

Post



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Off the boat. Up in the air. - May 5, 2023

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SUMMARY

Our cruise now over, we got up early for final packing and breakfast. Like with Tokyo I had imagined our entry into Singapore would be very efficient but was wrong (again). After that chaos we arrived at our hotel and are granted early check in. We got metro passes and headed to the AMAZING Marina Bay Sands hotel. Three massive 56-story buildings house the hotel, restaurants, and expensive boutiques. On the 57th floor and resting atop and cantilevered way out is a giant surfboard. Part of it is an observation deck with stunning views. Also Spago restaurant where we had the best meal of our trip. From there we explored the jaw-dropping Gardens by the Bay, visiting the

Cloud Forest, Flower Dome (hello Holland it's tulip time!), and the Flower Fantasy exhibit hall. Just WOW! It was hot and beyond muggy so we headed back to rest a while before heading out for dinner. - Karen

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DETAIL

By the time we're awake, groggy from last night's excess, we are already docked in Singapore. We get ready and have our last meal (our last breakfast) on board. We tip our cabin attendant and some fun/nice waiters. We say "Bye" to some people we had come to know and swap addresses.

I try to change some American money for Singapore dollars but no joy. Right now they're just doing US to US. While there I overhear a lady that missed the instructions in her cabin about filling out an immigration form online. She said it was no wonder they didn't know how to do that immigration stuff, they'd been on the ship for 10 months. They were just now getting off. Holy moly!

We wheel our luggage off the boat and snake our way to Immigration. The line is long and boring so I go to snap a picture of the long line. Before I can do it Karen, and two guards, remind me that such things aren't allowed. I'm required to prove that I had not, in fact, taken any pictures. (Whoops!).

Next step is Customs. Many people (but not us) first have to claim their luggage (which had been transferred off the ship for them). Some of these people have a trolley stacked high and overflowing with luggage. We are happy to be traveling so light. Our ways are changed forever!

Free at last, I do change all my Vietnamese currency for 35 or so Singapore dollars (symbol is cleverly \$\$). We quickly get a cab and are at our hotel in no time. I think I hear the people next to us being told their room isn't ready yet. No surprise, it's like 10 am. We, on the other hand, are told our room IS ready (YAY) and happily freshen up and ditch our luggage for the day.

Our flight out is two days out, at 6 o'clock or so at night, so we have almost three days to wander. We've mapped it out and today is exploring, and having lunch atop, the iconic Marina Bay Sands hotel. It was featured in Crazy Rich Asians and looks like an oversized Pi symbol (Π) but with a third leg. The top looks like a giant surfboard.

We take the metro there and figure out how to get up to Spago for lunch (in 90 minutes). We take an elevator up a different leg to get to the observation platform. You're outside, and the platform is enormous. We're at one end of the "surf board" and way up in the air. It's breathtaking and I'm sure vertigo inducing for some. We look for our ship out at the docks, and at Singapore in every direction. We look at Gardens By The Bay (next door) where we'll be headed after lunch. We see the famous Merlion. From this distance it looks like a little white speck.

Lunch at Spago is really magnificent and priced accordingly. We figure that since we didn't have any big costly mishaps on our trip we can do this one splurge. We get a similarly amazing view from our table as from the observation platform, kind of, plus a view of people swimming in the negative edge pool up there. It looks unreal.

At Gardens By The Bay we find out that we purchased the wrong tickets. We'll go to the floral exhibit we did get tickets for, but for now we buy more tickets, for the Cloud Forest and the Flower Dome. One is damp and cool and the other is warm and dry.

We do the damp and cool first. The fuchsias and orchids and so many other flowers love it and are going crazy. There are really big orchids and very tiny ones that you can only see properly under a magnifying glass. They've sprinkled in a lot of made up plants and creatures from the new Avatar 2 movie, The Way of Water. It's more for the kids, but it makes me want to see the film (all three plus hours of it).

The Flower Dome has many different sections including a desert with succulents and an area with plants from Australia. In the middle is the story of the tulip, with big swaths of different colored tulips. We think maybe we are back in Holland.

