

SLOEPMOUCHE - 46' Norman Cross trimaran - 5' draft – July – October 2018
Subject/ Area: Malaysia: Sabah and Labuan F.T. on Borneo

Dear SSCA,

After 6 yrs in the Philippines with a few sorties to Indonesia and Palau, we finally made the move to Malaysia. Diving Tubbataha Reef for a week as our last activity in Philippines was a perfect farewell. (see our previous letter). Landing in “deepest, darkest Borneo”, we are making our way down the Malaysian side towards mainland Malaysia.

Kudat: Arriving from the Philippines around sunrise, we decided to take the easy entrance to Kudat Harbor. We anchored near town, a short dinghy ride from a convenient dinghy dock to clear in. Tie your dinghy on east side of the pier, near Police speed boats. You have steps to get off at any tide and there should be no security issues as you are next to the police vessels. We arrived on a Saturday so we could only clear in with Immigration, because they work weekends. All persons on board have to go in, as they take fingerprints of all crew. The officers were very pleasant with no fees to pay. We were free to go ashore before clearing in with Customs & Port on Monday. The Customs office is just outside of the docking area, just 100 yds from Immigration. Very easy clearance at Customs with no fees either. Then you walk to the Port Office (Jabatan Laut) a walking distance away but not easy to find! It is located on the second floor via a staircase between 2 small stores.

Following a health incident, and after going to the local government hospital in Kudat and finding little specialized care, we decided to go by road to Kotu Kinabalu. (KK, as it is called). The capital of the State is located about 180km by road from Kudat, a 3 ½ to 4 hr drive. There are no big buses going to KK at this time (July 2018) – the bus line goes to Sandakan instead. You can take a minibus (RM35/pax) but the van will only depart when filled with 7pax unless you pay for all 7 seats. You can also hire a taxi (350-450 return). Since we had a set appt, and some other things to do in KK, we were lucky to meet Peter, a friendly English speaking taxi driver who has been assisting cruisers for over 20 years, in their special errands (ph 019 802 0084) so we hired him to go to KK. It was the best idea because we got the perfect driver to go to the different places we needed to go and on top of that, he offered us better rates (because of his older taxi and we agreed to not use A/C (we hate it anyway) At present the only car rental possibility is to rent it from an unofficial company (150RM/day + insurance). The small airlines is reported to sometimes cancel flights at last minute so that might not be too reliable either!

Fuel is only available by jerry cans if you have a special permit. All stations sell at the same price because of govt control, and it was about half price of in the Philippines :) We bought from from the Shell station nearby. Edgardo, the manager is very helpful. If you need to get more than 20 liters, you need to obtain a special permit from KPDNKK a short distance by taxi. That permit is only good for a day and needs to be obtained one day earlier (no cost for the permit). You have to tell them the maximum quantity of diesel you plan to purchase and your containers are supposed to be poured into your vessel tanks immediately (nobody checked). I guess they try to limit the illegal fuel smuggled to the Philippines

At a small store past the Petron station at the fishing pier along the sea front, you can find excellent rollers for antifouling or epoxy application as well as car polish and other supplies used when hauling out. We hauled out at the Penuwasa Boat yard, next to the Kudat Marina.

This shipyard has a 150 ton Travel-Lift, taking vessels up to 26ft wide (our trimaran is 25ft wide!). Cruisers are welcome: nice personnel, you can to do your own work and live onboard.

