

Post



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# 666, is that a bad sign?? - April 5, 2023

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## ***SUMMARY***

A brief history of today's transportation:  
cruise ship (40 passengers with lots of room) > tender boat (40 passengers with little room) > bamboo boat (8 passengers) > tender boat > cruise ship > tender boat > mini bus (15 passenger, no room) > taxi.  
What we accomplished with all this movement was a visit to Bright Cave which is actually a tunnel into a completely enclosed little body of water (like Crater Lake but much smaller) and arrival at our rather dismal hotel near the Hanoi Airport. - Karen

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## ***DETAIL***

Today dawns bright but it's still very cloudy. It seems we may not get any blue skies while in Lan Ha Bay. We have a quick cup of coffee and head to the tender station, we're heading off to see the Bright and Dark Caves. After a short ride we're dropped at a floating platform with a slew of 'bamboo boats' coming and going. Each has eight passengers and a rower/driver. We can see the flow of boats headed out on the right and coming back on the far side of this body of water on the left.

First stop? The Dark Cave. Maybe it was me, or maybe our driver's accent, but I hear "Duck Cave". In fact, that might be a good name for it. The ceiling is very low, going in, and it opens up further along. But because of the low ceiling at the entrance it's dark. Apparently someone didn't 'duck' on the way in, they hit their head and so now the cave is closed to everyone. We won't be visiting 50% of the promised caves.

At the next 'cave' we do go in, and can see an opening at the other end. There are stalactites hanging down and you need to be sure you don't bump your head. As we approach the entrance there's excitement as passengers spot monkeys up in the trees, way up over heads. Sadly there are only 60 or 70 such monkeys left here. Locals believed (believe?) that eating the monkey's brain is good for their cognitive function. They caught and ate many a monkey. We all do not wish these people well.

As we re-approach our cruise ship we notice the ship's registry. Something about 6666. The number 666 rings a bell but otherwise we aren't concerned. Surely everything will be fine. (Right?)

We pack and abandon our room, leaving our locked bags next to the door. We pay our bill, have brunch and say our good byes to the crew and waitstaff, they've been good, if often unintelligible.

We repeat our tender ride back to the dock, in reverse, and soon are on our bus for the ride into town. Most people will be dropped at the hotel from which we were picked up. The plan for us, by contrast, is that we'll get dropped at a shopping mall on the outskirts of Hanoi, the bus will take off and we'll (hopefully) catch a different ride to our hotel by the airport.

At 50 mph we're told it's time for the two of us to get off the bus. The 50 mph thing is a non-starter for us, but after three such requests we gather our backpacks and sashay towards the front of the bus. Thankfully the bus stops for us to get out. Sadly we are a ways from the curb and there are many motor scooters zooming past. Shocker, I know. We retrieve our luggage, brave the scooters and happily find our new ride waiting, we guess like a boss.

Earlier in the day, by WhatsApp messaging, our night's hotel reaches out. They want to know at what time we'll be arriving and do we want to upgrade to a nicer room at their sister hotel. We give our arrival time and decline the upgrade. He pushes on... it's much nicer and has an elevator. He sends pictures. It looks nice. "How much more and does it also have a free airport shuttle?" No more money and yes. I say OK and get the new address.

I tell our new driver where we're going, he seems to understand. At our exit from the freeway he exits, yay! At the next turn, to the left, he turns right in direct conflict to the expert backseat driving I'm doing. Thankfully his way worked, too. But when we get there it seems super sketchy, Karen and I both agree we'll be killed, or worse, if we stay here. I driver points to our hotel (not what we'd been looking at) and we're relieved.

In the hotel we are greeted by a shirtless man saying "Scott?" This is a good sign. We give up and get back our passports. He takes us up to our room on the cramped elevator, up to the sixth floor (the highest the elevator goes). Maybe we're in the penthouse? That would be sweet. He gives us the room key, which has the room number on it. #666. Hm. Bad sign?

He turns on a floor fan and opens two windows to let a warm cross draft cool the room. The A/C is still off as he makes his hasty retreat, but I figure I can handle that. I turn on the air conditioner and we both strip to our skivvies.

After a while I question the efficacy of this particular A/C. I recheck what I'd done. It wasn't on Cool, but rather had been set to Dry. Ah, silly me. I change the mode and start excavating the bowels of my suitcase for our thermometer. Both the room and the air emanating from our A/C register 30° C (86° F).

