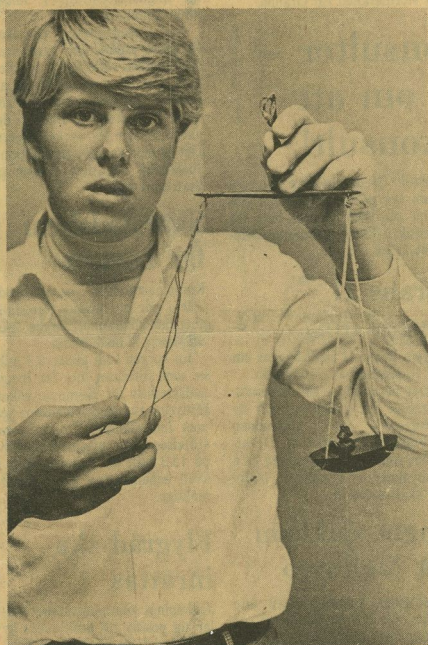


World Tour

Around the world
in nine months
1981 - 1982



OPIUM- VÅGEN



På sådana här vågar vägs opium i "gyllene triangeln".

22-åriga Michael Cederborg i Jönköping och hans jämn-gamle kamrat Johan Malm-qvist har varit ute och rest – en sträcka som motsvarar näs-tan två varv runt jorden!

Michael har kommit åter efter sju månader, kompsen ännu inte när detta skrivs.

Bland länder de besökt är Kina, Japan, Hongkong och Australien.

I Hongkong måste Michael läggas in på sjukhus för någon infektion. Av de tre klas-

Michaels souvenir från Kinaresan

serna-kategorierna där valde han den billigaste.

En dag när han låg i sängen och åt fick han nästan en chock: Mitt i maten snittade en läkare upp magen på när-maste grannen – i sängen och utan bedövning!

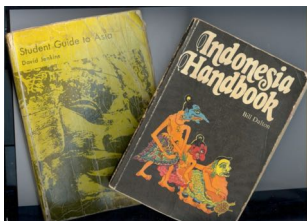
Se sidan 20.

Around the World in 9 months

Does anyone remember what it was like to travel as a Back-packer when the term was relatively some 40 years ago. This was the early days and Lonely Planet had just started to publish their series of guidebooks. In addition to the few guidebooks available at the time, one had to rely on word-of-mouth from one place to another. This was before South-east Asia had been swamped with back-packers luckily. Traveling over time is of course always a comparison with expectations and information available at that particular time and place. I can of course only compare with my experiences of today in the 2020-ies. I travel even more today, but seek places truly "off-the-beaten-track" – and I can assure the readers, that these are not easy to find these days.

I intend to sum up some of my impressions from this "Around-the-world-tour" which I did back in 1981-82. I still have my diaries complete with text as well as hand-drawn picture. I am glad I did write these at the time and that I kept them all these years.

I have spoken to people who did travel back in the 40-ies and 50-ies, and I can truly say I am envious of the way one traveled back in those days and compare that with my experiences from the late 70-ies and early 80-ies. This is a bit like comparing traveling today's travelling with this trip I made back in 1981. The differences are really huge. After my military service and before going to University, I took 9 months off to travel around the world. The first half with a good friend and the second half on my own. It took 6 months to plan ahead as well as saving-up money for the air-ticket and expenses during the trip. We were on a very tight budget, and had of course to supplement by working where ever it was possible to get some temporary work.





Stockholm – Helsinki - Moscow

Our first leg of the trip not without excitement

We started our adventure in Stockholm by taking the boat to Helsinki. From Helsinki we then continued by train to the border of Soviet Union (USSR), as it was at the time. We had decided to purchase some Rubel already in Sweden on the black market as these were not officially possible to purchase at the banks. Furthermore, it was prohibited to import or export Rubles to/from the USSR.

This was during the “cold-war” era and the control-apparatus was very well developed back then. One had also a lot of respect for the regime. So, coming closer to the check-points of the Finnish-USSR border, I remember we thought it better not to have the Rubel in our pockets, and so decided to hide them in the train compartment. We found space in the pull-down blind covering the window and stashed the cash there. Sure enough, at the border-crossing USSR military came through not only checking our tickets, but the compartment as well. They checked behind the heater, a small hatch our seats and under – so sure the fear was very real and justified.

I remember we travelled in green military pants which we had been able to get after our military service in Sweden. These were very convenient pants to wear as they had pockets everywhere. In hindsight, it was probably not the smartest move, as we stood out as a sore thumb and attracted even more attention from border-patrols.



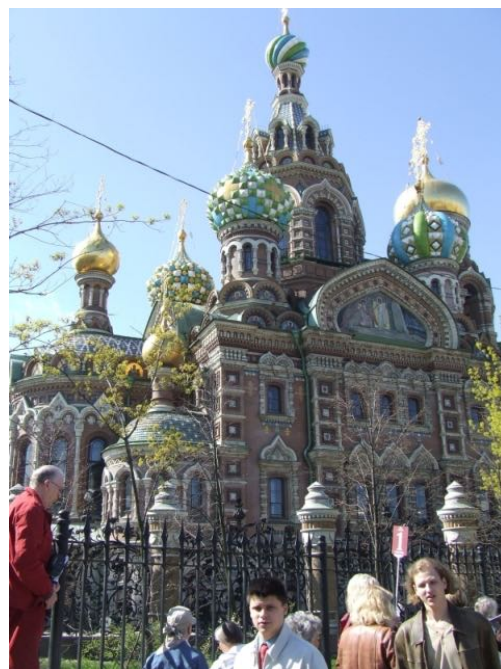


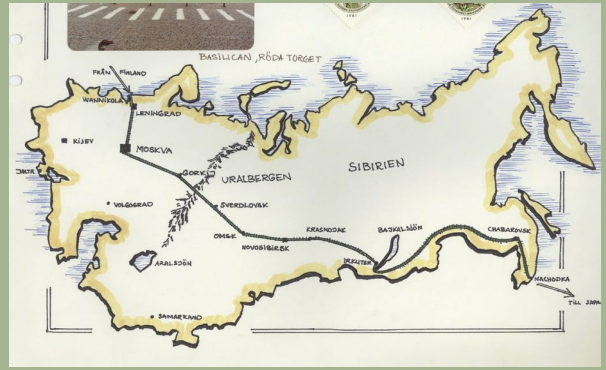
Moscow

This is during the In-tourist era, so we are met by an In-tourist guide upon arrival at the train station in Moscow. We have been checked in to the old Metropol Hotel. This is at a time and age when you don't move around freely as a tourist anywhere in the USSR. After having checked in we take a walk over to another important site – GUM – the famous department store. I can assure any reader that the GUM of today looks nothing like when we visited back in 1981. You do find some souvenirs, clothes and other very basic stuff, and as for the food-section – this is at a time where you mostly find pickled cucumbers and fruits on glass jars. No section for GUCCI or Prada which with other international brands today take up most of the space.

We make most of the important stops such as the red square, Kremlin, the Basilica and Lenin mausoleum. What makes our 2 day stop memorable is the VIP-treatment we are about to get.

Me and my travel mate Johan tell the reception that we are reporters from a Swedish magazine, focusing on Hotel & Restaurants and that we intend to write an article on the Russian cuisine and publish this then later. We asked if we could interview the director of the Metropol hotel. To our great surprise, only after a few minutes and a phone-call, we were guided up to the administrative section of the hotel to see the director. Not all that well prepared, we did conduct and interview with him. He then suggested we'd take a guided tour around the premises with him and an entourage of co-workers. We finished, we were invited to the top restaurant of the hotel and were treated to a seven-course dinner, including caviar as well as champagne. As if this was not enough, he asked if we wanted to go see the Bolshoi theatre in the evening and were given two tickets including transport of course. No bad for two 21-year olds who could not have afforded this on our budget. A really good start to our trip this was.



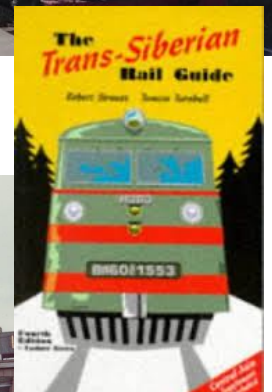


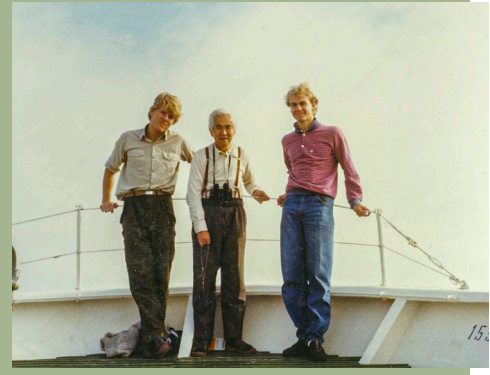
Moscow to Nakhodka

Hasn't everyone been dreaming about doing the trans-Siberian railway once in a lifetime? I certainly had, and this was one of the main reasons for wanting to travel the route we choose. So, now it was finally time to enter the train which would be our home for seven full days from Moscow all the way to Nakhodka (Vladivostok).

It takes a couple of days before we get to grips with the fact that it is barter trading which gives you the little extra service, food and seats in the restaurant compartment. If you don't have hard currency (dollars) or something else, like a knife, t-shirt etc., you'll have to put up with bullion or fish soup (without the fish) for seven full days. And the longer we travel, the less there is to get in the restaurant. What little there is to barter trade becomes a main occupation during the trip. It is also possible to get some food on the rare stops which the train makes. We are fortunate to travel in first or second class with our 4-bed compartments. The Russians travel in compartments often even without beds. The smell is almost unbearable when you do your daily exercise and walk the train up-and-down. The first days takes us across the Ural Mountains with a fantastic mountainous landscape to watch. After this stretch we continue through tundra and vast areas of birch trees. Seven days is a long time on a train, so I did walk the 19 compartments quite a few times up-n-down. We made friends with some Russians who invited us with Vodka, homemade bread and sausages. We played chess with them on many occasions. So even if they could not speak English and we not Russian, we got along quite well. We continued through south Siberia, lake Baikal and noted that the people who got on the train did quite different from the people starting out in Moscow.