If you pay a light premium, you can be stored on hard concrete and use private toilets/showers that are much nicer than the older common ones. Electricity and water are included if not abused. Charges for us were 1,500 RM for haul out/in with pressure wash and 1 layday included. Extra lay days were 110 RM. Lower prices for longer stays. In early July when we hauled out, because seasonal wx is uncertain, the yard was quite empty so we got in immediately and had the place for ourselves! The yard-store has a fair selection of paints/supplies at fair prices but you will get better prices buying your antifouling from agent in KK.. The yard mostly deals with fishing boats but can do straight forward work on yachts. We had some SS welding and fabrication jobs at very fair prices, but they do not polish the weld because lack of the right acid. You can ask Tommy to get you day workers (70 RM/day+5 RM fee to yard). We had all our small jobs done in a week. The yard bill was fair with no surprises! This was one of our easiest haul out experiences since 92'!. It was so nice to have a travel lift so easily lift us and drive us to our spot and gently lower us and block. The power wash (included) was just that, powerful! Only one caveat: they usually do not send in a diver to look how the straps are placed around the keel, so if that is important to you, they will do it if asked. We had Peter take our chain to KK for re-galvanizing and bring it back a week later when done (clean job at fair price).

Since we had sent our anchor chain to KK for re-galvanizing, we decided to med-moor in the basin just opposite to the Kudat Jetty Marina, anchoring with a short spare chain and putting 2 lines astern ashore right on the golf course wall. Super well protected here (no direct opening to the sea) and no cost if you land your dinghy right next to the marina, at the police dock. The small marina is now run by Chinese owners and offers a bar and restaurant with advance meal order only. If you med-moor to the golf wall opposite of the marina, you do not have to pay anything as this part of the duck pond belongs to the local govt. If you want to use the Marina Jeti to land your dinghy or use their facilities, then you have to pay a daily/weekly/monthly fee.

If you love seafood and want to splurge, go for the "Steamboat" seafood party at the Jeti Marina that is the same idea as a Swiss Fondue but instead, you steam fresh still-live seafood over boiling soup that is drunk at the end. Minimum party of 4, advance reservation needed, each has lobsters, shrimps, shellfish of different kinds and more. Hotel Mozart in town also offers great seafood.

The Kudat Golf & Marina Resort is also very hospitable and you might use their pool if you ask nicely and patronize their attractive restaurant. The food was good and enticingly presented, and there are nice Western food choices.

The one scuba dive we did was not great but it is probably best in the outer-islands. According to many reports and our friends on Ocelot, the very best is Sipadan Island on the East side of Sabah where they were heading with the 2018 Sail Malaysia rally to the East (one of these coming years we'll join perhaps :)

Internet so far has been excellent as far as speed and cost using Celcom, one of the main companies with country-wide coverage. Even better than the Philippines.

We were lucky to be here for the Annual Kudat Festival (end of July). 4 days of festivities not-to-be-missed with canoe races, cooking contest, cultural performances, games, and a final concert with many artists/bands. After producing a few videos about it for our YouTube channel, we did a week of filming local tourism attractions and businesses. 'Cobra', the local Sail Malaysia coordinator is also the coordinator of a Homestay program grouping more than 40 guesthouses in North Sabah. He took us around for the filming. We think that anyone

looking at this Mini Tourist Guide of Kudat on our channel, will be enticed to visit this interesting area! The highlights include: the Tip of Borneo, a park at the very Northern most point of Borneo where you can stand and see the Sulu sea on one side and the South China sea on the other; the Gong "Factory", which is actually a village of gong makers; the Honey Bee Center and the Gombizau Honey Bee Farm; the Bavang Gazo traditional long house of the Rungus Tribe; and a tour offered by Misompuru Homestay network. The latter is a program to help small communities create various livelihood activities emphasizing traditional crafts or folklore and eco-tourism in hopes the communities will have a way to make income by protecting their natural environment and preserving the traditional way of life as they see that visitors enjoy learning and sharing with them. It's a program worth supporting. Contact Cobra: email: cobramisompuru@live.com

After 6 fun weeks in Kudat, Jackie loaded up on fresh veg & fruits at the regular market and the special Tues market, and Luc checked out with port, customs and immigration (in that order, paperwork but no fee and friendly officers). After lunch, we retrieved our anchor buried in solid deep mud, let go the stern mooring lines we used and went on our way towards the Tip of Borneo. We anchored in front of a beach, calm during SW monsoon. A good overnight stop before passing the Tip of Borneo towards KK.

