

Chef's Blog Malaysia Experience

Oct 17th

After all our preparations, training sessions, try-outs and demonstration rides, we are finally here in Malaysia. Just getting here was a test of endurance. My time was fairly tame – I left San Jose Weds the 15th so I could be in LA for a 1:45am flight to Hong Kong on the 16th. I had a 3 hour layover, then rode for 14 hours to Hong Kong. From Hong Kong to Kuala Lumpur a mere 4 hour flight, then a short hop to Kuala Terengganu. All totaled my trip was around 30 hours. A few of the rider's had about 40 hour trips with layovers, so I'm not complaining.

At the airport we were greeted by several people from the organizing committee. They helped us get our luggage and drove us to the hotel. Cheryl and Stewart Dell, two Canadians and I all arrived on the same flight. Jan Worthington, Grace Ramsey, John Crandell, Meg Sleeper, and Kathy Brunjes all arrived later that night or the next day.

We have acclimated fairly quickly. It feels just like Florida, so no one is suffering unduly from heat or humidity. It rains at night with great displays of thunder and lightning, but so far has been nice during the day.

Our hotel is in the process of being remodeled. All the TVs work on the 1st floor, but on the 2nd floor there is reception for only one channel. I am sure no one has ever been in our room before. Once the flooding shower was fixed it has proven to be a very nice room. Of course, the remodeling was supposed to be finished before we all arrived. Every day there are new changes. It's sort of a game to see what is new – hm – was that mirror there yesterday?

The swimming pool had its light installed last night and today they are filling it with a hose. It is about two feet deep now. It's the same story with the gym – it should be finished about the time we leave. We are going to see if we can walk to the beach and play beach volleyball for exercise.

We are eagerly awaiting the arrival of the horses on the 20th, and starting to make preparations for their arrival.

Oct. 19th

My confidence in driving on the "wrong" side of the road is increasing. Once we got out the venue (40 minutes away from the hotel) I practiced in our rental car. In true Malaysian style it took almost 2 hours to get the car. Part of the problem was the promised SUV was not available, so I was offered a car or a pickup. I opted for the pickup and it turned out to be a very wise choice. Because it took so long to deliver, we are convinced that the truck was commandeered from an employee of the rental car agency. We saw them taking personal stuff out of it. It is an older 1990's

Missubishi, but it is a crew cab and we can fit 6 people if we squeeze 4 in the back seat. Since there are now 9 of us we also can take the rest in the back of the truck. The locals think this is very amusing we get a lot of stares. We think it is no more unusual than a family of four on a motor scooter – very common here.

We have been to the Mydin and the Giant stores – sort of Malaysian Walmarts – to buy our supplies of buckets, sponges, chairs, drinking water, carrots, apples, etc. It is cheaper to buy these things locally than to try to ship them.

We have our credentials from the OC – wristbands are required to get into the stalls. The stalls are prepared with shavings and water set out in the new plastic trash cans in the sun to take away some of the plastic taste.

Jim Bryant, our team veterinarian, and I managed to touch base while he was with the horses in Amsterdam. The shipping had gone well and the horses were EDPP (eating, drinking, peeing and pooping for you non-endurance folks). They had a 2 and a half day layover in AMS, so Jim, with the help of two local horsewomen, made sure the horses were walked 2-3 hours each day, and an hour the day they left AMS.

Tomorrow is horse arrival day and so it's off to bed – our latest night yet – at 8:30.

Oct 20th

The horses are coming today! Riders are excited and anxious. Cheryl Dell has not seen her horse in over a month. Her husband Stewart and father Jerry Gillepsie shared the duties of going to Florida to continue with Reason's training. There were many sacrifices to not only making the team, but to keeping the horses in a climate conducive to a race in Malaysia. All the riders made sacrifices – they did not see their horse or their spouse in several cases.

We were all tired of the inactivity from the log trips and driving around. To work off a little nervous energy we decided to take a morning walk to the beach. Stewart had found the way, about a block from the hotel, so with ideas of an hour walk we headed out. It was a beautiful morning, the sky clear, we could see the mountains across the China Sea. We walked for about half an hour to a jetty, then decided to take the sidewalk back. Mistake! First we walked into a dead end in a local neighborhood. We had to go further to get to the main road. Our quick way back took a full hour. We were all tired by 9AM.

The horses were due around 1:00pm. We were told to go to the venue and we would be taken to the airport to meet the horses. We followed out a caravan of cars – 24 horses were coming on one shipment. The Terengganu Airport has been completely rebuilt and the runway extended for this race to accommodate landing 747's. Even so, the airport is very small. We were allowed on the runway to watch the plane land. It was very emotional to watch the plane circle before landing, then

watch it touch down, knowing the precious cargo inside for all the people waiting on the tarmac.

The pilot made a superb smooth landing. Two loads of cargo came out first – all the tack and equipment. The first pallet out had Golden Lightning, Reason To Believe and Reveille. Next out, Theatric, Saba Shams and Flash Flame. The horses came off the pallets fairly well – the tarmac was slick and two horses had minor skids, but no falls or major mishaps. We offered water and they all drank, walked them until identification was complete, then put them onto the horse vans, - 6 USA and 1 Canadian horse. Forty minutes later the horses were in their stalls. We gave them mashes, and let them rest for an hour. Then we gave them a gentle hand walk of 30 minutes and brought them back to the stalls for 10 liters of IV fluids and electrolytes. Although the horses looked travel weary, their weight was great and overall they looked very good. Great thanks to Dr. Jim for looking after them so well.