

Borneo Trip

20 Feb 2024 to 1 March 2024

One of the reasons we went to Borneo is that my dad, George Robert Sambrooks, fought at Balikpapan during WW II. Also 35 Squadron operated out of Labuan supplying the Australian Army with food, ammunition etc. Andrea's father, A.R. "Butch" Barnier, was in Sparrow Force in Timor, 2/2 Commando. His cousin, John Nicholson Barnier, was in B Force, Singapore, transported from Changi to Sandakan as a prisoner of war of the Japanese in 1942. He died 12 June 1945. His name is on the Roll of Honour at Sandakan.

The tour was pretty full bore, on the go most of the time. We virtually did the Sandakan Death March by bus. We stopped at various sites and memorials. Our guide, Brendan, was excellent, deeply knowledgeable about the war in Borneo. His grandfather fought with the Australians against the Japanese. A story he told us only 6 Australians were alive when they reached Sandakan. His grandfather told him after the Japanese surrendered, they had to march them to a prison camp. Only six men survived. The locals used their blow pipes to kill as many Japanese as they could. During our tour we visited a native village where they demonstrated how effective the blow pipe was. They could hide in the jungle and use their blow pipes to kill the Japanese and not be detected.

In Kundasang the Kinabalu War Memorial is interesting. It has graves of some of the Australians. The Sandakan War Memorial has the honour roll of all of those who were in the Sandakan death march.

Sandakan memorial camp site where the last six arrived. Both memorials are brilliant. Both governments have done an excellent job of maintaining the memorials.

We were incredibly lucky to have Brendan as our guide.

Our accommodation varied from The Bilit Rainforest Lodge, which is part of a national park, to a very historic building in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur, "The Chow Kit Hotel."

The food was not 'my cup of tea' as I am not a big eater of Asian food. Breakfast consisted of scrambled eggs, cereal, sausages, rice, juice. One day we were on the road all day and we were supplied with a picnic lunch. We had lunch at various restaurants. At night we could have a choice of eating in restaurants or where we were staying at our hotel.

Alcohol was available in some bars but mostly there were liquor barns where you could purchase alcohol. Because of some religious beliefs some restaurants would not sell alcohol.

We had six flights in 11 days which is very exhausting when you are old.

The footpaths in the cities are interesting. They have open and deep drains. The motor bikes are ridden on the footpaths and are parked on them.

Kuala Lumpur has twenty-three million people of which 90% own cars, so the traffic is horrific.

There were thirty-four people on our tour which is unusually a large number of people on one tour. Included are pictures of where we visited. Our itinerary is included.

<https://lifeonebigadventure.com/2023/08/16/package-tours-are-they-all-they-are-cracked-up-to-be-review-of-tripadeal-borneo-2-for-1-deal/>