On one occasion, I managed to win a game of chess. The wooden cover on the bench we sat, was then opened. Time for celebration. Out came six bottles of vodka, bread and sausages. Now it was time to get to know the real Russian tradition. I remember being in bed for almost a full day after the drinking session with a heavy hangover.





Nakhodka to Yokohama

We leave the port of Nakhodka on the Russian east coast as we are not allowed to enter Vladivostok being a restricted military zone by boat. It takes 2 days to reach Yokohama in Japan. The sea is very rough during our days at sea. Our destination after arrival to Yokohama is Tokyo. We find a traditional Ryokan to stay at – Okubo House – traditional with tatami mats and paper thin sliding walls.

I check my old diary and note that the average daily expense is very high – 90 sek (ca: 10\$/ day) (food and bed). This does not seem much in today's value, but back then it was very high. This was way about my daily budget and what I spent a few months later in China and south-east Asia. After a couple of days in the capital we decide it is time to make our way to Kyoto. Our end-goal in Japan is Shimonoseki from where we plan to take the boat to South Korea.

In order to keep our expenses in check, we decided to hitchhike to Kyoto instead of public transport. This turned out more difficult than expected and not to mention illegal. We took a local train out to the suburbs of Tokyo and where the highways start. We managed after some wait to get a ride and then a few more before we eventually arrived to Kyoto – the old capital – where we then spend a couple of days. Kyoto is very beautiful and also here do we stay at a Ryokan. Strengthened by our success hitchhiking from Tokyo, we decided to try it again down to Shimonoseki. After having waited more than 5 hours we were just about to give up and make our way back in to town, this after the police had stopped and instructed us to leave the highway, when a car stopped to pick us up.

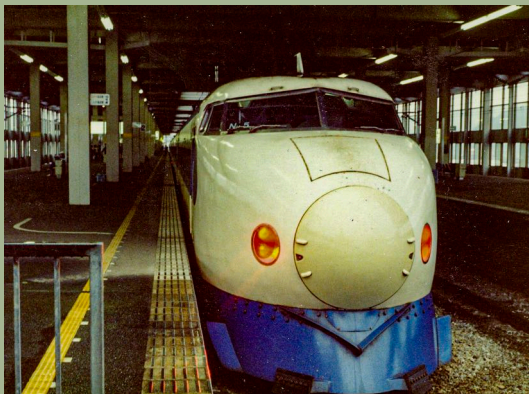




Royal treatment in Japan

The family who takes pity on us explains in bad English that is very unlikely that we will get lifts all the way to Shimonoseki, especially on a Sunday. They inform us they are not headed to Shimonoseki, but rather to Osaka. They invite us to come with them to Osaka and try and make our transfer by train from there instead. We realize this is probably the only real option we have – even though costly. It turns out Mr. Inoue and his family will be our host in Osaka for the coming 3 days. Mr. Inoue wants us to have the best experience from Japan, so he takes us around Kobe and Osaka. We are taken to an amusement park called Portopia and insist that we go a just about all of the rides with his kid-son. We continue by taking a speed-boat out a yacht in the bay-area where we are treated to Kobe beef and other delicatessens. The afternoon is spent visiting Osaka Castle and other sights. In the evening we continue by visiting a specialty restaurant where we are served Fugu-fish. This very expensive and also rather dangerous dish. Licensed chefs prepare this dish. Many people die each year from having eaten this fish as it contains a poison which needs to be carefully removed. No, we are really tired and think we are headed back to their apartment to sleep – but no such luck! Now, it is time for today's main event. Mr. Inoue has booked us a private Geisha party. This goes on until the early hours of the night. We land in his apartment thereafter, but then it is time for Cognac tasting and for Mr. Inoue to show and demonstrate his private samurai sword collection. We are later taken to the train station in Osaka, where Mr. Inoue purchases two one-way tickets to Shimonoseki on the Shinkansen, Bullet-train.

We are quite taken by this hospitality and all the amazing experiences which we have had during a couple of days together with Mr. Inoue and his family.





Pusan, Kuong-Ju and Seoul

After a ferry from Shimonoseki, Japan, we arrive to Pusan. Pusan, the second largest city after Seoul. Here we find hot, delicious food at only a fraction of the prices in Japan. Very few tourists, and we seem to be the main attraction – people wanting to take pictures of us where ever we go. After a few days in Pusan (Busan) we hit the road again and by now being quite seasoned hitchhikers, we try our luck again and make way up to the ancient capital – Kuong-Ju. Here we find a traditional place to stay at “Yeo-in-Sook”. The floors in the dormitory rooms are ca. ½ meter above the other floor as they are heated by wood from under. Very nice warmth and feeling, especially now during the winter month.

At the hostel we learn wash ourselves sitting down on a small stool with boiling hot water poured over from head-to-toe. Once you have cleaned yourself thoroughly, you climb down into a hot bath, but very slowly. This is heaven. I read again in my old diary about the food we eat. Hot and tasty. We eat kimchi, wooked squid with chili peppers and plenty of vegetables. We also try the Korean traditional drink – Soju – which is a strong liquor. Many local tourists dress up in their traditional colorful Korean dresses. We spend a few days here and then continue up to Seoul. A buzzing city with plenty to do and see. I will skip over these activities here as it will take too long to write about. I sum up a very enjoyable visit to this country however.



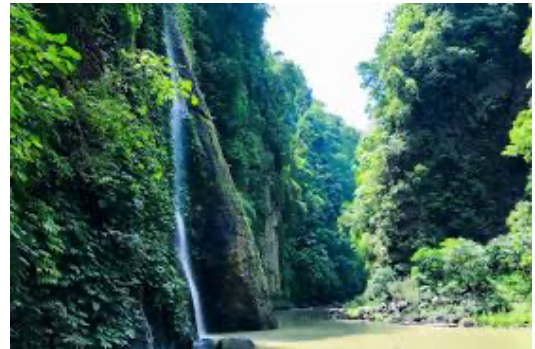


100-Islands and waterfalls

We fly from Seoul to Manila. The contrasts couldn't be bigger. Coming out of the airport we are met by a sea of people all wanting to make business of us newcomers into the country. It is hot and humid and take the local transports into town. We rest up a bit and then explore this metropolis over a couple of days and thereafter take the bus going north up the San Fernando and continue to Beccuit Beach (100-Islands). I remember this place still as a paradise. Empty beaches and small fishing communities scattered along the coast. No tourism to speak of yet. We stayed in a small bamboo hut and made small excursions.

On one such occasion, I hitched a lift with a couple of fishermen not knowing their home was out on a smaller Island rather than on the mainland. They invited me home for dinner and shared what little they had. Very welcoming, as most Philippines are. After a couple of days resting up on the beach, we headed back to Manila stopping at the terraced rice-fields (world renowned) and made some excursions around Manila. Went to see the Pagsanjan waterfall and more. Noted many people play chess in the Philippines. You see people everywhere in the public parks playing the game.

We were both taken (being 21 not surprising) with all the wooden carvings in all shapes and forms. Made the mistake of purchasing a heavy mahogany coffee-table with a glass top and many other things. Had to arrange for a shipment of these things back home to Sweden. Don't know what I was thinking. The stuff arrived 1 year later to Sweden, were probably used only a short while back home before being dumped. Worst purchase I ever made travelling.





5-day hospital stay...

Hong Kong needs hardly any closer presentation. For me, it was a nice revisit, as I was hear a couple of years earlier doing an essay at school on Hong Kong (18 at the time). Do you remember the old airport Kai Tak (closed in 1988)? If you have landed at this old airport back in the days, will remember approaching and landing. It felt as if you were coming in between the skyscrapers watching people dining and watching TV in their apartments – a bit scary really.

The planes had to have an absolute minimum of fuel before landing for safety. Nathan Road on the Kowloon side is possibly also familiar with those who visited Hong Kong in the 70ies and 80ies as many of the hostels / backpacker's hangouts were all located here. I remember you could stay for 2 \$ / night at some of these places then. Not sure they are even around anymore. This long before I had to travel regularly in the 90-ies, having set-up a daughter company with office and personal. Then, I could stay a bit more comfortable on the Hong Kong Island – Victoria. The week set-off to explore Hong Kong this time around and also to find someone who could arrange a visa into China, turned out quite differently.

Already when landing in Hong Kong, I started to feel an itch all over my body. After not having been able to sleep at all the first night at our hostel, I became unbearable. My friend joined me and we went to Queen Elisabeth Hospital. At this point my feet, face and body had swollen considerably. My eyes had walled up so that I could barely see. I was taken into the emergency ward for check-ups and some cortisone shots and a cocktail of pills. I would be five days before I was discharged. The section where I was being treated turned out to be third class and the cheapest of the sections in the hospital, this as my insurance did not cover these types of incidents at the time.

They were serving food (if it could be called that) in a ward with 70 people while at the same time performing minor surgery to a patient in the bed next to mine. They had only moving screens which would be rolled-up and partition. The stench was unbearable and I can only imagine the infection risk being very high. I had, god knows, how many doctors examining me and coming to different conclusions weather it could have been food poison or possibly the spider, that did bite me up around 100-Islands in the Philippines. The swelling however subsided and having lost 8 kg in a week, I was discharged, but still quite week. Had to rest up at the hostel for a couple of days before making any traveling's.