Next day, taking advantage of light wind forecast we did 30nm to a nice deserted beach of **Pulau Silad**. Had a stroll on the beach and a good night, rolling just a little in the gentle swell finding it's way around the point. Next day, we made another 30nm hop taking advantage of the pattern of very light wind in the morning picking up to just 10kt close-hauled around mid-day. We anchored in **Teluk Ambong** in front of a small beach, well protected from SW and W wind with only a gentle swell rolling in. We stayed here a couple of days while the SW monsoon came back for a day. Another day of light S to W wind had us motorsailing to Kota Kinabalu.

Kota Kinabalu (KK): Not too many options to anchor here! Either you pay premium prices, if space available, to go into Sutera Harbour Marina or you anchor in front of the town seafront. We anchored in front of Oceanus Waterfront Mall, in a sort of cul de sac formed by a bridge and an artificial island with fancy villas, near fishing and tourist boat moorings. Fairly well protected during SW monsoon. Not very clean water as it is in front of town and a lot of gray water, (maybe even darker than gray) runs off. Boat traffic is less here, except speed boats going under the bridge up the river. (you can take your dink up the river to a park, but we did not try it). To land ashore, one could go into the river south of anchorage or use a rickety metal ladder near the mall, or as we did, ask the Sabah Park jetty people permission to leave our dinghy there at the floating dock. This last is probably the most secure place but it is a long & bumpy dinghy ride from the anchorage because of confused seas caused by lots of high speed boats passing in every direction. The Sabah Park Jetty is across from Wisma Merdeka, one of the malls, and very close to the Suria Sabah Mall, where we found a treasure trove of organic grains, flours, and other dry goods. Locking everything at night and when away, plus having 2 dogs onboard we had no problem with thievery, but heard third hand that yachts and dinghies have had problems.

Coming from Kudat, we had to clear in with Immigration, Customs and Ports again coming in and then going out. Some things have changed since the latest info we found (we updated info on Noonsite) and it took me all morning to clear in. Clearing out was easy, now that I knew the places to go! Do NOT let anyone tell you to go to the main immigration building at Jalan UMS as this is the Immigration building everyone knows but they do NOT deal with

yachts! Immigration and Customs for yachts are now located in the same (new) building at Sabah Ports at Jesselton Point, passed the Mercure Hotel, on the coastal road, just after the round about, just before the KKCC Show Gallery store front. On the other side of that store you have the old Port building (empty now) and old gate (locked). Immigration is on the right side of the new building and Customs is on the road front. From town, you could walk, take a taxi or even a public bus (1RM). Then it is a 20-30 minutes expedition to Jabatan Laut in Sepanggar. I went by public bus and mini-vans as I rather experience local life than expensive freezing (AC full blast!) taxis. Each bus driver dropped me at the next bus stop and it was easy and inexpensive (a few RM instead of 100). The first ride will pass you by "1Borneo", a mega mall and the last ride will get you to the Port office which is located inland in the middle of nowhere, far from the ocean! No official charges anywhere.

KK offers all services of big cities, that look more like any other big city with a plethora of Malls selling the exact same things. The seafront fresh market is big. A nice surprise was to find a very large inventory of organic nuts, seeds, grains and flour at the City Grocer in the Suria Sabah Mall just 200 yrds north of Wisma Merdeka Mall. On Sunday mornings there is the Sunday Market on Gaya Street. It's mostly for tourists, as you won't find any bargains, but it's a fun ambiance, and who knows you might find a treasure or a good deal just before the market closes at noon. If you are dying for real cheese: Brie, Cheddar, Halvarti, etc, there is a specialty grocery, with a Chinese name, I don't remember now, but find it by starting at Suria Sabah Mall taking the street that goes away from the sea until you hit Gaya St. It's right on that corner, close to the HSBC Bank.