Back in our room I write up the day's notes and make a dinner reservation. We still don't have any cell service so we have to beg and plead with strangers to help us find the place. It's a small French restaurant, of course, called Chez Suzette (like Crêpe Suzette). Asking Chinese people, in English, how to find this non-English named restaurant, when they don't even use our alphabet... that takes some cojones.

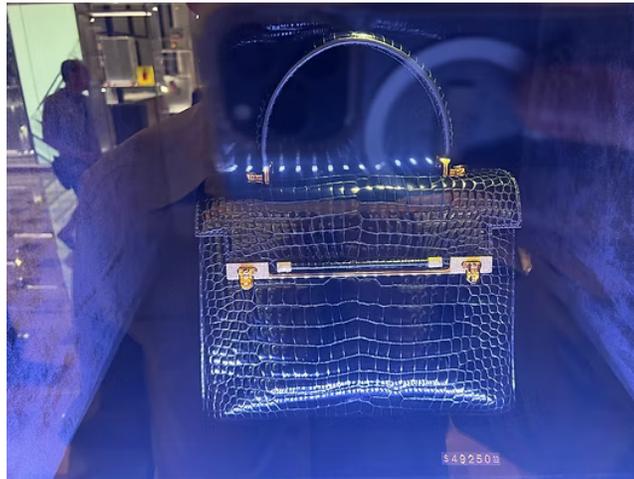
On the way to dinner, at a Hindu temple, they were having service. Out front was someone's new car. In front of it a priest (who to me appeared to be dressed and made up like an aborigine from from Australian outback) was blessing it with a smoking smudge. We're definitely not in Kansas.

We do find the restaurant and it is good and fun (though we are still full from lunch). Afterwards we metro home and crash, ready for tomorrow's adventures.

Photos



Got into our hotel room at 9:30 am. We were concerned about the humidity outside, but it got better.



Between the metro and the Marina Bay Sands hotel there was a corridor with countless stores selling Rolex-class watches, and purses like this one. In US dollars this one is \$11,764.



Where we're headed. This one cost, reportedly, \$8 billion to build.



The observation platform is breathtaking.



The views looking down (if you dare) are great. That ball-looking thing on the water? An Apple store. :-)



Scott, Karen and the Merlion (part lion, part fish)



Close-up view of the Merlion statue/fountain courtesy of my iPhone.



Looking out to sea. Those two domes are part of the Gardens by the Bay.



Looking towards the other end of the "surf board". You can see the pool, and to it's left is where we'll be having lunch. Do you see the guy on the *outside* of the railing? Leaning back? This is discouraged.



The pool with the million dollar view. (I'll let you guess why it's called that).



Awesome lunch at Spago



Very close behind us in part of the food prep area.



They prep some mighty fine food. Here salmon (both before and after birth).



In the Cloud Forest. Very high waterfalls.



We got to see the mountain of plants from various heights.



There were many creatures and plants from the Avatar 2 movie



Yes. We were there.



You could see Marina Bay Sands from the dome.

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30' wingspan and animated, as many of the creatures were.



From atop the waterfall.





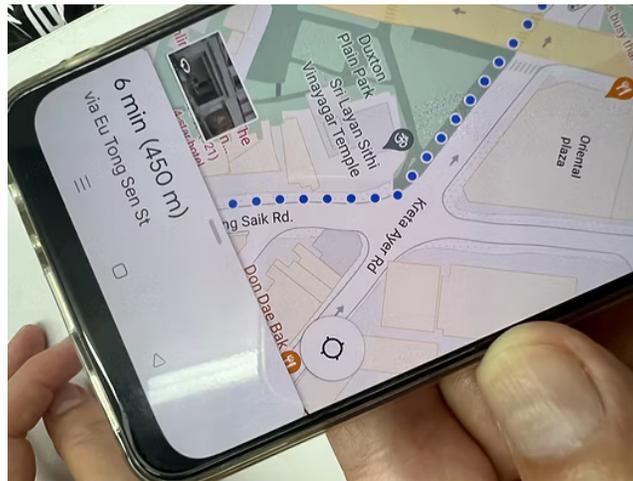
We loved every flower. Oh, wait. Maybe
not every one.



The tulips seemed out of place.



There was a dragon made of wood.



How we found dinner. Taking pictures of other people's phones with our phone.



The Hindu temple near our restaurant.

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