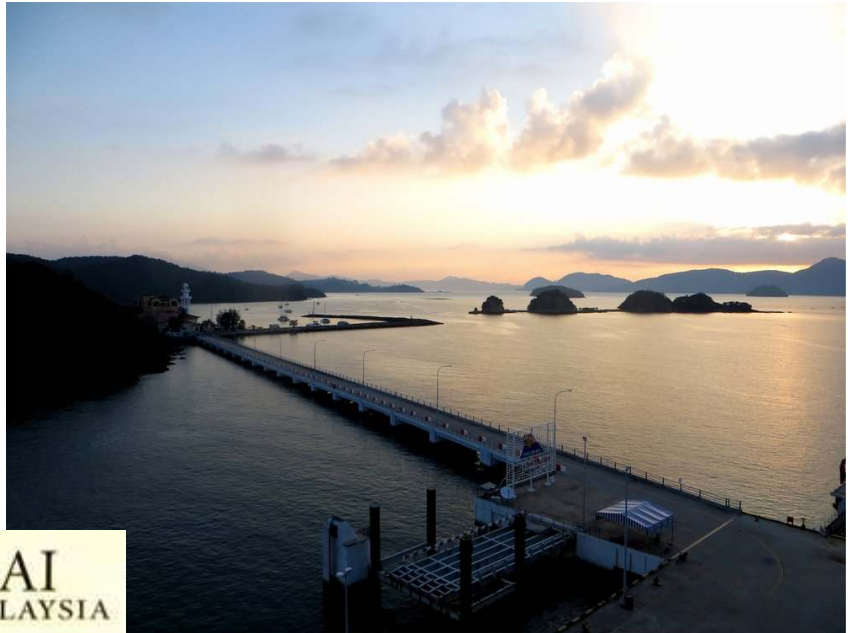
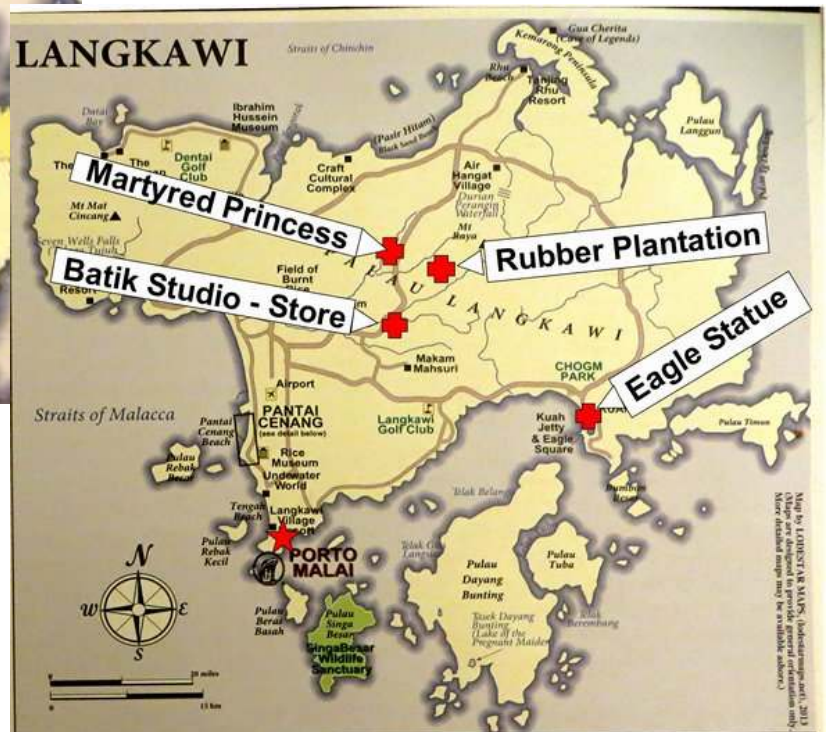


3/20/13 - Day 73—Porto Malai, Malaysia – Langkawi Island: About 7am we arrived at Porto Malai on the island of Langkawi in Malaysia. It was just dawn and there was a beautiful scene as we looked out across the pier to the surrounding islands in the bay, as shown on the right.