We got some contacts about “fake” visas into China. This was at a time when only organized group travelling into China was possible, and very few people did travel even this way. So, we were very pleased to get our visas, allowing us to travel to a number of predestined cities in China for a period of 1 month. We later managed to extend this visa period and adding new places to be visited as was required.





CHINA (Canton – Shanghai)



Now the real adventure begins!

We take the overfilled train from Hong Kong to the Chinese border and have to fight for space with Chinese going back to Canton (Guangzhou). We had to walk across the border and had our passports and visa checked at five different check-points. We jumped the first train going towards Canton, but the train conductor was not happy since we could not produce any tickets. We were asked to leave the train at the next stop, but decided to stay on and keep moving between the compartments. We could not quite make out what the real problem was. However, we made it all the way to the end-station in Canton. The train conductor had apparently not given up and kept arguing and pointing towards our tickets. In the end, we just left semi-running and got away.

In Canton, we had to register at a Public Security Bureau in order to visit other cities and also make it known, we had arrived to Canton. This also in order to be able to check in to a hostel/hotel. We also had to arrange for our train-tickets from Canton to Shanghai – another challenge. Do remember that in 1981, there were virtually no one who spoke English, nor any information in English as this was largely a country unfamiliar with tourists. What they had introduced however was a monetary system and bills for tourists in parallel to the local currency Renminbi, who every Chinese used. We were in reality not allowed to use the local currency. Furthermore, a train ticket for tourists purchased in Tourist currency would cost 10-times more than in local currency. So, we had to have a Chinese purchase for us in local currency the train-tickets in order to save a considerable amount. Luckily the tourist-currency could be used in special "Tourist-shops" and only for foreigners. Here you could purchase goods otherwise not available to the Chinese. Hence, a "win-win" situation had occurred here.

The China of 1981 cannot in any way be compared to the China I later came in contact with in the 90-ies when on business and setting up a subsidiary in Beijing. By then everything had changed dramatically. Not to mention what has happened since – the China of today anno 2020. Our train-tickets were exchanged for metal badge to be kept and shown on the journey. We stayed in a compartment with 3 bunkbeds high x 2 in each small room. We are the only foreigners and again attract a lot of interest. People are staring at us. The journey up to Shanghai takes a day and a half in one of these old steam trains. We are served pretty much the same food at all the meals consisting of a bullion soup with pieces of fat and some vegetables, not particularly filling, but cheap at 15 cents a portion. The "horse-blanket" serves its purpose as it is very cold at night. The second day we succeed to purchase some dumplings and oranges at one of the stops – success! Managed to find a Chinese who does speak some English. I note in my diary that I have now learned to count to 1000 in Chinese and also using sign-language for numbers, which is often used here. So, I am pretty pleased with myself.





Shanghai the green city

Very few would recognize oneself in Shanghai of today compared with some 40 years ago. I was back a few years ago and it is like two completely different places. My standing impression of the Shanghai of 1981 was one very green city with many streets lined with trees. The picture above was taken back then by me and shows the typical Chinese houses of the time. None of these remain today of course – sad. The picture top right is of the Bund, the famous water-front main street of old Shanghai build by the Americans to a large extent back in the early 50ies. Some of the main buildings are still intact and have been renovated fortunately. These buildings were the only ones 4-story high at the time. These were bank palaces in the old days.

We spend a lot of time planning our next stops. Also finding a hostel which will actually allow foreigners to stay is not easy at this time. Especially since there are no guidebooks or information available to consult. Restaurants are to be found scattered here and there, but they are mostly very simple serving very basic food. We visit a few museums, walk the streets and book tickets for a local Chinese Opera. After a lot of research, we eventually find where to book tickets for this Chinese Opera. In place we realize this is a long-extended suffering not very enjoyable to our untrained western ears. Two ladies sing in a theater without any acoustics accompanied by a man playing the piano. We sneak out in the interval all together and went for a cup of coffee instead.

We could not find two tickets available on the same train up to Beijing, so we had to split up. This is well before mobile phones, internet, easy contacting and all the rest. We agreed on meeting up at the main Hostel in Beijing a few days later.





The Forbidden City and more

After having purchased warm underwear, gloves and extra thick socks, one is now ready for winter in Beijing. What hits me is all the bicycles and almost now cars or trucks in the traffic. Everyone is bicycling. From the heavy traffic one can possibly see a few trucks, buses, horse-carriages, the odd taxi, but no private cars at all. People at this time are still largely all dressed in a uniform way wearing the characteristic green unisex uniforms with a hat. Peking (not Beijing as it is now called) feels like a big city, sure, but with very few tall buildings it is difficult to get once bearings around. We transport ourselves around on buses and rickshaws. The few young students who do speak some English quickly make contact in order to practice their English. This helps us as well, as we get free guiding and assistance to get around. Whenever we stop to get our bearings, people gather around and just stand and stare at us as if we were aliens. We do get used to this after some time though.

When I go through my notes in the diary, I note we have been very active in seeing many of the sights, even though some have been difficult to get to. Apart from the obligatory Chinese wall up at Badaling, we also made a stop at the Ming graves north of Beijing where 13 of all 16 Ming rulers are buried. When we visited, only two out of all had been excavated. The Great Wall is just as impressive as I had imagined. Tiananmen Square, where Chairman Mao, held his speech to the masses back on October 1st, 1949, is said to be the largest square in the world. Apart from the Mausoleum the main attraction opposite the square is of course the Forbidden City. It takes more than a day to see these premises thoroughly. I spare the reader all these details here – but of course very impressive and worth visiting. Jing Shan or “Coal Hill” near Beihai Park is the hill that became after digging the mound around the Forbidden City. From here one has a formidable view over Beijing and the Palace grounds.

After having spent a full day on arranging a flight from Kunming in the south of China to Rangoon, Burma (six weeks further down our visit) are we still waiting for a visa to Burma which we are hoping to get in Beijing. The afternoon was spent first trying to find the old summer palace which is almost destroyed today. Only some ruins left. It was very hard to find and I hitchhiked with a farmer (horse and cart) in order to get as near as possible. The last 5 km I had to walk. The palace was said to be built in the early 19th century after the Versailles in Paris. The following day, the “new” summer palace was visited, which is also well worth a visit.

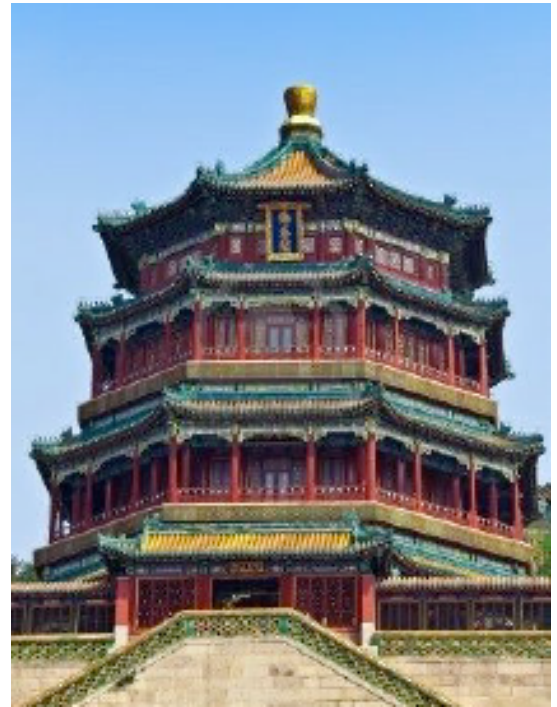




Invited to a Chinese home....

We were invited home to a Chinese family. This must have been quite exceptional, as the people at this time did not have a lot of freedom to engage with foreigners, nor were they allowed to invite to their homes. The person whom we met on the street, and who guided us all day, took no doubt, a very big risk doing so. They lived, like many Chinese did at the time in the Futong districts surrounding the city centers. Most of these areas are all demolished today, to give place to new high-rise buildings. In these old quarters with narrow alleys, we made our way to his family and home. We were served both good food as well as a cold beer. The father was a high official for a sporting committee, and we felt that they were quite well off with a TV as well as a fridge. Quite uncommon at the time for the average family. The flat had three bedrooms and a kitchen.

Our student-guide, decides to take the next day off just to guide us through Beijing. We are met by him at the Forbidden City and then taken around Beijing to all sorts of sights, which we would not have found on our own most certainly. We visit the Temple of Heaven and more. We also had help to find our first decent Chinese restaurant and were able to order some food which was actually quite delicious. Again, this is pre-tourist times with loads of restaurants catering to the tourist industry. Apart from using the bus-services, we also bicycled around town – a great way to see the city. On our last day our Burmese visas were ready (Yippee). Our guide also assists us in getting train-tickets to our next stop – Xian. He also writes a few notes in Chinese for us to use which will make it easier to ask questions in booking of a hotel, train, food or getting directions.





The Terracotta Army in Xian

Xian is not very well visited by westerners at this time back in the early 80-ies. This becomes very clear to us as there are no hotels prepared for westerners to check in to. We do find a hotel after a lot of searching named “Liberation Hotel”, where they will let us stay even though not being Chinese. First of all, you need a permit to stay in hotels, and the hotels on the other hand need a special permit for letting foreigners stay – quite complicated actually. We get help from a person from the same train we came down on, with getting a double room in the hotel. We do so as “specially invited foreign students” who are “lecturing” at a nearby university – I read in my diary. This cost is then 2 \$ / night per person.

