roasting the coffee beans. They had every imaginable flavor of coffee, including chocolate coffee, lemon grass tea, etc., etc. They served us a number of samples, all of which were delicious. Our next stop was the Tegalalang Rice Terraces, a little farther down the mountain. An extensive amusement center had also sprung up here, complete with zip lines, swings that swung out over a very deep valley and a "sky bicycle", which more or less replicated a zip line, but you rode a bicycle across the valley, on suspended cables, instead of riding in a bosun's chair!

Tues, 16 Apr. This was a free day, with no schedules and no obligations. We got up at a leisurely pace, had breakfast, walked the beach area of the resort, sat in the shade and relaxed. For lunch we had a pizza, followed by an afternoon nap. This was Beverly Harmon's birthday and we all gathered at one of the restaurants for sundowners, overlooking the beach. There was a nice musical group performing on the beach. The lead singer came to our group, we sang happy birthday, along with a few other tunes and retired early.

Wed, 17 Apr. Left hotel about 3:45 to flew to Jakarta and on to Kuala Lumpur where they met Terri & Stan and then flew on to Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Sun, 14 April. Stan and Terri flew from Jakarta to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Malaysia Airlines while the rest of group flew to Bali. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at the Parkroyal Kuala Lumpur hotel. It was wonderful to have full air conditioned facilities with a terrific dining room. The buffets were fantastic.

Mon, 15 April. We bought tickets for a 'Hop on/Hop Off' bus and really enjoyed the tour of the city. We went by Little India, The Butterfly Park, National Museum, National Palace, Bird Park, National Mosque, Quill City Mall, the highest twin towers in the world and the 2nd tallest building in the world (Dubai has the tallest).

Tue, 16 April. We used Buffalo Tours for the Batu Cave tour. We climbed the 272 steps each way and then explored the caves above. This was one of our favorite sites.

After returning to hotel, we were both hot and tired. We cooled off, napped and had dinner. Stan went exploring. Terri picked up some kind of bug and didn't leave the room.

Wed, 17 April Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We boarded Air Asia flight for Siem Reap, Cambodia Airport. We met the rest of the group at the KL Airport. We arrived in Siem Reap about 2:20 and our shuttle took us to the nicest hotel we've stayed in, Shinta Mani Shack Hotel.

Siem Reap, Cambodia

Thurs, 18 April, Angkor Wat Archeological Park. Our group assembled in the hotel lobby at 5 am, where we were met by our tour guide, driver and van, from Buffalo Tours. Our goal was to view the sunrise at Angkor Wat. Angkor Wat is one of the great monuments of Hinduism. It was later converted to a Buddhist Monastery and became the largest Buddhist cultural center in Cambodia after the 14th-18th centuries.

After getting our sunrise pictures, we wandered through the complex, marveling at the construction, the detail, the massive pagodas, the bass relief carvings that were everywhere and the thousands of steep steps to upper levels. We then headed to the main (east) gate, once again crossing the moat via a massive stone causeway, with the seven head serpent (Naga) gracing each end of the causeway rail. Our van returned us to the hotel about 8 am and we enjoyed a hard earned breakfast!

Our driver transported us to the rear (west) entry of Angkor Wat. We crossed the moat, which is about a block across. We crossed on an ancient stone causeway. The massive stone rails on either side of the causeway terminated on each end, with the raised head of a serpent, which actually had seven heads! We walked through the rear perimeter wall and circled the temple complex.

Angkor Wat is a combination of the words "Angkor", meaning city or capital and "Wat", meaning temple or pagoda. Angkor Wat is the most magnificent example of Khmer classical architecture and is the largest religious monument in the world.

We left Angkor Thom and stopped at a restaurant for lunch. The van dropped us off at the hotel about 12:30 pm.

Fri, 20 April, Tonle Sap Lake tour and floating village. At 8:30 am, our group met in the hotel lobby, where we were picked up by Buffalo Tours, for a trip to Tonle Sap, a few miles south of Siem Reap. Translated, Toni Sap means 'great lake'. At the end of the dry season it is roughly 100 miles long and 15 miles wide, at its widest point; and at the peak of the monsoon season its dimensions will swell to a length of about 160 miles and width of 40 miles. The Tonle Sap is connected to the Mekong River's huge drainage basin.

When we visited, it was near the end of the dry season, so the lake was near its lowest level.

The shuttle dropped us off at a dock at the upper end of a long narrow tongue of water that was connected to the lake. We boarded a homemade boat that had seating for about 20 people, so we were not crowded and were able to spread out. The boat was made of wood, with wooden bench seats, shaded by a canvas roof. The engine, propeller shaft, steering mechanism and

electrical system (such as it was), looked like it was all salvage material from a local junk yard! The propeller shaft and rudder extended behind the boat for about 8 feet and was capable of being raised and lowered by means of a crude, home-made winch (a little boy lowered and lifted at times). The water was very muddy and a light brownish/yellow color.

