

Cruise Report

Ship: Superstar Gemini
Dates: 20 December 1998
Itinerary: Straits of Malacca
Duration: 7 Days
Add-ons: 7 Days at Rasa Sentosa, Sentosa Island

This report was written almost 8 years after the event [at the time we cruised I didn't have a web site]. It has been fun reading through the 'bits and pieces' that you bring home, the daily Star Navigator newsletters, the thankyou note from the room steward, the many photos and my scribbled observations.

Introduction ..

This was to be the last big family holiday. Adam and Lea were at the point where they had their own lives [with their own interests] and to mark the occasion we were going cruising for the first time.

We flew to Singapore, stayed overnight, cruised for 7 days and then crossed to Sentosa Island for 7 days.

Singapore ..

As we stood in the queue to check in for our Qantas flight to Singapore Robyn excused herself and went outside for a cigarette. When she returned she declared that she had just given up smoking.

What ! .. she had to pick now .. we're going on holiday .. with someone who's going to be totally irrational and crazed .. what did we do to deserve this ??

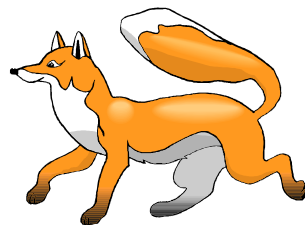
But as it turned out Robyn didn't turn into a mad woman .. it went well ..and she succeeded .. and she gave up smoking .. and I'm proud of her ..

In Singapore we were met and transferred to the Westin Towers which is located next door to the famous Raffles Hotel. I like Westin Hotels and this was no exception, nice big rooms [adjoining], great facilities etc.

Not wanting to waste any time at all, we had a stroll around in the afternoon with a bite of lunch in the Raffles arcades [and I recall sitting at a high table on the equivalent of bar stools, strange what one remembers] before returning to the Hotel.

As dusk fell, Adam and I went for a swim in the pool and then we headed off to Bugis Street for a walk through the market and dinner at a street restaurant. Robyn and Lea ordered room service and watched a movie on the in-house system. A good time was had by all.

On Sunday morning we had a few hours to kill – boarding was in the afternoon – so I booked the Hotel Limousine for a tour. We saw the various ethnic areas, Little India, China Town, remnants of the Colonial Days and it was a very pleasant way to spend a morning.



When we visited the cable car terminal we had our first glimpse of the Gemini in harbour. I remember she looked tiny alongside another liner, possibly Virgo [was the Virgo built then ? yes, I think so].

Boarding ..

Boarding was, in the vernacular, ‘a real dogs dinner’. Baggage was handed over kerb-side, where it was tagged and taken away but there were vehicles disgorging people everywhere and little organisation evident.

Next, you walked into the terminal at the World Trade Centre where, again, there was little organisation, a counter where people congregated without any lines. Remember this was back in the days before pre-registration, so you queued and then filled in copious forms while you were literally standing in line but it was eventually sorted out and we headed off to the ship.



Little Red Dresses ..

As we boarded we were greeted by Hostesses dressed in little red dresses, which I initially thought were because of the Christmas Cruise, I mean they were short and flashy, something you might see in a stage show and yes they warmed the cockles of an old mans heart, but it turns out that this was the standard attire. The Chinese version of classy yet casual.

Collecting our seating allocation for the Captains Dinner [all other meals were dine as you please] we headed off to the cabins where we ran into a couple of problems;

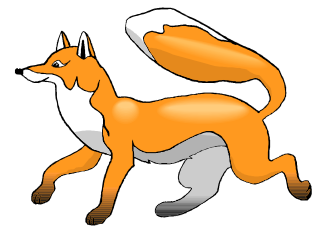
- The electronic door key didn't work .. neither did the second ..
- The connecting door connected the wrong way – with strangers, not with the kids ..
- The rooms were serviced by different stewards – which was initially a challenge, trying to get one of them to let us in to wake them up, but was sorted out ..
- Our room was set up as a double which, whilst our normal choice, meant that you couldn't move – it was tiny and we were in Admiral Junior Suites. So I set about changing this, lifted the glass topped table out of the way and shattered it. Glass everywhere.

I should say, at this point, that it sounds as if we're not really having a good time but, you know, it sounds worse than it was. We were on holiday and it takes a real disaster to mess up holiday time and these were simple inconveniences, albeit almost slapstick.

The Cruise ..

The Gemini is a small ship at only 19,000 grt, she carries a maximum 800 passengers and sails the Straits of Malacca. She's generally listed as something between 3 star and 4 star.

We sailed at midnight and at the sail away party they had a beer chugging competition. I remember thinking at the time that ‘I could have won that!’. Again, this was before the responsible service of alcohol was even on the radar.



The normal pattern for the days was soon established, go on a tour, dinner together, take in a show, bedtime for the oldies and party time for Adam & Lea.

Port Klang, Kuala Lumpur

Like many modern cruise ports, Port Klang is an hour away from Kuala Lumpur but on the positive side you do see a lot of the local countryside.

We docked early afternoon and went on a Coach Tour to see temples, the Blue Mosque, Petronas Towers and a very rapid ride to the top of the Telecom Spire, KL Tower – where the worlds highest McDonalds is located [at least it was when we went there].