1981 is many years before they had excavated and opened up Qin Shi Huang Di's grave. At the time of our visit it was not prepared for large groups of visitors. We found it also very difficult to get to the site and had to take different buses in order to reach it. We visit also a hot spring which is located close to the grave site, which is also renowned for the place where Chiang Kai Shek was captured. After the visit to the Hot springs, we walk across a hill to reach the excavation site. The site was discovered as late as in 1974, so by 1981 they had only managed to excavate a small portion of the site. Approximately 6400 terracotta soldiers and horses had been found by the time of our visit. We were let in together with a small group of Chinese visitors and were shown around the area where a lot of work was ongoing. We were told we could not photograph – which we still did when they were not looking (we thought). One of the guarding guides ripped the camera from me when she saw me photographing. I was thereafter taken aside to a small shack where the guards interrogated me (in Chinese mind you). I was able to leave first of ca: 2 hours – and lo and behold with the film intact in my camera.





The Yangtze Kiang river

After a short train ride from Xian to Wuhan – only 22 hours – there is no need for a sleeping compartment. I have still not gotten used to having 30-40 people standing staring at you as if I was an alien from another planet. It is fascinating to be able to travel at these early days with no tourists around. People are dressed poorly in shabby clothes. If we leave any food on our plates at a restaurant, someone will quickly come up and grab what little is left. You have not even left the table before this happens. Wuhan is our next stop and the main idea is to find a river-boat who can take us upstream on the mighty Yangtze Kiang river to Chongqing.

We manage to get tickets on the next boat although we are being told – again all these restrictions – that as a westerner you are only allowed to travel down-stream, not upstream. There are 5 different classes on the boat, and we are pleased with having selected class 4 which means sharing a cabin with 24 Chinese in 3-high bunk-beds. The 5-day trip costs as ca: 10 \$ each one way. It is not without excitement that we stand on dock and look out when we finally take off in the early morning. The firsts 2 days it's more like cruising on a sea instead of a river. The river is huge. On day three the river becomes narrower and we get to see more of the landscape and some mountains around. A few of the pictures are of quite poor quality (lower left)





Being sick on board – again!

Finally, I have gotten used to being the only foreigners around. Make start to make some friends on the boat with the few Chinese with whom one can communicate a little bit with. We were offered by the captain to dine in the separate staff restaurants, where they also serve much better food. For ca: 50 cents, you get a really good meal. The term good meal is to be compared to what we have gotten used to previously during the trip.

On deck outside we see what is fifth class booking. People just sleep outside on deck. I am glad we did not choose this option. After a couple of days, we also manage to use the showers available to first-class travelers. This was nice, although only cold water.

Time to get sick again! After 3 days at sea I take to the bed again, having vomited and feeling very weak. I get to see the doctor onboard (yes there is one). He has a small room filled with glass jars filled with Chinese herbs and stuff. Some of the jars contain animals. He takes down some of the jars and mixes some herbs in a small pouch for me. I have, of course, no idea of what he has prescribed to me. After having been in bed for 2 days the fever and stomach ache is slowly disappearing, and on the fourth day I am up again. We are now also nearing the famous “Three Gorges” pass. It is so beautiful. I read in my diary that much of the days on-board is spent playing table tennis and chinese checkers. We have also learnt to play Chinese cards. When sitting down and playing, there is always a group standing watching our every move. On day five a Chinese sales person on board is yelling “Wahn Sian, wahn sian”. This means we have now arrived to Chongqing. He is selling oranges – 5 for 7 cents. Taken! We pack-up what little we have and leave the boat and climb up the steep stairs from the river. Chongqing is a large industrial city with much of its business in shipping.





The Stone Forest – (Shilin)

It takes 36 hours from Chongqing to Kunming by train, including a couple of changes of train. I woke up in the morning on the train and looked out and noted the sky was blue and the temperature around 20 degrees Celsius. Quite a change from the winter up in Beijing. This makes you realize that China is indeed a huge country. Nice to be able to put away the warm long-underwear and gloves which were a blessing up north. Kunming is our last stop in China before we fly out to Rangoon, Burma in a couple of days. Before then, we will discover Kunming and the surroundings first.

Kunming is a sleepy country village, more than a large city – it feels. A lot of the old style of buildings are still to be found here.

We took a bus down to a small village close to the famous Stone Forest area south of Kunming and spent two full days here. We stayed at the Stone Forest Hotel and hook up with a couple of girls from Hong Kong, helping us out with the practical arrangements again. We visit a small village together where the indigenous group – the Sani people lives in their red limed traditional clay houses. The main produce seems to be corn and pepper. Both are dried up in the trees.

The Stone Forest or Shilin is a set of limestone formations about 500 km² large located in Shilin south of Kunming. The tall rocks seem to arise from the ground in a manner somewhat reminiscent of stalagmites, or like petrified trees. Hence the name “Stone Forest”. This is today UNESCO world heritage protected. We saw local indigenous groups of people performing in their traditional costumes.

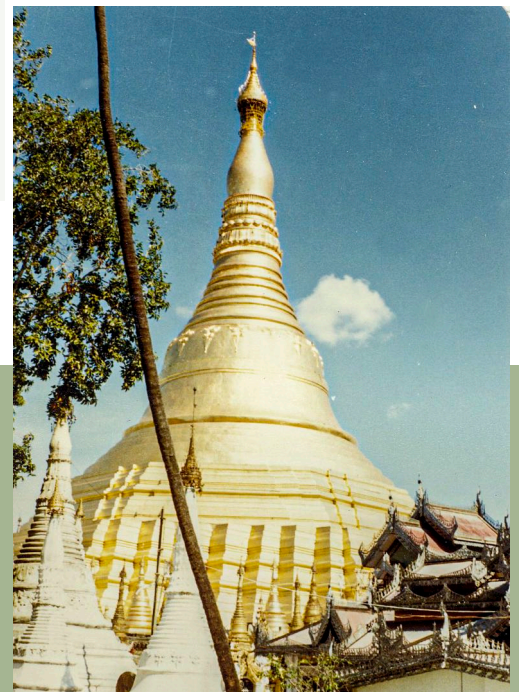




Rangoon and Mandalay

After a lot of paper-exercise, we finally are let through customs and immigration in Rangoon, Burma. Yes, this is still Burma and Myanmar, and Rangoon is still the capital. With the help of 1 \$ bill, a taxi takes us to the center of town. We first want to trade-off the cigarettes and bottle of whiskey which we were advised to bring in and exchange for hard local cash. We got as much as 30 \$ of this on the black market. This, at the time, is really hard-currency in Burma and gets us going for the full week – incredible. We still have to exchange a minimum amount of dollars in order to get the official exchange stamps into our passport. They will check upon departure that we have exchanged money officially as well.

At the time of visit, one can get a 7-day visa maximum, no extensions possible. We plan to do Rangoon, Mandalay and Pagan (Bagan) during this week. Rangoon is a sleepy old British colonial town, with many buildings dating back to the time of their control. It feels more like a small village than a large city. The city is very green with parks everywhere. The famous Shwedagon Pagoda is on our list of things to do and see. It is not possible to move around freely in the city. The military is in control. There are also people following our every move. We board the night train, which we booked, up to Mandalay. It is very hot and humid. We arrive the following afternoon. Only a few hostels do take foreigners. The Burmese people are very friendly and curious and speak much better English than the Chinese do. People are however not so willing to make contact, as the military regime does not want too much interaction between us. The first two hostels do not take us, being foreigners, but the third one does. Man San Dar Win Guesthouse (2\$/night). We visit the famous Kuthadaw temple located high up on a hill. There are 1729 steps, quite a challenge in the heat, to get up. The view is of course magnificent. We have a view over "the world's largest book" with the 729 marble pages spread out in the enormous field down below. The local market is also visited – very genuine – with a people, bicycles, horses and animals all mixed together.

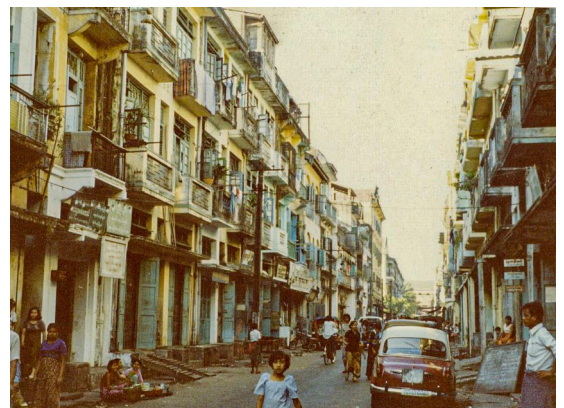


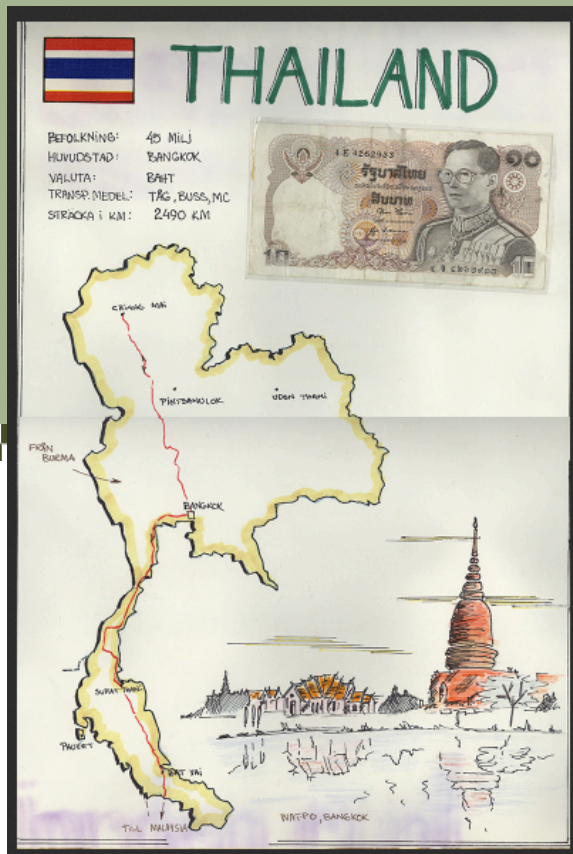


The magical Pagan

After a rough transport on the back of a lorry from Mandalay, we arrive to Nyangoo just north of Pagan, from where we hitchhike the last stretch. Pagan at this point in time is not even a village, but more a few spread out shacks more than houses. We find a place to check in – Si Thu. Pagan consists of thousands of pagodas and stupas spread out through an enormous area. The place feels almost deserted. There are no tourists in sight anywhere. So, off we go and to crisscross this enormous area. What heightens the feeling even more is the fact that you have the place to yourself. I climb up on a couple of the temples and have a marvelous view over the landscape and see as far as the river – Irrawaddy.