There is a relatively new super-modern medical center called Jesselton Medical Center located in Metro Town. It's all that you'd expect from a western medical facility. They have MRI and all the diagnostic facilities, and doctors trained in the States or Britain. (unfortunately, no functional medicine doctors yet). They specialize in Medical Tourism, a term that means they cater to folks from 1st World countries that want medical treatments at a much lower cost and best hospitality than at home. There's a hotel attached to the Med Center. Usually one could book the treatment, stay, and flight for less than the treatment would cost at home.

We had a car rental from KK Leisure Tour & Rent A Car +6016 8895219 for a day. Other than clearing out we went to the Murug Turug waterfalls in Tamparuli, about 1 1/2 hour north of KK. On the way, we saw impressive Mt Kinabalu in the distance and a suspension bridge. Murug Turug is a relatively newly-opened natural area. There are hiking trails to 7 different waterfalls. We had a guide take us on Tour B – 3 waterfalls loop of 45min easy hike. (Because we had a high clearance car, we were able to drive a bunch of the dirt road and avoid 40 more min of walking). Nice to do some walking other than on city streets :) The waterfalls were great and refreshing. We swam and lunched at the 2nd fall, but you could swim them all. (See them on our Youtube channel). We had a drink for sunset back at the city's Signal Hill Observation Deck, also reached via the Nano Jungle Trek (see Trip Advisor). For dinner, we went to QQ Cafe KK (on FB) across from Plaza 333 for a different kind of buffet: you can cook any food your choose (from an amazing variety offered) at your table in boiling soups of your choice as well as choose a variety of cooked foods. At 33 Rm/per person for all-you-like to eat with drinks and seafood included, full of locals .. you will be immersed in local life as well as well fed!

Flying to/from Kota Kinabalu (KK) is easy as there are many inexpensive daily flights to several destinations. If you wish you can visit some of the attractions on the East coast of Sabah. we booked a very well organized tour from Mr Lai of Sandakan Hotspot Eco-Tours.

Leaving from KK early morning on day 1, we were met, along with other tourists, at Sandakan airport by Hadi, our professional and agreeable tour-guide. After a quick breakfast at a local cafe, we arrived at the Sepilok Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Center, one of only 4 such centers in the world. You get to see orangutans coming at feeding time of their own free will as they are free in nature. You also get to see the newly rescued orangutans getting some training to be able to survive later in the wild. After a great visit there, we had a nice buffet lunch at a local restaurant and our comfortable A/C bus took us to the Gomantong Caves. We were very fortunate to visit during the 6 weeks a year when bird nest collectors are at work. It gave an extra interest to this huge cathedral-type of cave. Amazing to see the collectors dangling precariously from ropes without any safety nets, collecting the incredibly expensive nests with the regurgitated delicacy inside. Then, we drove to the Sungai Kinabatangan, Sabah's longest river. We checked-in at Borneo Natural Sukau Bilit Resort where I was quite surprised at how nice the bungalows were. we did not use the A/C as the cool temperature and fans were just right. Nice traditional style but clean and spacious. Rooms with personality! After a quick snack, we went for a late afternoon river cruise to spot many types of birds, proboscis monkeys, macaques, and perhaps crocodiles and pygmy elephants. You realize then that your eyes are much better than your camera at distinguishing the creatures often far away and in the shade! After this 2h1/2 hour trip we came back to the resort for a simple buffet dinner with the many other tourists (most backpacker-type) that came for a day tour or overnight like we did. Shortly after dinner, we were invited to join a night walk around the property to see some animals like insects and sleeping birds. After a great night of sleep, we got up early again, this time to go to a 6am river tour, giving us more chance to see the wild animals clinging to the jungle bordering the river with infamous palm oil trees fields beyond! After a breakfast on our river tour return, a big bus took a lot of us to diverse destinations, sometimes to connect with other buses. Back at Sandakan airport mid-day, then back in KK by 4pm on day2. A busy but really fun 2-day tour! You could also drive to Semporna to go diving at the famous Sipadan Marine Park before returning to KK. But that will be a later adventure for us!