You probably won't find Porto Malai in any reference books or maps because it is just the name of a private docking facility for Star Cruises on the island of Langkawi.



The Island of Langkawi is located on the west coast of Malaysia as shown on the left. A map of Langkawi with some of the highlights of a tour we took is shown below.



We had signed up for a Holland America tour called “Langkawi Overview. At about 9am we joined 35 other passengers and boarded a bus that was waiting for us on the pier. Our guide’s name was Guna and the driver was Tod. Guna, who spoke good English, introduced himself and proceeded to fill us in on the day’s schedule along with some information about local traditions and highlights. Regarding our schedule, we would first stop at a batik cloth factory/studio/store that billed itself as being especially artistic. Then we would proceed to the Mausoleum of a Martyred Princess whose story is part of a local legend. A demonstration of harvesting rubber at a rubber plantation would be next and then a visit to Eagle Square where we would see a large statue of an eagle which is the symbol of this island.



Guna said that the manufacture of electronic devices was the main economic driver in Malaysia and tourism was the second largest source of income. We suspected that on Langkawi tourism may be the larger economic force because we saw many hotels and resorts. Guna was well versed in the price of rooms at the various hotels and resorts that we passed. Typical prices ranged from \$80 to \$200 USD per night, so there were no real



bargains here. This sign on the left announcing a new hotel/resort emphasized the tourism connection.

We passed through several small villages on our way to the batik factory. The appearance of the towns was clean and well maintained. They appeared to be moderately prosperous with no significant signs of poverty. We took some photos of homes along the road and they are shown below.





The people of Malaysia are primarily of the Muslim religion and we saw several mosques.



Some women wore coverings over their heads and we saw one instance of a group of men wearing all white clothes that was probably part of some religious function.

After about a 40 minute ride we pulled into the parking lot of the Atma Alam Batik Art store.



They gave a nice demonstration of how the artist creates a pattern on cloth in the batik style. The careful painting of the image was the main emphasis with only a superficial description of the complicated wax application and removal. They had a good display room where we found a couple batik pillow covers that we liked.

While Barbara was taking in the batik manufacturing demonstration and shopping, Orlin walked next door to a gasoline station to get some information on Langkawi gas prices. We have found that the international practice of posting gasoline prices is not followed by many stations here in Southeast Asia. Sometimes we have to take pictures of the gas pump sale indicator to get the prices. That was the case today when we got these pictures.

As shown on the right the gasoline was selling for 1.900 Ringgits (RM) per liter. The current exchange rate is 3.10 RM per \$1 USD. Therefore, a liter of gas costs \$0.61 USD and at 4 liters per gallon that works out to \$2.45 USD per gallon. What a great low price!



SUBSIDI MINYAK OLEH KERAJAAN PADA BULAN MARCH 2013		
	PETROL RON95 RM/Liter	DIESEL RM/Liter
Harga sebenar	RM 2.94	RM 2.85
Harga kawalan	RM 1.90	RM 1.80
SUBSIDI OLEH KERAJAAN	RM 1.04	RM 1.05

However, there was more to the story. Beside the gas pump the information shown in the photo on the left was posted. A friendly man pumping gas into his car explained it to Orlin in very good English. It turns out the state sets a fixed price of 2.94 RM per liter (that is \$3.79 USD per gallon). That's about what many people in the US are paying for gas. Then there is a state subsidy of 1.90 RM per liter. Subtracting the subsidy from the fixed price yields the 1.90RM per liter (\$2.45 USD/gallon) that people pay at the pump.

We finished the visit to the Atma Alam Batik Art store, boarded our bus and proceeded on. Our next event was a tour of the Makam Mahsuri Mausoleum. The tourism industry of Langkawi is marketing their little corner of the world as "The Island of Legends". It turned out that our next destination was part of an important legend about Princess Makam Mahsuri and Guna explained it to us.