After a few days here in Pagan, it is time to leave this scenic landscape. The means of transportation are, lorry, horse and carriage – plus walking. This in order to get to Thazi where we hoped to find a train back to Rangoon. We do find a couple of seats luckily as we need to leave the country the day after latest. Today, it took all day to travel 170 km. The station manager of the Train station says the train has been fully booked since long, but he was hopeful all the same that a few seats should be possible to arrange. While we wait, we are invited to his home where we are offered dinner and a possibility for a shower and change of clothes. We had a very interesting discussion over dinner with this man, who earlier worked as a Professor at the university in Rangoon. He was forced to leave when the military seized power, and has since been working at the railways as local station manager. It is very dangerous to speak out in this country about the Military and the government he says. He was very outspoken about the situation in the country, and not very hopeful for the future.



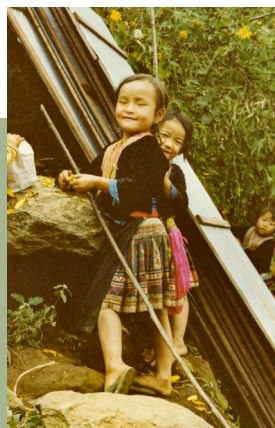


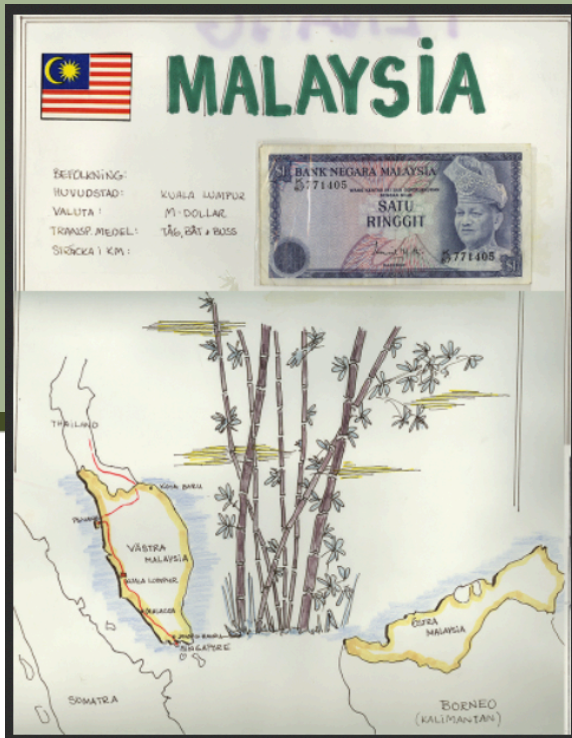
Bangkok and Chiang Mai

Leaving Rangoon by flight to Bangkok on a small Fokker F-28. Watching Rangoon from the air, it looks more like a dense jungle than a city of a million people. Stayed a couple of days at one of the guesthouses on Surawongse road. Picked-up seven mail from the central post office (Poste restante). Yes, you heard right. This was back in the days when people still communicated via mail by postal service.

Having done most of the sights in Bangkok, including the Royal Palace, Wat Arun and Wat Poh etc. I felt it was time to move on and see something more of the country. Decided to take a bus up to Chiang Mai in the north to do some trekking. Hooked up with a sister and brother from New Zealand. We stayed together in Chiang Mai and also rented some motorcycles and headed out into the north. We had planned to visit a hill tribe, but the roads ended up in just smaller trails, so we had to leave the bikes and do the last bit by foot. Met a Thai girl with her own car whom I spent two days with. She was involved in a children's shelter which she ran. She took me around and showed me Chiang Mai's all sights and also a few good restaurants. She, treated me to all these things. Time to get back to Bangkok again and arrange for next journey. I stay in Bangkok a couple of days to sort out some practical things like visa for Indonesia, train ticket to Penang and wiring money.

Take a night train down to the Malaysian border town of Had Yai. Shared a coupe with a mother and her son. The son took the liberty of pooping on the floor – dear god. The smell for the remaining couple of hours was unbearable.





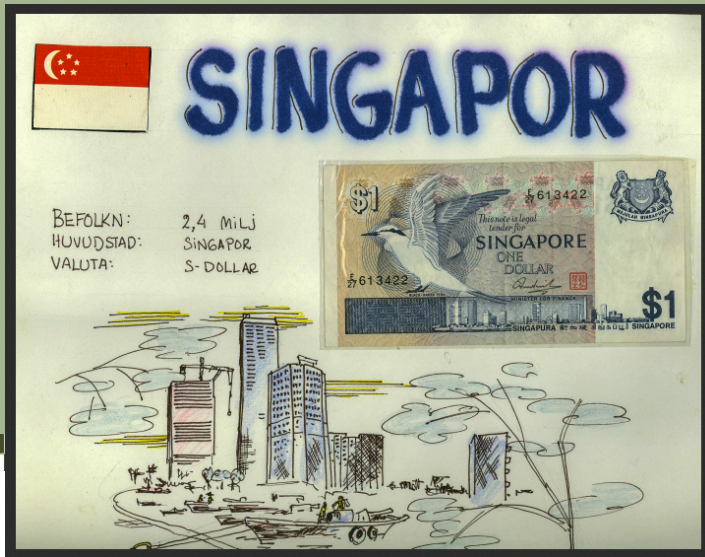
Kuala Lumpur & Penang

Having crossed the border between Thailand and Malaysia, it took me 7 hours to travel by road the 150 km to Butterworth on the coast. The landscape is quite different compared to Thailand, here with well-organized Palm-tree growths producing palm oil. I take the boat across to Penang – this is ages before the bridge connecting the island with the mainland was built. I take a bicycle taxi to my hotel – New China Hotel – in Georgetown. The cost is ca: 1\$ per night. The first people I run in to is a group Swedish traveler celebrating Lucia drinking loads of beer. Nice to be among fellow-country men again since it has been awhile.

Banana porridge for breakfast turns out to be a hit. I tried out the Indonesian embassy here, but they insisted I could produce a ticket out of Indonesia first. Chulia street is the main street in Georgetown, which is buzzing with activity. I bought a couple of books in a secondhand book shop, some sun-screen, packed-up and took a local bus up to the north side of Penang to a small fishing village called Telok Bahang. I found a “stay-in” with an Indian family for 70 cents per night. I spend a couple of days here enjoying being alone on the beach, the sun, a good book and great banana pancakes. I read in my diary that I have a mustache, now all white from the sun. I have not had beard nor a mustache in my whole life. This I have completely forgotten. Must have looked hilarious. There are a few other travelers staying at the same place smoking marijuana. Not uncommon at the time.

Back in Georgetown to pick-up my visa for Indonesia. I also have to show sufficient funds for staying – which equals 200 \$ - and the ticket out of the country, which I do. So now all set for Indonesia after Singapore which is my next stop. I take a long-haul bus down to Singapore, plastic seats and very uncomfortable. I travel with an Aussie, who tells me they are quite strict at the border into Singapore. Rumors has it the long-haired backpackers need to cut their hair before being allowed to enter. The customs go through our back-packs, but we are whisked through without any issues.





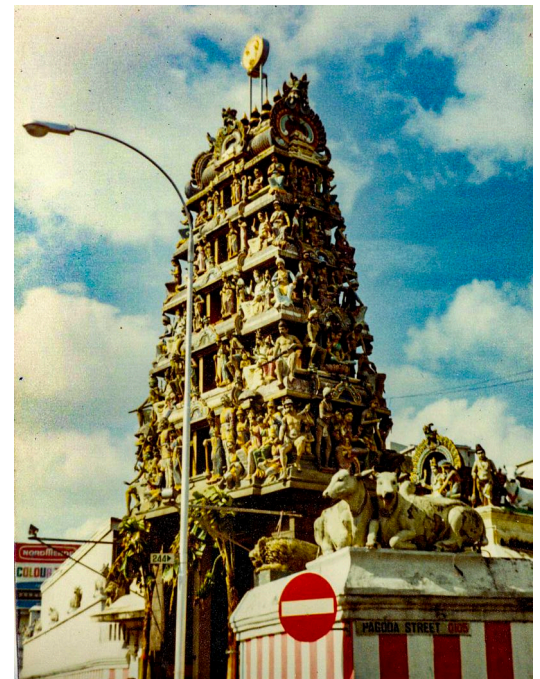
Singapore

We made our way from the border to central Singapore and Bencoolan street where all the cheaper hostels are located. Not that there are any really cheap places comparatively, as you have to pay 7-8 \$ / night here. Surprise, surprise, when I had decided on a dormitory and checked in, who did find there by not Johan, my travel buddy for 4 months. We split up in Bangkok, as we had different things and countries we wanted to visit. Furthermore, Johan was planning to continue his travels with his girlfriend who was about to join him from Sweden. However, not yet arrived.