Pangkor Island

Adam wasn't getting out of bed today, so the 3 of us headed ashore by tender and went to the Inter Continental Hotel, where we set up pool side and swan, drank dozed and watched the local monkeys cavorting about.

Lea and I went on Jet Ski's, which was a whole lot of fun. I have this theory that young people do not know fear. They haven't lived long enough to appreciate what they could lose.

20-Dec-98	Sunday	Singapore
21-Dec-98	Monday	Port Klang, Kuala Lumpur
22-Dec-98	Tuesday	Pangkor Island
23-Dec-98	Wednesday	Phuket
24-Dec-98	Thursday	Langkawi
25-Dec-98	Friday	Penang
26-Dec-98	Saturday	Malacca
27-Dec-98	Sunday	Singapore

Phuket

I tend not to get on the back of poor animals, given that I'm a pretty big bloke, but I didn't have a problem getting on the back of an elephant.

Robyn, was not as comfortable and when we returned to tighten the girth [that lurching seat was not the best sensation] she took the chance to hop off. We also watched the elephants painting and going through some clever stuff before buying bananas to hand feed them.

That afternoon we cruised Pangor [?] Beach where there are hundreds of restaurants, bars and stall selling knock off goods. Great fun with a real buzz.

The evening show on board was a troop of He-She's. Apparently there is a thriving community of Him-Her's and performing is one of the local attractions. They are very attractive and I have photos to prove it.

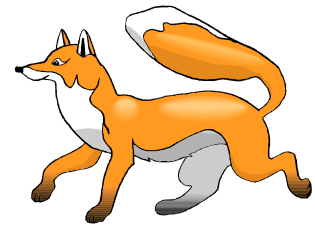
Langkawi

Langkawi reminded me of Fiji in the 70's. The streets had open drains that you needed a plank to get over, whilst the shops sold everything from crockery and spoons to duty free booze.

We visited a very large carved Eagle, a national symbol of some kind which was impressive and a duty free 'zone' which was in effect the ferry terminal, boats being a very popular inter-island travel means.

Penang

Christmas Day in Penang, we elected not to leave the ship and enjoyed ourselves on board. We entered the golf contest and even in a diminished field failed to win a prize. I regret not entering the beer chug now.



The Captains Cocktail Party was held in the evening followed by dinner in the restaurant. It was a very nice meal and we have a photo taken that night, of a very happy family, on display at home.

Malacca

We tendered ashore, caught a bus into town and basically walked around a shopping centre. The strongest memory I have is that Lea was trying to buy a hat, which she eventually did in a sports store.

At least we can say that we've been to Malacca.

Singapore

Star Cruises led the way they did a number of things. In 1998 they had freestyle dining when no other cruise company in the world had. They also had a great disembarkation process.

When you get up in the morning, pack your bag and put it out. Go and have breakfast and then disembark. Baggage is collected from an airline carousel, no waiting.

Meals

We took most meals as a family in the buffet – except of course breakfast, which was when we took pastries & juice and delivered them to the sleepers.

The food was good, predominantly Asian buffets of course.

The restaurant was as good as any 5 star shore side venues. Apart from the Christmas dinner, we dined in there one other night and had a wonderful meal. In truth, we discovered how good it was a little too late into the cruise.

Entertainment

The entertainment was a mixture of crew and guest entertainers and was very good.

The crew were excellent naturally gifted performers who turned up everywhere on the ship and burst into song, particularly if there was a queue. The Christmas show was a crew concert of carols and different nationality nativity songs.

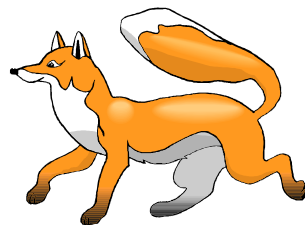
I also remember the juggler, his 'piece de resistance' involved dozens of dinner plates on sticks and he was funny. Must be the only man I know who can do 2 things at once.

Santosa Island ..

Week 2 of the holiday was spent at the Rasa Sentosa Hotel on Sentosa Island, we arrived on 27 December.

The island is accessed by a causeway from Singapore or by Cable Car and is controlled by security personnel. You get around by jumping on and off the circular railway.

The Hotel itself is on the beach and we had rooms that looked out to the ocean. The adjacent rooms were connected and Adam had a good time watching ESPN whenever he was in residence.



Hi-lights of the week included;

- Eating at the Hawkers Market, where there are numerous stalls selling satays, curries, rice and noodles etc around a central seating area.
- An afternoon at the water park with just Adam and myself. One of the tunnels went underground and literally fell away in the dark, falling uncontrollable until being ejected into the daylight, it was heart stopping fun.
- Driving electric cars along the beach and back to the hotel.
- The Merlion Laser Show .. even if it was raining.
- Crossing from Sentosa to the main land and back in the Cable Car with Lea. It's a long way when you're dangling on a wire.
- Visiting the Hi-tech shopping malls of Singapore and the awesome array of merchandise.

A couple of not so high points;

- The New Years Eve beach party was awash with rain
- Robyn ate something that didn't agree with her on NYE and she was laid up in bed after dinner

It Ends ..

So that was the 1998 Big Holiday, the last time we all went away together, the first Christmas that Robyn and I went away on a cruise [but not the last].

It was fun and that's what a family holiday should be.