

Post



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Chocolate and rice, YUM! - March 20, 2023

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SUMMARY

Driving to the northern coast of the island today to the black sand beaches of Lovina. On the way we encounter many processions of villagers taking their Gods to the water to be blessed. That created an interesting day for our driver, Benny! Along the way we visited a chocolate factory with unlimited samples and the UNESCO World Heritage rice fields of Jatiluwih where we encountered rain. Stopped at a beautiful temple on Lake Bratan and spent time in the hot springs in Banjar. Spent the night at a beautiful resort and dined (almost) on the beach with a view of the sunset. Paradise! - Karen

DETAIL

It's a bit of a funny 'good bye' at our hotel. They're thanking us for coming and wishing us safe travels. Our answer is "See you soon... we'll be back tomorrow". We hope we'll get the same room. Today is a just a quick (relatively) trip up to the top of the island, to Lovina.

Bali is about the same size as Rhode Island. It's biggest city, Denpasar, has 750,000 people (as of 2020). Ubud has a tenth of that. Lovina's population isn't even listed, but it's probably one tenth the size of Ubud. We're going there to see the black sand beaches, the dolphins, and the attractions between here and there.

Our first stop isn't that attractive, it's for gas. The price of petrol here is controlled (subsidized) by the government. We're told it's priced in "Rupiah per three liters". Hm. If you do all the mathematical gymnastics it comes out to \$2.60 a gallon (close but a bit less than in Austin today).

While Benny fills our vehicle we buy a frozen durian treat. We're hoping to be able to say "yes!" when asked if we tried durian (without actually having to try durian). The taste is fine. The smell isn't awful, but we get a hint of what the real thing might smell (er, stink) like. We're told that like our pee after eating asparagus, one's farts after eating durian can be (shall we say?) off putting. We shall see (smell).

As we drive on Rina tells us about the area and Bali in general. Apparently they eat rice at every meal, about 1 liter of dry rice per day for a family of three. The federal health department says Indonesians get too much rice and salt and should cut back. The people say they can't sleep if they don't have this much rice and salt so they ignore the advice (and suffer the resulting ill health).

One of the fruits we've seen growing (cultivated and in the wild) is cocoa. As such we're not surprised to see a chocolate factory. We stop and take a tour and tasting. They're constantly roasting the seeds from the pods (which takes about 40 minutes) and we're lucky to see (and smell) the freshly roasted seed (beans?) coming out of the roaster. The chocolate is delicious and they have a couple of dozen flavors (no durian). There are small wooden cups with small metal tweezers to take a sample. Some enterprising tourists simply pick up the cup and shake a good measure into their hand. OK...

Next stop is an area known for it's productive and scenic rice paddies. There's a charge but it's not much. They have an interesting system, all over Bali, to prevent corruption (low level corruption only, please). There's a booth with Person A selling a ticket, with a QR code, for the vehicle with N number of visitors. Further along, maybe 200 meters, there is Person B who counts the people and scans the QR code. Chicanery averted. (Only the higher ups are allowed to profit from rampant corruption, thank you very much!).

The rice paddies are very scenic and they have an awesome, long walking path through them, which would have been great if it weren't raining. We have lunch and press on smartly. Our next stop is the Temple on the Lake, aka the Floating Temple (which it's not). The Temples are attractive though not as pretty due to the grey clouds overhead. There are locals in traditional dress in a big procession transporting their local gods to the water for the local priest to do the annual cleansing with holy water. How do they get so spiritually dirty in just a year??

Our next stop is for self cleansing. We're going to the Holy Hot Springs. I verify that this is, indeed holy water and am assured that it is not. It is refreshing and warm (bordering on hottish warm). We love it. There are three levels of water spouts and we do all three, like a good local. Where the water is falling the furthest I have numbers and equations going through my head — 8.3 pounds per gallon of water, 32 feet per second per second for a falling body. This helps explain how the pounding on our necks and shoulders can be so rough. It feels great (when you're done).

The Lovina Bali Resort truly is like paradise. I could see us staying here longer, like for a month. So calm, and quiet, and lush, and beautiful. We have drinks and later dinner overlooking the placid Indian Ocean. There's a very talented trio playing music and we tip them 50,000 for their work (about three dollars). We enjoy the view and the music and try to ignore the cat looking at us, seeming asking for a small taste of our dinner.

Photos



Durian? In the words of one Barak Obama:
Yes we can!



On our drive we saw many groups of locals headed to this or that celebration. Just loaded into trucks that normally transport maybe Durian?



Chocolate factory tour. Here just in time to see (smell) the freshly roasted beans coming out. Thank you, god of chocolate.



More processions. More gods off to be
cleansed. More delays.



Ooooooh. Pretty.



Our very own "Insta" moment. (If we only actually used Instagram.)



Lunch, including much rice, overlooking rice paddies, with a rice plant on our table for decoration.



FARNSNIENTE



The floating (yes, right, sure) Temples. It's so bright we struggle to keep our eyes open.



A rabbit warren for the kids. One rabbit may have had enough of the excitement.





It's that Nyepi time of year: Night of Silence/New Year. 1,000 of these dolls, ogoh-ogohs, representing evil spirits, will perish in flames tomorrow night.



Karen working diligently to appease the gods of the sudoku.



Scott focuses on different spirits.

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