The story starts with Princess Makam Mahsuri and her husband in the year 1819. The husband as a good patriot went off to fight in a war. Princess Mahsuri lived alone for a long time but eventually a man friend made the proposition that he and Mahsuri live together as brother and sister. They lived together for some time but a scheming sister-in-law started a rumor that the couple was actually living together as husband and wife while Mahsuri's husband was fighting in the war. The local chief held a trial and Mahsuri was convicted of adultery. In accordance with Muslim tradition she had to be executed. They killed her by stabbing her in the chest. The legend says that her blood flowed out white. The white blood meant that she was an innocent victim of slander and treachery. Before breathing her last breath she placed a curse on the island of Langkawi. The curse was that "There shall be no peace and prosperity on this island for a period of seven generations." The curse is shown on her tombstone which is displayed on the grounds of the Mausoleum, as shown below. Information in the Mausoleum said the island actually suffered poverty and war in accordance with the curse. According to our



guide, Guna, the curse came to an end in 1987. Langkawi appeared to be prosperous and at peace so it looks like they have survived the curse of Mahsuri.

The next stop on our tour of Langkawi Island was a rubber plantation. As shown on the right, the rubber trees are planted in rows and vegetation is kept mowed down between the trees. The sap of the trees is collected and after processing it is used in latex rubber products like surgical gloves, paint, and tires.



Guna provided an explanation of the tree tapping process as a worker wielded the special tool used to cut the tree bark. The

bark is cut and removed leaving a groove about a foot long and tilted at a 45 degree angle to the ground, as shown above and on the right. The white latex sap immediately starts to run down the groove where a metal trough affixed to the tree collects the latex and directs it into a bucket.



The buckets of latex are collected and processed by heating and rolling until a mat about one eighth inch thick is produced. The mats of rubber are then sent to the factory for incorporation into latex products.

The production of rubber from trees has been a part of the Malaysian economy since the late 1800s. The need to acquire a source of rubber for industrial and military use was one of the reasons that Japan occupied the Malaysian Peninsula during the early days of WWII. Rubber from natural latex has been largely replaced by synthetic rubber from petroleum but apparently there is still a modest market for natural latex.

Guna had said that we could produce a rubber band in our hand with the white latex dripping out of the tree. He gave a quick demonstration and then Orlin gave it a try as shown on the right. The white latex was very fluid and most of it ran off rather than forming a thick layer. After about 10 minutes the latex had hardened and could be peeled off as a rubbery thin film. However, it came off of Orlin's hand in pieces



so without some additional process development work the existing rubber band business has nothing to fear.

We finished up our visit to the rubber plantation and boarded our bus again. This time we were headed for the town of Kuah where there was a huge statue of an eagle. The name of the island of Langkawi is derived from the Malay word for eagle, “helang” and “kawi” which means the color, auburn. Therefore the auburn colored eagle that lives here has been adopted as a mascot for the island. The community of Kuah had placed a large 40 ft. statue of an eagle in a local park and it was the center of attention for people in the tourist trade.

The road to Kuah led through open countryside where we got the following pictures of typical farmland that we thought showed a productive rural community.





In Kuah we stopped at a large park on the sea shore. We walked out to the statue of the eagle that was located at the water's edge. The eagle was even more impressive than we had expected. We saw right away that this was the right spot for Barbara to document the visit of her library card to the island of Langkawi, Malaysia. In a moment we had accomplished the deed as shown on the left.

Having seen the famous auburn eagle of Langkawi we climbed back on board our bus and returned to the Amsterdam at Porto Malai.

With all the resorts we had passed today there was no need for more evidence that tourism was a major

economic factor here. However, as we neared the port we sighted this "Help Wanted" sign on the right made the picture complete. It was at a local hotel and invited walk-in candidates to come in for an interview.



About 3:30pm there was a Malaysian Cultural show in the Queen's Lounge put on by the Malay Kompang Group. It consisted of men and women in traditional Siamese costumes doing intricate dances. Photography is always a challenge in the low light conditions but a couple pictures are shown below.



It was a very enjoyable way to end our visit to Malaysia.



The Amsterdam got underway about 5pm bound for the port of Phuket (pronounced foo-ket) Thailand. We expect to arrive there tomorrow morning.