

We had decided to enter Malaysia using the ferry leaving from Changi, which is just north of the airport. We knew from the ride into Singapore that there is a wonderful bike path, that would take us all the way to the ferry along the water's edge without us having to deal with the Singapore traffic. Our ferry left at 10:30 and the ride to the ferry was about 50km, so we left pretty early. We were held up a bit at the hostel by a very nice Malaysian lady who had locked herself out of her dorm and wouldn't stop chatting when she learned that we were traveling around by bike. We ended up richer by some Ricola sweets she happened to have on her and some lemon juice that she said we had to mix in with our water to give us enough vitamin C.

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The ferry was a sleek speed-boat. I was a bit concerned if we would get all our luggage on board, we had to take all the bags off again and carry everything down the narrow gangplank. The ride over was about 30min and we both slept most of the way. On the other side we packed our bikes up again to get to immigration, but then we had to take everything off again for another security check. We had a delicious meal at the little snack place at the ferry terminal and then rode the 30km or so to Desaru, where we had organized a Warmshower stay with Zizi. He lived in a housing estate that reminded me very much of England, with hundreds of identical houses all in rows. He was not yet home when we got to his place, but he had pinned a wonderful welcome note to his gate. We went and had a coffee at a nearby food-stall and soon he came riding along. We had a great stay at his place and he invited us to some local dishes and we finished off having an ABC, which is a sort of mixed up frozen Malaysian desert, very good, but very unhealthy... He talked about all the bike touring adventures he already completed and also about his upcoming adventure: The Karakorum Highway! THIS would be something I'd like to do!









Fr 25.3.2016, day 257. Another Warmshower Homestay. (Desaru – Tanjung Sedili, 65 km)

Our next night was to be at Bob's little paradise, another Warmshower in a tiny place called Kuala Sedili about 50km from Zizi's place. We took it nice and slow stopping off for quite an extended midday snooze down by the beach. The ride was absolutely wonderful, mostly on tiny roads through palm oil plantations or sometimes through real rain forest. We also had our first encounter with monkeys. There was a whole group of them climbing up and down trees and lamp posts, balancing along power cables, poncing around and playing with each other. Such groups of monkeys turned out to be quite regular occurrences along the roads, and always fascinating and funny.

Our stay at Bob's place was also fantastic. He is a retired banker who lives on quite a large plot that he has transformed into a little paradise with rabbits, chickens and cocks and fish. He has some lovely mango, papaya and other trees and sometimes hornbills pay him a visit or the odd Monitor Lizard turns up and munches away a couple of his fish. He took us off to the local night market, where we gorged ourselves on all sorts of local specialities, most of them very sweet. Good thing we are getting enough exercise!

Afterwards we had a Karaoke session at his place and finished the day off by having a cup of tea down by the seaside.









Sa 26.3.2016, day 258. Through palm oil plantations. (Tanjung Sedili – Mersing, 85 km)

After some fried rice for breakfast we headed out on a very small road with almost no traffic along the coast. The terrain was hilly and there were palm oil plantations as far as the eye could see. Here in Asia the expression for such a road that constantly rises and dips with the terrain is dragon back road. And so we rode the dragon back all day, making the ride quite tough. In Mersing we checked into a brand new hotel and got chatting to a young French couple who were traveling through Sri Lanka and Malaysia.



Su 27.3.2016, day 259. A great kiting day! (Mersing – Kampong Air Papan, 25 km)

We started the day nice and slowly. Went to the laundromat to do our washing and then headed out along the coast through the jungle. There was quite a bit of wind and we soon came past a nice beach. A great opportunity for some kite surfing! We unpacked the stuff, I stuck a patch on the kite where it was starting to rip and soon I was out on the muddy water having a great time. The wind was slowly dropping and so after a while I handed over to Siria and she also got a small session. We then rinsed the saltwater off our faces, packed up everything and continued along the small coast road. We soon came to another long beach, that seemed to be a local weekend getaway. The wind had again picked up a bit and it looked like great kiting conditions, so we quickly decided to get some more kiting in and camp on the beach for the night. The kiting was again excellent, this time with quite big waves. The wind was just about strong enough to do some small jumps. Before turning in for the night, we went to the only open food stall. The starter was an absolutely delicious fruit salad with some sort of sweet and salty oyster sauce. Putting up the tent was a bit of an effort as there was still quite a bit of wind and the deep sand provided no anchoring for the herrings. Finally, after moving the tent around in the dark to try and find a sheltered spot and trying to find some grass covered ground to give some grip to the herrings, we managed to put it up and tied it to our bikes, the trailer and some trees to be sure to have a quiet night.