I read in my diary that I was on the hunt for a Walkman which I found for ca; 50 \$ which was supposed to be a good price at the time. Seems very expensive today of course. Went in the evening with Johan to an Indian restaurant to eat. I was nice to see him again after a few weeks apart. He had also put-up with a beard. We continued thereafter to the Norwegian Seamans church where they served delicious waffles free-of-charge.

Bought a used travel-guide book from another short-term friend – David, which I had planned on using in Indonesia – The Indonesian Handbook – the bible of guidebooks to Indonesia.

Went to the Botanical Garden for a visit. Really nice oasis in the middle of this bustling city. One part of the park was almost jungle like with flora and fauna from near and far. It strikes me, having been back on a couple of occasions later on in life, that the Singaporeans already back then had a strong sense for the environment and ecological planning and thinking. Went to see a movie with a friend in the afternoon before making my way out to the airport for a flight from Singapore to Jakarta



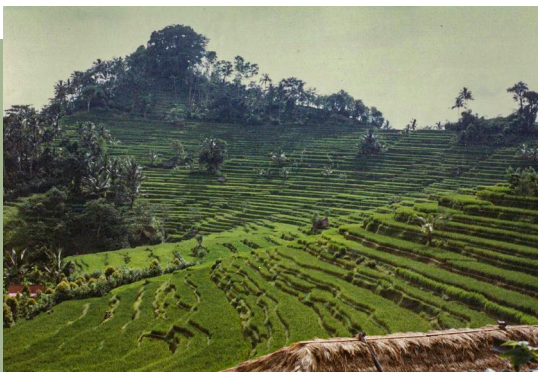


Jakarta is flooded at Christmas

Shared a taxi with a guy from Switzerland as we arrived to Jakarta at midnight. We aimed for Jalan Jaksan street where all the guest houses are located in Jakarta and found a place to stay at. We arrived on christmas eve and the place was actually fully booked, but they took pity on us and said they'd arrange something, and they did. Christmas celebration was still going on when we arrived at the guesthouse.

The following day we try out the traditional Bandung kitchen, famous for Indonesia. The basics are that they cram the table with various dishes and you eat what you want, and only pay for what you eat. Today is Christmas Day, and as we are staying with a Christian family they celebrate with a Christmas tree as well. We are all invited for a Christmas table with lots of good food – Meat, fish, chicken, rice, stews, vegetables, fruit and more. The owner of the house also reads a Christmas prayer before we can eat.

Next, I can hear it starts to rain and then the rain increases. After a while it is as if heaven has opened up completely – it pours down. An hour later, we have two decimeters of water inside the house. I had left my backpack on the floor which is now soaked with water – yikes. I called home today and spoke to my parents. Nice to hear their voices. We mostly correspond via mail (post) – poste restante. You get a response mail type 4 weeks after you have sent yours. Can you imagine this today – no didn't think so. But this is how it was back then. Spent a couple of days exploring Jakarta, not easy as many of the streets were flooded. Many transported themselves by canoe on the streets which were now mostly filled with water in the area we were staying. In parts the water was covering the first floor of many houses. I saw many people who had taken their precious belonging and moved up to higher ground waiting for the water to subside.





Jakarta to Bali

Took a train to Surabaya on the east coast. The trains move very slowly with the flooding's everywhere. The train also had to stop as one person had fallen off the roof of the train. I have been living off bananas and bread all day. When we eventually arrived at Surabaya, 8 hours late, the direct evening bus to Denpasar, Bali had already left. We decided to make it anyway, a traveling friend and I, with various local transports. We took a local bus down to the harbor and then a ferry across to Gilimanor and then a minibus to Denpasar. From Denpasar two local "Bemus", mini-buses, to our final destination – Kuta Beach.

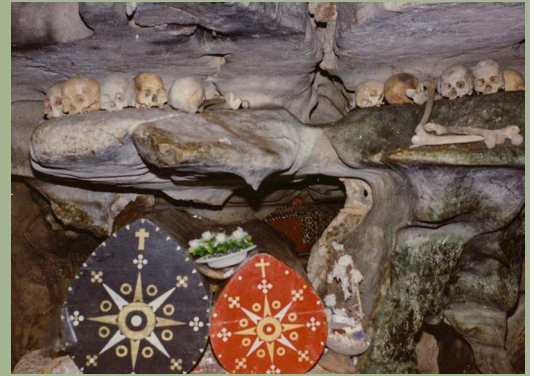
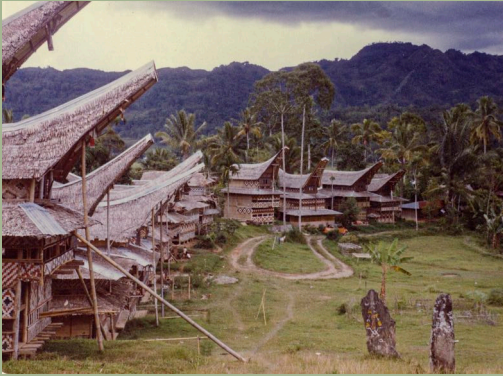
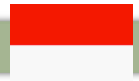
Checked into a small hostel and freshened up. Nice to take a shower after two days of travelling from Jakarta. The beaches here must be among the best in the world. I ran in to three others Swedes, all which I had bumped into at various places in south east Asia on my trip. Hooked up with some Indonesian girls from Java, who were here vacationing. Had dinner at one of many local joints. We do also a bar-round as this place is mostly famous for just that. It is called surfers paradise for all the Aussies coming up here to party and surf. It is extremely humid and hot, and no A/C.

Some sort of festival going on here with a long procession of women carrying various fruit in baskets on their heads. In the evening I joined the girls I had befriended from Java to go and see a traditional Balinese dance called Kecak dance. I really enjoyed this suggestive performance.

Went around the Island to explore a bit using the local transportation i.e. mini buses. We went to visit a place called Monkey forest, a park where there were said to be lots monkeys, and sure enough. We also went up in the mountains to a place called Peneloran giving us a marvelous view over Batur lake and Batur mountain. We continued down to a place called Nusa Nusa on the southern tip of Bali where we had dinner. Managed to get a visa to Australia at their consulate in Denpasar.

I read in my diary that the days are spent touring the Island and the evenings for bar-hopping and partying. New Year's Eve in Kuta Beach seems to have been quite fun. I went to see more of these traditional dances and where people perform with paper figurines.





Ujung Pandang (Makassar) – Rante Pao

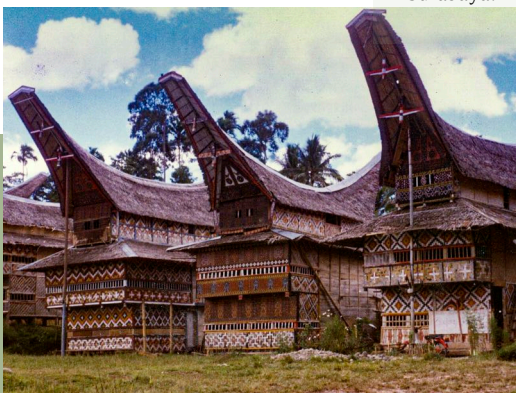
I took a very early flight from Denpasar to Ujung Pandang, today know as Makassar on the Island of Sulawesi (formerly known as Celebes). This a large island between Borneo and Iran Jaya, and a lot less visited of all the Islands in the Indonesian archipelago.

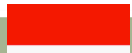
Arriving around 09:00 in the morning I had a full day to explore Makassar. This is a former Dutch spice colony, and they had a base here in Sulawesi. I walk around the town and look at what is left of the old fortress. I also arranged a night bus going north up to the village of Pare Pare and Rantepao. Before leaving I also had to arrange a flight back to Java and Surabaya. A few domestic airlines to choose from. I settled on Merpati at 28 \$ for the flight a week later.

I note in my diary that the bus is very crowded and they have squeezed in much more people than there should be. The roads are also in very poor condition. So, all in all not the best of trips. We arrive to Rantepao at 05:00 AM and I check in to a local Guest house called Flora Lose Man. I haven't seen any foreigners since I stepped off the plane yesterday morning. This area is known for the burial rites. So, I ask around if there are any burials to take place in the coming days. I also visit the local market which seems very genuine only catering to the locals. The sell anything from pigs, chickens, buffalos to vegetables, fruit to pots and pans.

I wanted to see the old village of Keté built in a traditional way with Torojan houses. I had to walk around 10 km to get there on small trails and roads in parts. Close by was also their burial site (picture above right) where coffins were stored openly in open caves carved out of the mountain wall. There were also dressed up figures in white standing guard over the dead. Half way on my walk back to Rantepao, I ran in to a person who actually wanted to practice his limited English. He knew of a small village nearby where they were holding a funeral celebration today. He accompanied we over the rice-fields and some thick vegetation to this place, and sure enough. The celebration was ongoing with slaughtering of pigs, roasting of pigs over an open fire. I had brought packages of cigarettes which I offered and was invited to take part in the celebrations. I tasted the food and some very strong homebrewed liqueur. Have to watch out not to use my left hand when eating and not pointing at someone with a figure or touching someone's head. This supposedly rude. The food is of course eating with your hand on a palm leaf is used to put it on.

