

2008 Hockey Tour to Malaysia

On 4 April, 28 girls accompanied by some of their parents and three staff members (Miss Henery, Mrs Lombard and Mrs Arendse) departed from Cape Town International Airport, not knowing what an awesome two weeks lay ahead of them. Personal screens and headsets with the latest movies, music and games made the 11-hour flight to Singapore go by fairly quickly. An average of 4 movies per player was watched, as excitement prevented all from sleeping. Good luck wishes from the pilot and cabin crew ended the long flight. We arrived at 05:25 local time, with stiff legs and the desperate need for a bathroom. We soon discovered that "tandas" is the Malay word for "toilets" and that they (the toilets) were completely different from those we were used to at home...no further details will be mentioned.

We had not reached our final destination, however, and had to catch a connecting flight to Penang, Malaysia. With the 6-hour time difference, it was already morning when we arrived at the Paradise Sandy Bay Hotel. We unpacked the bags but had little time to rest as jet skis and paragliding was waiting for us at the beach at the foot of our hotel. With such a large group it took a while for each of us to get our turn, but once we were in the air or on the water at top speed, it was worth the wait. Supper time arrived and we ate at a local Malay restaurant, where the food was served on banana leaves instead of plates. At first, we were all a little sceptical about the food, but with our stomachs growling for a meal we all dug in, drinking lots of water in between the bites for some relief from the hot food.

The next day we competed in our first match against a local team. At first, we battled to play in the humidity, but soon realised it was something we had to get used to, as it was not going to change over the next two weeks. At the completion of the game, we enjoyed light refreshments with the host team. We spent the rest of the day shopping in a 7-storey shopping mall and at a night market that sold all the pirated stuff that Rhenish could not stop buying. We didn't make friends with our bargaining, but saved a lot of money by doing so.

The following morning, we checked out of our accommodation and were transferred to Penang Airport for our flight to Kuala Lumpur. During our 4-night stay in the capital city, we did various activities including a city tour, discovering the exciting landmarks of Kuala Lumpur. A photo stop at the magnificent Petronas Twin Towers was obviously included, as well as a drive around Chinatown and a walk to some beautiful caves. An evening was spent at a Malaysian Buffet Dinner and Cultural Night Show. It was highly entertaining, especially when some of the local dances were taught to us. We competed in 2 matches, one of which was played in the Commonwealth Games' Hockey Stadium. This was an experience many other hockey players would be very jealous of.

From Kuala Lumpur we travelled by bus to the well-known Genting Highland theme park on top of a mountain. To reach the top we had to travel in cable cars, which gave us a beautiful view over the Malaysian Jungle. We spent the rest of the day and night on rides - screaming, turning upside down, facing our fears of height and having the best time ever. We didn't get much rest as the park only closed at midnight.

The next two nights we spent in the small town of Malacca. We learnt about the way of life and religion of the Malay culture during our city tour. We competed in our 4th and final match, and of course we did not miss out on the shopping. Overall, the 1st team won 2 matches and lost 2 matches. The 2nd team won 3 matches and lost 1 match.

Our final destination was Singapore. When you visit Singapore, you will soon discover that everything is either the biggest, the first or the best of its kind. The city is beautiful. With its very strict laws and regulations you will not find any litter, beggars or crime on the streets. During our stay, we enjoyed a tour around the city and a Sentosa Island excursion, where we experienced the most amazing laser show ever. Oh yes... we also found the best shopping places in town.

Besides the hockey, the sightseeing, the travelling and the shopping, we enjoyed many hours of laughter. Especially when prank-calling team-mates in frightening Chinese accents - on the hotel's bill of course. Or when someone pretended to be pregnant and in labour when she wore her backpack at the front with the team jacket zipped over it. Other funny moments included the tour guide speaking very incorrect English. These moments, and many more, were the cherries on top of our splendid tour.

After two weeks it was unfortunately time to go home. We were, however, looking forward to a proper South African meal again with no rice or chicken in sight! The flight back felt very short, as the lack of sleep hit us all and we slept from the moment we lifted off.

We, the girls, would like to thank the school and parents for affording us this super-fantastic opportunity. Some of us had never been overseas before, and for those and the others, the tour was an absolutely amazing experience that will leave memories with us forever.

Dominique ter Huurne, Hockey Captain