I ask our host if he might have another room where the A/C works a tad better (i.e. at all). He hands me the key for room 766 (though as I recall, the elevator only goes to the 6th floor, hm). Was this one of those Harry Potter Track 10-1/2 sort of things? Back on the sixth floor I see that stairs do, indeed, continue beyond the reaches of the elevator. We visit the room (very nice) and test out the A/C (very nice!) and relocate our worldly possessions up the stairs. Crisis averted.

Out our bathroom window the sunset looks like a moonset, just more orange. With the pollution you could easily stare at the dim orange perfect sphere forever with no concern for your eyes. Actual sunset is still a long time away.

From the hotel's menu, pizza and fried egg rolls are ordered for dinner and cheerfully delivered to our room. Pizza is accompanied by two kinds of small packets of toppings, just like back home. Unlike back home, they're ketchup and asian hot sauce. We had ordered a 'sausage and mushroom pizza' and upon delivery agree that 'hot dog' is a kind of sausage.

We enjoy dinner with a delightful red wine from Circle K. Karen, not a beer drinker, tries the red wine, declares it corked and opts instead for a cheap can of beer from the fridge.

As we sleep, we have confidence that we are in the right place (close to the Hanoi International Airport for our morning flight). We occasionally hear the planes overhead and the semi trucks rumbling down the freeway. And in the morning, the guy walking the two Water Buffalo down the cross street assures us we are still in Việt Nam.

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## Photos



Our first exciting activity du jour is a visit to the Bright and Dark (Duck?) Caves by bamboo boat



Seeing the route the boats take seemed to be pretty easy



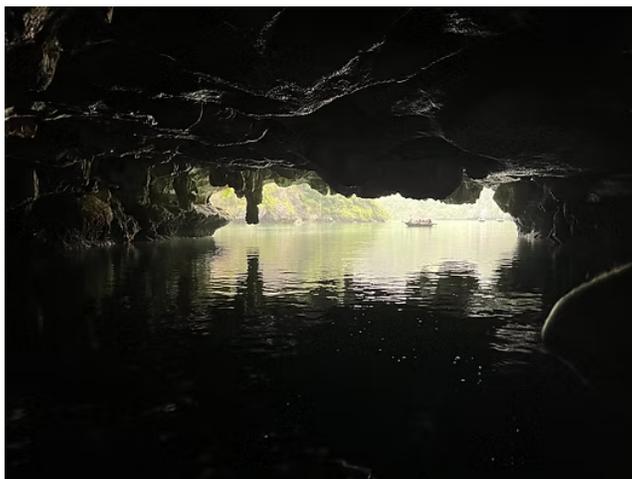
We're told that someone didn't 'duck' at the dark (duck?) cave when they should have. Now it's closed to everyone.



In the Bright Cave (er, tunnel)



OK everyone, group photo!



Some of the Bright Cave's dangly bits



Back at the main boat. The registry numbers. An ominous sign??



More cruising and more impressive  
scenery



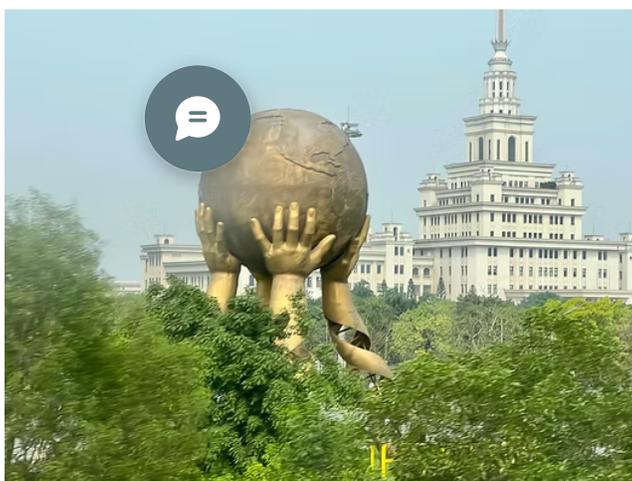
Near where the most recent Kina Kona

FARNSNIENTE





Sadly not all of the trash's been picked up  
yet



Lots of fun stuff to see zipping by on the  
long bus ride



At our hotel? (Taxi driver, for the love of god, please don't leave us here!!)



Our taxi driver points out the actual entrance, just to the left. We feel better.



The room had some very nice attributes!



The condiments provided to augment our hotdog and mushroom pizza. Asian Chili Sauce and Ketchup. It couldn't have hurt.

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