I spend a couple of days around Rantepao and enjoy the community and lack of tourists. It is a long way back to Makassar on all sorts of transports and hitchhiking. There I have to spend an extra day waiting for a flight out to Surabaya. A small propeller plane fully loaded with people, cargo (inside) as well as some pigs. Quite a sight ☺





Yogyakarta and Borobudur temple

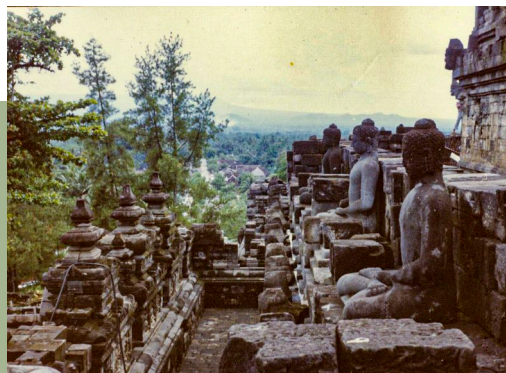


After a night stop-over in Surabaya, I take leave for Yogyakarta by train this time. Took a bicycle taxi to the area where the cheaper hostels are located. They are called "Losemen" in Indonesia. I checked in to Lima Losemen, which I was recommended by other travelers. I walk around the local market and bazaars and find an endless supply of local batik. I take time to look around Yogyakarta and see the old Imperial palace among other things. It is said the walls are 1 km long and 3 meters wide, so it is quite a huge area. Some 20,000 people are also living inside these walls. I use an English-speaking Indonesian guide to show me around these vast grounds. The layout and planning remind me a bit of the Forbidden city in Beijing. Did also see the bird's market and the water palace, which I reached through narrow alleys lined with picturesque settings.

I met a few old travelling friends at the hostel, this is something which happens all the time. It seems many are hitting the same trails and stops. We have dinner together at the local restaurant – superman. Fried noodles and banana pancakes – my new favorite. I have some small kids from the neighborhood take care of my laundry. They bring it home and deliver it the same day for a very small charge. I usually do the laundry myself, but it does not always come at as clean when doing it in the sink in the bathrooms of the hostels.

Today, I started early for the main attraction of the Yogyakarta region. The Boobadour. I take a couple of local buses and have to walk the last bit. Just as impressive as I had expected. I spent a full day around this important temple site.

I then rest-up a couple of days in Yogyakarta, read books, sell-off some of my old clothes and books. I pack-up and take a train back to Jakarta, which is a whole day event, leaving at 07:00 and arrive only at 22:30. I check in to the same hostel, where I stayed earlier in Jakarta. Leave for the airport the next day. Finally – going to Sydney, Australia. This I look forward to. Not surprised when I meet up with my old friend John, who is booked on the same flight. He is supposed to meet up with his Swedish girlfriend there. He was really looking forward to this he says.





Sydney for 3 long weeks

They were really thorough at customs / immigration when arriving at Sydney. They went through all my belongings and had me clean my boats. Apparently afraid of getting and germs or bacteria this way. I decided to surprise my former girlfriend from Sweden who, had since a few months back moved to her parents in Sydney.

...and yes, she was surprised to say the least, but positively so. She invited me in. Her parents were also home, whom I had met back home in Sweden the year before. They did not only invite me in for lunch and dinner, they were kind enough to let me stay for 3 full weeks. Eva, and I had subsequently a lot of time together and she did take me around Sydney to see all the sights worth visiting. We initially also spent a lot of time on the beach. As they were living in Coogee which is on the sea front at Coogee beach this was only 3 minute's walk away.

Having settled in, I offered to help out at the hotel which her parents owned and were operating in the down town area. I did this for a couple of weeks doing all type of shores from cleaning the rooms to reception work. I was even paid for this work, which felt a little embarrassing as I was staying with them and being fully feed without any charges. They treated me also to all sorts of nice restaurants around the bay area. I even got to go to their dentist to have a regular check-up on my teeth. Such hospitality – really kind of them. After 3 weeks together in Sydney, Eva had long since planned to go back to Sweden for a while to sell off her flat and furniture and then move permanently to Sydney. So, it was time to say goodbye for this time and move on. Moving on meant not leaving Australia, but try and see a bit more of the country. I decided to go north along the coast to see the Great Barrier reef, something I always wanted to do.





The Gold Coast & Barrier reef



Spent the night at a Sydney Youth hostel down town on the day when Eva left. Packed up and took a train up to Brisbane where I spent a day and also investigated what areas of the gold coast and barrier reef would be good to visit. I decided on Rockhampton as the next stop. Took an evening train up there and checked in to a youth hostel. They also administered the only hostel out on the Island – Great Keppel Island – which I then booked for a full week. I had to bring most food out to the Island myself, as there is only a small kiosk on Island not fully stocked.

I take the only transport out – the speedboat – to the Island the following morning. The sky is clear blue and the weather is warm and tropical. All other people on the boat are young people going out to enjoy themselves, partying, diving and snorkeling. A mixture of Aussies and other nationalities.

I read in my diary that I met a pretty Australian girl – Vicki -, with whom I spent most of the week. We had long walks on the beach, snorkeled together and got along well. She was on a break from University where she studied Finance & Economics. I had an incident out on the reef as I got carried away snorkeling and ran into some sharks. I panicked and tried to stand up on the coral, but cut myself quite badly. Not a good combo with sharks around and blood from the cuts I made. I managed to make it back to shore with some help and had to spend the next two days out of the water to heal. We barbeque in the evenings, drink beer, play cards and have fun for the full week. Then it's time to make it back to the mainland.

I get to go with 2 other Australian guys who have an old car. They plan to drive the 1600 km back down to Sydney. We drive taking turns all through the day and night. We pause also and stop for breaks and food. It is often very far between the petrol stations. We have more than one incident with running in to kangaroos which is like our deer/mouse problems on the roads back home. We stay with some friends of theirs and are well feed.

I stay on 1 more week in Sydney before its time to move on. Eva, parents, are kind to take me in for these days, and take me out again to various restaurants and look after me really well. I help out at the hotel again with various shores. Time to pack-up and leave for New Zealand via Noumea (New Caledonia).

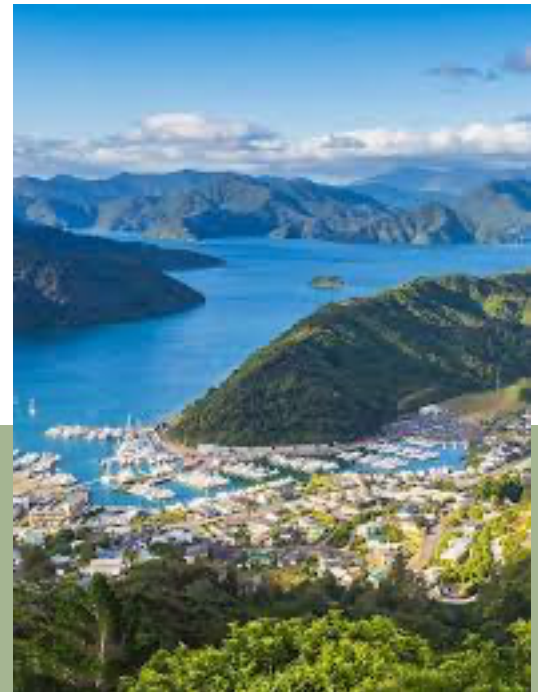




Auckland to Christchurch

Arrived just before midnight to Auckland. No, public transport to the city center so I had to take a taxi – very expensive. When I finally arrived to the youth hostel I was hoping to stay at, they had of course closed for evening. Had to find an alternative place, not the easiest. I got a lift to another place – Boys town – who took me, although fully booked. Had to sleep on a wrestling mattress in their gym, but at least someplace to turn in to. Had to leave though at 08:00 AM, as they were going to use the gym.

I bought a 1-month train-boat-bus pass which cost me 60 \$. This turned out to be an excellent idea. With this arranged, I called a lady friend whom I met up at Great Keppel Island a month earlier. She lived in Auckland with her parents. So, she took me around town and also invited me home to dine with her family. I had a night train booked (sleeping compartment) down to Wellington. The weather is a bit colder as I approach Wellington, the southern tip, and capital, of the north Island. Breakfast included, which was nice, arrived in the morning well rested in Wellington. Made my way directly down to the harbor to catch a ferry across to Picton on the South Island. I stayed for a day to look around the Picton, beautifully situated in the archipelago surrounded by mountains. Took the train down to Christchurch on the south eastern coast of NZ. Most hostels are fully booked here, but I do find a place and share with a Britt whom I met on the train. I explore the city for a couple of days before I continue further south, all the way down to Dunedin. Took a direct bus and arrived at this lovely British influenced town and architecture. The hotel I am booked looks like an old castle. I stay here and to explore the city and surroundings. Lovely place.



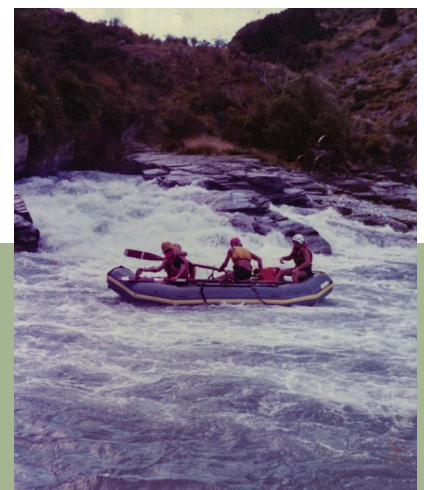
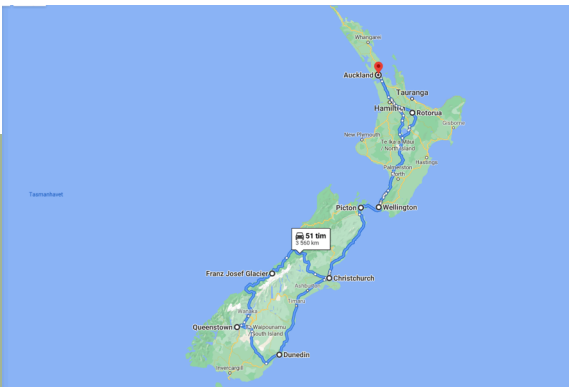


Queenstown and river rafting

Travelled by bus through some really nice landscape from Dunedin to Queenstown. Checked in to a really nice hotel here and met a few other Swedes, so it got to be quite a few beers and very late before I got in to bed. We made company the following day and took a lift up to the top of the mountain and had a great view from there (see picture top right). The next day I had decided to try river rafting with a local tour operator. This was a whole day adventure. We walked some of the more difficult passes and got instructions on how to tackle these before they'd let us in the rafts and go down. We did not make the most turbulent passes – we flipped over. So, it was just to lay very still and just go with the flow until we could be picked up further down. Quite an adventure, and luckily no one got injured (some very bad quality photos below right).