Mo 28.3.2016, day 260. Monster ride up the coast (Kampong Air Papan – Pekan, 155 km).

We packed up the tent just as the sun started creeping up over the clouds on the horizon. To start the day, we followed some tiny roads along the coast. It was a fantastic ride through dense jungle. It was fascinating listening to the sounds of birds and bugs coming out from the trees. We had a lunch break in Endau and decided to continue on towards Pekan knowing that it would probably be too far to make it in one day. I figured that it was a big road along the coast, so surely there would be some villages and the odd hotel or homestay along the road. It turned out that it was not like this at all! The road was very lonely indeed with only a few houses here and there. Again it was a great ride through jungle and sometimes also past huge shrimp farms along the coast. Somewhere along the road Siria picked up a young “admirer”. He rode alongside her on his scooter getting way too close. He then sped ahead, lit up a cigarette, turned round and came up from behind again almost pushing her off the road. He then turned round and was gone again, only to reappear, this time with a friend of his. The game went on for a while and I was starting to think about detaching the walking stick I use as a prop for my bike and giving him a clobber, but they eventually got bored and stopped hassling us.

After this bit of excitement we were starting to think about where to spend the night as it was starting to get late. Also the wind had turned and was now in our faces, making progress though and slow. We passed a tiny village where there was a hopeful sign of “motel”. But it turned out to be well and truly closed. We thought about camping, but we were really looking forward for a shower after kiting in the muddy salt water the day before and we were really sticky from the long sweaty ride in the tropical heat, so we pushed on. Night came, we switched on our lights and continued biking. It was close to 9pm when we finally arrived in Pekan. We took the first hotel we saw, which was actually quite nice and our room was conveniently located on the ground floor, so we could simply push our bikes in. We dumped our stuff and immediately headed out to find some food, worried that everything would be closed if we would take the time to first have a shower. We easily found a place. For starters we had apple shakes with lots of ice. It was absolutely delicious!





Tu 29.3.2016, day 261. Luxury hotel indulgence. (Pekan, 5km)

We weren't sure what to do this day. We were quite tired from the day before and needed a bit of rest and a sleep-in. We didn't really know if we wanted to continue, as the next place where there would be hotels was Temerloh, over 150 km away, certainly too far. There was a Warmshower about 120 km away, also too far and we hadn't heard back from him. The ride was along a big river, so probably there would be the possibility to camp somewhere on the way. So we started the day slowly, had some breakfast and then rode over the bridge to check out another hotel we had seen on the map. It turned out that it was a huge and luxurious hotel, complete with marble entrance, swimming pool out back, bell boys, the whole works. We asked about prices at the reception and were told the rates were 90\$ for

the night, but they could give us a special deal of 60\$. We then found that we could get a room for 40\$ on the internet. The idea of heading off and roughing it somewhere along the river quickly became very unattractive and we became seduced by the thought of a day and night of pure luxury.

So we rode back to get our stuff and checked in. It was really really nice. We spent most of the day lounging round the hotel, swimming in the pool. We had dinner at a close by food stall and even found a place where they made mango sticky rice for desert!

We 30.3.2016, day 262. Another long biking day (Pekan – Jerantut, 160 km).