After a easy motor sail, 29nm SW in very light winds, we anchored off a sandy islet off **Pulau Tiga** (nice to be away from polluted cities!). Did some snorkeling and beach hiking away from crowds and walked all around Snake island, the rocky islet where you can sometimes see lots of sea snake breeding ... must be a different time of the year as we saw none. The winds switched and the anchorage became roly with swell. We moved to the east side of Pulau Tiga and dinghied to the NE beach to go immerse ourselves in the famous mud baths. The path is marked by a wood sign just beyond the sandy beach, in the first vegetation (near a very tall dead tree with no branches or leaves) that directs you to a 2.250 km path to the ranger station via the mud baths (mid-way). Since we read that day tours often finish their tour there in the afternoon, we went in the morning and had the place to ourselves :) So nobody to see us all covered in mud and wallowing like pigs in the mud patches ... you really float in the mud! Zotke and Zonne were probably the first Schipperkes to have a mud bath there! They call them the mud volcanoes but they are not warm, and there are few places where you see bubbling. Take plenty of mosquito and sand fly repellent, as the mud does not protect you as you walk back the 2.2km to wash off in the sea!

After another easy 35nm passage in light wind (we seem to time our passages quite well with Windy.com :), we arrived on the NE side of **Labuan** and anchored just below their mysterious chimney. Took the dinghy to the beach on the northern tip of the island, and were pleasantly surprised to find very interesting a beautiful multi-colored sandstone formations and a clean

fine sand beach. Very pretty.

We had planned from here to go inside the Sungai Klias river but looking at the tide tables, we decided to wait a week in order to get favorable currents during our trip there. So we sailed to **Victoria Harbor**, another easy 10nm trip. Since the reports we had read about the Labuan Public Marina were not that enticing, we decided to anchor off town. Since the anchorage off the marina was choppy with wind and boat traffic waves, we anchored as far North as we could comfortably. We anchored on the west side of the channel in front of the very neat and well-cared-for village on stilts, opposite the double international ferry docks. Jackie dropped me there at the water taxi wall and I could easily walk first to Port (about 200 yds away) and then to Immigration & Customs, inside the ferry terminal, to check in. Jackie had to come show herself at Immigration as they also fingerprint everyone electronically both at arrival and at departure! Labuan is a Federated Territory directly under Kuala Lumpur and has duty-free status: load up on all what is not best for you like booze, tobacco and cosmetics as prices are the best in Malaysia. You have to show your passport when buying anything duty-free as they enter your purchases online with Customs and so you cannot get more than your monthly allowance in duty-free spirits (5lt), tobaccos ... The One Stop Shop had the most extensive choice, including Belgian Chocolates! Big wet market with lots of fresh food for sale in a gigantic building that looks more like an airport than a market! There are supermarkets around too, but none were the caliber of the Suria Sabah in KK.

From Victoria Harbor, now that tide times were more favorable, we had an easy 10nm motoring to the entrance of Sungai (river) Klias. We anchored in the entrance of the river in front of a break in mangrove on the west side that let windy breeze through. Perfect place to wait for the incoming tide to start exploring the river. We entered the river the next morning with an incoming tide so we had favorable current until mid-day. We probably had about 2kts current and had a very easy navigation in the wide river channel. Anchored for lunch just past the intersection with a tributary river in 20ft (after passing over 70ft deep in the intersection itself!). Perfect overnight spot. We saw a group of macaques in nearby trees as soon as we anchored! It took us 3,5h at 5kts (current with us) to get here from entrance. Decided to explore the rest from here by dinghy to get closer & take videos. After 4pm, we explored the river tributaries nearby and sighted birds and monkeys (some real close!) to get back on board by 6pm before dark. With our 15hp outboard at moderate speed it was easy to go against the tidal current when needed. First dinghy trail took us south and back; second trail took us NE, parallel to the main river and back via the main river (waypoints posted in the OpenCPN waypoints compendium by Terry on s/v Valhalla). In narrow river, watch out for underwater branches and obstructions! After a peaceful night of sleep and seeing a group of monkeys jumping from branch to branch in all acrobatics right on shore next to the boat, we took another dinghy trip, this time to go all the way to the bridge (end of big boat navigation 25mi from the river mouth) and went farther passed the small community with some docks & tour boats that must take tourists for river trips (must be on WE and holidays as we saw no activity). Like previous trips, the most sightings of wildlife were made in late afternoon. The nice thing about Sungai Klias is the absence of obstructions during navigation of the main river and the absence of tour boats seen in other such jungle rivers around Malaysia & Indonesia. Feels more like old time adventures, ah ah!