Next challenge was now to visit Franz Josephs glacier. We again went through some virgin forests and amazing landscape. As I arrived to the small village and hostel being the base for my trip up to the glacier. Not quite knowing what I was in for, I set out myself on this trip around lunch time. I had no idea what I was in for, nor did I have the right gear to hike a glacier of this magnitude. So anyway, I went and got quite far up, realizing that not only did it get quite cold, it was also approaching late afternoon. I decided to abort the attempt of reaching the top, half way up, and started my decent down again. Now it was getting really dark. I got back at midnight to the lodge/hostel frozen and quite shaken. I had made it back but only just. This was really stupid.

I rested up for a whole day and then decided to make it back up to the northern Island in time for my flight out of Auckland. On the way up, I stopped at Rotorua where some of the native Maori people have settled. I spent a couple of days around here to explore before going back to Auckland in time for my flight to Tahiti, French Polynesia.





Papete and Bora Bora

Left Auckland, NZ on a Friday and arrived to Papete, Tahiti on a Thursday, having just crossed the date-line. I wanted to get away from the relatively dull and touristic Papete to the Island of Bora Bora. I had just missed the once a week boat which goes out that way, so I decided to take a plane instead. The small prop-plane landed on a coral reef surrounding the Island. I took the small boat from the reef into the Island itself and made my way to “Chez Amie” a small place I had been recommended. This one of very few places where one can stay (3 \$/night) if you're not on a budget for the top hotels of course. There is of course another Swede already checked in. A 28-year-old doctor. We cook together in the small kitchen available to travelers. I have 10 days here and the days go by reading books, snorkeling, exploring the Island and from time-to-time sneaking into the Club Mediternaee hotel, where it is possible to get free drinks even without the customary plastic pearls which you are supposed to pay everything with.

I have been bicycling quite around the Island on a few occasions, and been out with the local fishermen. My Swedish friend, Janne, leaves today by boat back to Tahiti. It takes 20 hours apparently. The local bar where we go in the evening is run by a local guy. When he opens the fridge, he always removes his sneakers first which he has put in on top over the beer to keep them cool. I am also fortunate to be able to catch the annual flower festival here, where all the locals gather to perform dances in traditional dresses.

I take a flight back to Papete and then connect with my main flight to Los Angeles. In LA, I stay with my distant relatives for a couple of days and do L.A. It was nice to see them again, as I meet them back in 1976. The three brothers, Nils, Axel and Seved Cederborg's father was a brother of my Grandfather who emigrated to America back in the early century. From LA, I continued via London, a stop-over for a couple of days to Sweden where this journey ended.



Michaels fantastiska resa:

Mutade sig in i Kina!

En stricka, som motsvarade nästan två varv runt jorden har avverkats av 22-åriga Michael Cederberg från Jönköping. Hans jämgamla kamrat, Johan Malmqvist, samma plats, var resekompis, men de två delade på sig senare delen av turen. Michael är åter efter sju månader - Johan har när detta skrivs inte kommit tillbaka än.

Gränserna härn med exempelvis dessa länder och "anhalter": Finland, Sovjet, Japan, Sydkorea, Filippinerna, Hongkong, Kina, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesien, Australien, Nya Zeeland, Tahiti, USA, England... Det här ska av naturliga skäl inte bli någon fullständig resebeskrivning. Vi väljer att ur samtal med Michael plocka något om människor och miljöer. Genom bl.a. extrapass fick anhållarna, även perger till ett sambands. Till sisten skall det för Michael bli ekonomiska studier och för Johan gymnastikskola, är det mening.

Inte turiststråk

De bögger älska på egen hand - ofta vid sidan av turiststråken. Det gick bra - i o m i Kina.

Men Moskva tillhörde de första "stopoverna". Beställningarna i landet är sådana, att det är nödvändigt att i förväg boka in sig på hotell. Det blev en flott ständ, men i övrigt fick man leva enkelt för att spara på slantarna.

Johan hade extraknäck på restaurang, så han ville gärna se bakom kulisserna på det nordiska hotellet. "Njet", sa direktören. Men se, ett arbetsstyg från Ru-

mada i Huskvarna öppnade alla spårar! De svenska gräbbarna kunde under chefskockens och andras ledning täna på allt de ville. Och på kvällen var de mest uppslappade gäster i matsalen.

Jeans 150 dollar

Sovjet från en annan sida: Michael och Johan blev som många andra varse rysarnas köplust på västerländska varor. För jeans erbjöds 150 USA-dollar... Tullare, rikade hur många jeans resenärer hade med sig för att ingen skulle göra illegala extrabeställningar.

Så tog Michael och Johan transsibiriska järnvägen till en plats, som heter Nachodka på östkusten, inte så långt från Vladivostok. De blev lite besvrens över vad somliga brukar säga utgåva det stora rådgivartyret. Ett par dagar björkskog, ett par dagar tundra, lite jordbruksbygd - ja, det blev lite enformigt, tycker Michael.

Vis kontakt med andra resenärer hade de första rysarna åker att spela schack, och när Michael lyckades slå en motståndare, blev han extra accepterad. Rysarna visste föresen vem Ulf Nilsson var.

Men Michael tyckte sig först, att många hade alkoholproblem. De drack mycket och ofta. Hela dricksglas med vodka kunde det bli...

Gästfrihet

Så i Japan några veckor. Där mötte svenskar en exempel på gästfrihet av som de först tyckte alls inte oroadande mått. De kom i kontakt med en japansk, förmögen familj, som bjöd på varjehanda: Dyras tillgångar, som pojkar inte hade råd att köpa på sig själva, flotta restaurangbesök, golfspelt... Men familjen hade inga bakslar. Men hade råd att köpa och



Vad är det? Jo, en vattenpipa, som Michael Cederberg skaffade som souvenir i Kina. (Foto: Henrik Grönroos).

då skulle den japanska gästfriheten visa.

Sjukhus tredje klass

Kontrast: I Hongkong rikade Michael ut för en sjukdom. Kanske var det en infektion. Han fick utslag, artrit och fötter svullade kraftigt. Så svensken lags in på ett sjukhus.

Där fanns tre klasser-kategorier att välja på. Michael valde den billigaste. Patienterna låg tätt, till på tillstopp, rör, kläder, och annan personal trängde sig fram. En dag när Michael låg på sängen och åt, fick han närmast en chock. Men under maten kom likare och opererade närmaste gränsen - där han låg i sängen och utan bedövning! Medicinmannen stötade upp i magen för rågen åkomma, vilken det nu kunde vara.

Michael fick nog och lämnade sjukhuset så snart som möjligt.

Till Kina

På reschryder och liknande i Hongkong lärde sig Michael och Johan för om det var möjligt att få visa till Kina. Nej, det gick bara för organiserade resgrupper.

Men såg sig mellan fingrarna ("och ordnade med hjälp av ett par handslag") en officiell inbjudan till Kina. Svenska sig skickades till sekretariatet i Stockholm.

sera över där - och nu var de kinesiska gäster.

875 mil

I detta väldiga land åkte de tåg och andra samfärdsmedel 875 mil. Kinesiska muren och kungadömaras här förde till sådant man måste se vid en sådan här resa.

Men svenska ågnade sig också åt sådant som några dagars resa uppför Yokohamafloden. Naturlivet delades med 24 kånser. Att begripa språket här inte till det lättaste, och inte så särskilt många i landet förstår engelska. Men av samtal med dem, som gör det, fick Michael och Johan uppfattningen, att folket väl följer med vad som händer också i västerlandet. Vid kinesiska gränsen gavs föresen en övning nyhet för några resenärer: En rysk ubåt hade gått på grund i Bäckings skärgård...!

Gyllene triangeln

En giltigt också från den s k "gyllene triangeln", i det här fallet Thailand, känd för opiumodlingar. Michael träffade bl.a. svenskar, som rest hit för detta farliga njutningsmedels skull. Somliga trodde

"lycka". Det märktes också hur unga och äldre bland folket brukade opium. Odlingarna var väl inte helt officiella och ibland undgådda. Vakter sattes ut. Men alla vet, att opiumvillan blommar här.

Michael och Johan boade oftast på enkla hotell. Där gjorde polisen ibland narkotikakontroll. Men inriktade uppmärksamhet att man före en sådan kontroll av en ryggsäck se efter, att händerna på rätternas handlangare var tomma. Det sades att poliser själva släppt ner opium i bagaget, snöbtt "hitin" det - och stipulerat om böter på 100-tals dollar.

8.150 mil

Så några veckor i Australien och låg sig hem över bl.a. USA. I Amerika har Michael för övrigt vistats ett år för bl.a. studier.

Michael har räknat ihop antalet mil till 8.150. Hans dagböcker är mycket noggrann förteckning på platser han besökt, andra sakuppgifter och vad mat och uppehåll kostat i detalj. Han har gjort det bl.a. med tanke på andra, som vill göra liknande resor. Om Asten finns det inte mycket resehandböcker av det slaget.

STUART PETERSSON