Upon entering the open lake, the shoreline disappeared and we saw only water ahead of us. A short distance out in the open lake, we came upon the floating village. There were all manner of house boats in the village. Many were residences, while others contained gift shops, restaurants, warehouses, schools, and the police check point, where foreign flagged vessels entering the country were expected to check in. We circled through the village observing the various kinds of structures, the fish farms and the clusters of bamboo stakes, driven into the bottom of the lake, which provided anchoring points for the various floating buildings. We docked at one of the tourist shops and had 10-15 minutes to inspect the offerings. Our tour guide pointed out that some of the structures received their buoyancy from 55 gallon oil drums under the structure; others used bamboo poles for buoyancy, while others had a steel hull to provide buoyancy. The attraction for the residents was that they could live here without paying real estate taxes.

When we returned to our home dock, we found a number of young boys swimming near the docks, a few were skinny dipping. Their main purpose seemed to be to attract attention and hopefully get a handout from the tourists!

A few miles up the road, we stopped at a lotus farm. Lotus farming is somewhat more profitable than rice farming, at the moment. As a result many farmers now raise lotus instead of rice. The lotus are raised in paddies, much the same as rice, so it may be an easy transition. The Chinese will pay handsomely for the lotus blossoms, and also for the lotus bud which has some edible There were a series of little thatched huts, on stilts, within the paddies. They appeared to be a place to rest and relax during the middle of the day. As I walked the perimeter of the paddy, I encountered three Brahma cows. One stood crossways in the path and I petted her as I passed by. One appeared to be a milk cow, while the others were probably being raised for beef.

Sat, 21 April, Today was our day off to do as we pleased, but we had booked travel to Kulen mountain, waterfall and, of course, the scenery was very pretty; we ate at a wonderful restaurant where I did have a yummy pina colada and food. We were back by happy hour!

Sun, April 21, Jack Cooley-Siem Reap to Phnom Pehn, Cambodia. Today was a rather easy day. We slept in, had a leisurely breakfast with several of our group, went back to our room, caught up on internet, email and journaled. We had lunch in the hotel with our group, checked out and departed for the airport at 2 pm. Our one-hour flight took us to Phnom Penh, where we

picked up by Buffalo Tours. Our hotel Plantation Urban Resort <https://theplantation.asia/> was not far away, but traffic was moving slowly, so we enjoyed an hour drive through the city. We arrived at the hotel around 6 pm and the temperature was near 100 degrees. We were surprised that none of the public areas were air conditioned. The lobby, reception area and most of the hotel restaurants were open air.

Our group ate at 'The Restaurant by the Pool'. The menu had a number of selections that appealed and the prices were reasonable.

Mon, April 22,. We are now in Phnom Pehn, capital of Cambodia. We are at the beautiful Plantation Urban Resort and Spa. It's hard to believe what happened in this country during our life time. We had a tour of the Toul Sleng Genocide Museum <http://tuolsleng.gov.kh/en/> and the Killing Fields <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/cambodia/articles/a-guide-to-cambodias-killing-fields/> . The museum at one time was the Toul Sleng High School but was converted to the S-21 Detention Center during the Pol Pot regime. During the Khmer Rouge years, thousands of Cambodians were taken to the killing fields; it is thought about 17,000 men, women and children were executed at the site. Today Cheung Ek is a memorial site for Cambodians and visitors from all over the world to pay their respects for those who lost their lives. Pol Pot died in 1998 and the civil war ended in Cambodia.

It is hot here and we headed back to the resort, some of us went to town in a tuk-tuk to shop and some of us just hung around the beautiful cool swimming pool. It is almost time to go back to the USA.

Tues, April 23, Phnom Pehn. This was a free day and our group scattered in various directions. Jo and Cathy Cobb rented a tuk-tuk for half a day (\$15), went to the central market, visited little 'hole-in-the-wall' stalls specializing in handcrafted wooden furniture, and then returned to the hotel for lunch and a cooling dip in the hotel swimming pool.

Wed, 24 April 2019. We took off from Phnom Penh airport on Silk Air bound for Singapore Changi Airport. Two weeks ago, Changi opened the new \$1.3B shopping pavilion. We were able to view the world's highest indoor waterfall from our train between terminals. What an amazing site!

We boarded Singapore Airlines for San Francisco, USA. We landed the same day. Lost a day going and gained a day coming back. What a wild month long adventure.