We got a good early start to the day, had some fried rice for breakfast and headed away from the coast towards the centre of Malaysia. The first 40 or 50 km went very quickly. The road was perfectly flat and we had a nice tail wind pushing us. Then the road got smaller and started rising and dipping. The scenery was absolutely lovely with lush forests and some rare glimpse of the large brown river to the right. We caught sight of quite a few groups of monkeys and some remarkably colourful birds. From time to time we saw squashed stinking monitor lizards on the road, some of them really huge and quite often various types of dead snakes. If we were going to camp out, this was certainly something we should be aware of! As we got close to Temerloh the road closely followed the river and some of the trees along the river bank were quite amazing, with massive trunks and huge shady canopies.

Temerloh turned out to be quite a busy town with absolutely ridiculously illogical traffic guidance. I would really have loved to take a walk with the engineer who devised the road layout and to have him explain how I was supposed to move around the town. The first hotel we tried was booked out, but we got a tiny room without windows (the last one they had!) in the hotel next door. Outside there were some food stalls in the street and we enjoyed some of the local chow before getting a good early night in.





Th 31.3.2016, day 263. Up the river (Jerantut – Temerloh, 85 km).

Again we got up just around sun-rise, found a place for some fried noodles for breakfast and headed off.

We took the longer and much smaller road that followed the river northwards towards Jerantut. It was again a great ride mostly through jungle, but also quite hard as we had the wind against us and the road climbed and dipped quite a bit. Apart from the usual gangs of monkeys and birds, the wildlife highlight of the day was an absolutely huge squashed python. The thing looked at least 4 m long and thicker than my leg. Again food for thought, should we have to camp out sometime!

We got to Jerantut in the early afternoon, found a place for lunch and checked into the hotel. They weren't too happy to see our bikes, but let us store them in the lobby. But we had to schlepp all of our luggage, including the bloody trailer up three flights of narrow stairs to the third floor. I had a delicious shower and collapsed on the bed. Siria started watching a movie on her laptop. I woke up again after what felt like a short snooze. I was very surprised to learn that Siria had already watched two whole movies and that it was after 7pm!

We went out for dinner in a very fancy place called Secret Recipe. Siria had a lasagne (taste of home!) and I had a delicious curry. We decided to go all in and so finished off with a large slice of cheese cake each. Good thing we are burning the calories!







Fr 1.4.2016, day 264. Short but tough biking day and a huge scare! (Temerloh – Kuala Lipis, 64 km)

We really have gotten back into the rhythm of biking. We again got up early, found a place serving roti and coffee for breakkars and headed off. (Roti is a type of a folded flatbread, that tastes somewhat like a pancake and comes with all sorts of fillings, usually egg, and some spicy sauce on the side. It is really fun to watch how they skilfully flatten the dough and then twirl it through the air until it is wafer thin).

We only had about 60 km to do, but they turned out to be extremely tough! The road constantly climbed and dropped with sometimes insane grades, but again the ride was very rewarding with some lovely scenery.

Right after one of the tough ascents, while we were stopped regaining our breath, Siria looked into her handlebar bag and then announced with panic in her voice that she had left her belly-bag with passport, credit cards, money and everything on the table of the place we had breakfast. She was absolutely sure about it. My heart sank. What a catastrophe! The only thing for it was to ride back and hope it was not stolen. Probably the best thing would be for me to dump all my bags and the trailer so I'd be faster, but I thought of the hills we had already climbed and groaned. What a mess! The Siria laughed. April fool! And I completely fell for it! I didn't even know it was the first of April!

At about half distance we stopped for our obligatory coffee at one of the tiny roadside restaurants that can be found even in the remotest stretches of road. This stop was quite funny, as no-one spoke a word of English and there was an elderly gentleman, who happily chatted away to us in Malay completely

unaware that we didn't understand a word he was saying. All the time he was caressing his pet cockerel that he had on his lap.

The last kilometres before Kuala Lipis the forest had been completely cleared and they had excavated the complete topsoil, probably because it was rich in Bauxite or some other mineral. Really sad to see. It would take decades, probably even centuries for the forest to recover.

Kuala Lipis turned out to be quite a nice town, somewhat run-down but with interesting colonial like buildings. Also the hotel was quite funky, really old and dilapidated, but somehow still stylish. Also we were lucky that there was a night marked on with a huge collection of mostly sweet and unhealthy Malay delicacies.





