

## 30 Days in Southeast Asia and Western Australia

Greetings!

I hope this note finds you enjoying spring or fall, depending where you are in the world. The purpose of this semiannual inspirational message is to share with you three simple lessons I learned on my 30-day sojourn throughout Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Western Australia. And for my readers who love to travel, I will also share my five favorite things about the trip, and there will be links to pictures at the end of the message.

First, let's begin with the lessons.

### LIFE LESSONS LEARNED AS A TRAVELER

- **Life is light and dark.** On this trip, among other things, I explored a royal Khmer palace in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, enjoyed numerous relaxing Balinese massages, and sampled so many delicious foods, from gudeg (an Indonesian combination of coconut, jackfruit, rice, and chicken) to simple, fresh Chinese vegetable dishes in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown. Yet, only two days into my journey, I learned by email that my Bubbie (my maternal grandmother), who I have written about in previous messages, died at age 93. Though sadness enveloped me for a day or two, I pledged to savor this trip in her honor – after all, she was a world traveler herself. She spent her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in China! **Question For You: How can you turn something dark into something light?**
- **Meander – it's okay to get lost!** Jon and I biked in no particular direction without a map in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where folks drive on the opposite side of the street. Sounds harrowing, no? Actually, it was quite liberating. Despite some crazy turns, we were able to find our way back to our hostel. The experience was a confidence builder for me – some of our best learning occurs when we're lost. If I can bike around a foreign city in which I don't speak the language, don't have a map, don't know one other soul besides Jon, and still find my way home, I can do anything I put my mind to! **Question for You: How can you get lost, and how will it help you?**
- **We all deserve an elongated vacation (minimum one month in length) at least once in our lives.** Until this trip, I had never traveled to multiple countries on a month-long holiday. This trip was refreshing, restorative, and rejuvenating. **Question for You: How can you begin planning your next trip today?**

Now, my fellow travelers can rejoice! Below are some of my favorite discoveries from Jon's and my romp throughout Southeast Asia and Western Australia.

### TOP 5 DELIGHTFUL DISCOVERIES

- **Air Asia, the world's favorite low-cost airline.** If you ever find yourself traveling throughout Southeast Asia, India, China, and/or Australia, I implore you to try Air Asia. You pay a very low fare for your journey (for example we paid \$60 one way from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to Phnom Penh, Cambodia), and you can choose to pay extra for checked bags, a meal (are you sitting down for this? The food was outstanding – the best I ever ate on an airplane in economy class), or more legroom. And you can use one of their major hubs, Kuala Lumpur or Bangkok, as your base, as Jon and I did.
- **Malaysia.** At first, Jon and I thought Malaysia would just be our base for using Air Asia, but it was so much more than that! We fell in love with Kuala Lumpur. The city is rich in diversity (Malay Muslims, Chinese Buddhists, and Hindu Indians live mostly in harmony together) and biodiversity (we were mesmerized by the Kuala Lumpur Bird Park, the world's largest free-

walking, open-air aviary). Then throw in some of the most delicious food on Earth, an outstanding public transportation system, and the city of Melaka, where we discovered the fascinating intersection of Malay, Dutch, Portuguese, British, and Chinese cultures. We found ourselves craving more of Malaysia – we can't wait to visit Penang on our next trip there someday!

- **Cambodian Souvenir Markets.** For those of you who love to shop and haggle, the Russian Market in Phnom Penh and the Night Market in Siem Reap are paradise. We had a blast haggling with shop owners over artwork, t-shirts, beads, and other bric-a-brac. I'm not normally a shopper, but I loved the dance – the simplicity of the initial greeting (“You buy something? “You buy my scarf?”), expressing interest, receiving the first exorbitant price, haggling back and forth, suggesting a final low price the vendor can't possibly give you, walking away, getting maybe 10 feet beyond his stall, and finally hearing the sweet sound of success – “Okay, okay \$2 for t-shirt”. Jon and I bought a sickening amount of souvenirs in Cambodia!
- **Yogyakarta, Indonesia.** If you can go only one place in Indonesia, please bypass Bali and head straight for what the locals refer to affectionately as Jogja, which is located on the island of Java. We really did not know what to expect there, and we got so much more than we anticipated! The two temple complexes outside the city are awe-inspiring feats of religious devotion – Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple constructed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and Prambanan, Java's largest Hindu temple complex (also constructed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century). Not only are the architecture, statues, and gardens of these temples jaw dropping, but keep in mind these temples reside in Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population. And please do promise Jon and me that if you visit, you'll stay at Green Garden B and B, a Dutch-owned hostel just outside the city center. I have never in my life received better treatment, and many of you know how obsessed I am with outstanding customer service! The staff provided us with an orientation about the city upon our arrival, accompanied us on tours, allowed us to borrow bicycles for free to explore the city, did our laundry for free, set the dining room table for us with candles when we ordered delivery food, served us breakfast early on our last day, and gave us a detailed thank-you note for staying with them. My favorite part was the owner's philosophy of service, “Whether you stay in a 5-star hotel or a 1-star hostel, you are a guest and always should be treated as such.”
- **Western Australia.** So many people visit Australia, but they only see Eastern Australia – Sydney, Melbourne, and perhaps the Great Barrier Reef. Jon and I instead chose the world's most remote state capital Perth and its surroundings in Western Australia, and we were treated to some of the most marvelous natural beauty, delicious food, and friendly people on Earth. One of my favorite sites was the breathtaking Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse (see the pictures!), where the Indian and Southern Oceans meet at Australia's most southwesterly point.

Finally, for my visual learners, the pictures! There are almost 700 of them available via the links below. So, feel free to go through them one gallery at a time.

#### LINKS TO PHOTOS

##### 1. Malaysia:

[http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2682174015/a=1590685\\_1590685/](http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2682174015/a=1590685_1590685/)

##### 2. Singapore:

[http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2682175015/a=1590685\\_1590685/](http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2682175015/a=1590685_1590685/)

##### 3. Cambodia:

[http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2684327015/a=1590685\\_1590685/](http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2684327015/a=1590685_1590685/)

##### 4. Yogyakarta, Indonesia:

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**5. Bali, Indonesia:**

[http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2684330015/a=1590685\\_1590685/](http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2684330015/a=1590685_1590685/)

**6. Western Australia:**

[http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2684331015/a=1590685\\_1590685/](http://www1.snapfish.com/snapfish/thumbnaillshare/AlbumID=2684331015/a=1590685_1590685/)

CONCLUSION

I feel restored, and I hope you'll do something today that will re-energize you. What will it be?

As always, I am on your journey with you. If I can help you in any way or if you want to know more about the places I visited, please contact me via email, LinkedIn, or my blog.

I'll write again in the fall, either before or after Jon and I complete our one-month trek through China in September.

I urge you to get out there and see the beautiful and intriguing world around you!

Regards from Seoul,

**Brian Fishbone**

Global Educator and Community Builder  
Language Instructor, Pagoda Academy - Seoul, Korea  
Adjunct Professor, Human Resources Management and Business Administration  
MBA in Human Resources Management, Temple University  
BA in Business and Spanish, Muhlenberg College

**Principal, Becoming  
Passion, Values, Purpose. -- Coaching, Courses, and Consulting.**

Email: [BFish@aol.com](mailto:BFish@aol.com)

Web: [www.linkedin.com/in/brianfishbone](http://www.linkedin.com/in/brianfishbone)

Becoming – The Blog: <http://brianfishbone.typepad.com/becoming-the-blog/>

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PPS – Previous semiannual inspirational messages can be found at <http://brianfishbone.typepad.com/becoming-the-blog/semiannual-inspirational-messages.html>.