Back in **Victoria harbor** to get our mail some c/o of Poste Restante at the local post office (very nice people there and helpful :) and some mail c/o Public Marina Labuan (after we met the manager, Anna, and arranged it with her). Contrary to old negative reports about the marina, we found the marina adequate with a new breakwater protecting now much better

from ferries wake than in the past ... The marina has security but as in any other marina, one should not expect to be protected from any possible petty thievery! The marina management is also very helpful. They did not charge us for leaving the dinghy there, which we did when leaving the dink for a long time or after dark. We heard talk about the management soon to be taken over by the private company running Miri Marina. As a side note, the once-grand Waterfront Hotel, which used to run the Marina long ago, shut down about 6mo ago. We noticed lots of shut down buildings in prime locations around Labuan. Too bad.

We're glad we stayed longer here in order to see the 7th annual Borneo Arts Festival – at the end of September. Little did we expect the quality of the dancing performances, especially the Creative Dance Competition in the Labuan Financial Plaza's top-quality theater, where 28 groups each performed a 5-min light & sound dance combining traditional Malay movements with modern interpretation and a Malay Borneo theme! We didn't envy the judges' job of ranking the top 10 groups and choosing the 1st prize winner which received RM 10,000 prize money! We also discovered the Gambus, a traditional type of guitar. Exhibition of local handicrafts and local foods as well as workshops and exhibitions, paintings, and other visual arts were on during the 3 days. We really enjoyed this 3-day event and plan to be back for another edition! We highly recommend it! We also did a tour of the island and visited several well-designed modern museums (free entrance) as well as a very nicely kept bird park with very healthy striking birds. Labuan is an island that is aiming at becoming the capital for maritime sports in the East! With their 4 different annual festivals and a very friendly population, we wish them luck!

We left Victoria harbor on a Sunday (had to wait 1 hour at Harbor Master to get the one person on duty to come to the office to make the clearance documents, without which Customs and Immigration won't clear you out! (all crew have to recheck finger prints when leaving Labuan). We had a relaxed 8nm motor sail to **Keraman Island** where it felt like heaven being alone near sandy beaches and clear water. Nice uninhabited Rusukan Kecil island was just south to go explore with dinghy. There's a long sand spit just in front of the anchorage. Our Schipperkes certainly enjoyed running the beaches after being confined onboard in crowded & floating debris in Victoria harbor. One caveat about beaches in Borneo: the sand flies are vicious, and voracious! Be forewarned. Jackie had to rig a beekeepers hat!

On to Brunei!

See separate letter

After enjoying 5 weeks around Labuan and Brunei, it was time to move west again, this time to discover the State of Sarawak. We motorsailed heading for Jerudong Harbor, Brunei where they let sailors spend an overnight of rest before continuing their westward trip. But we did much better speed than expected so we decided to continue another 20nm since we had favorable wind angle, if not strong. We anchored about 1nm from the shore off Telisai, in just 8m of water to have a night sleep before resuming our passage towards Miri.

Miri: Arriving too late to safely enter Miri Marina, we decided to enter the Miri river just as dusk came and look for a suitable place to spend a calm night (anchoring outside would not be very fun in the swell!). We had a minimum of 9ft below the keel the whole way and were able to navigate even just after dark into this busy river port. Lots of oil support vessels are rafted up on both sides and lots of traffic even into the night. We picked a place near the west bank in front of a forested area and anchored fore and aft to stay out of the way of the river traffic. Not easy and at some times we had overgrown branches over the aft deck ... by luck our 2 vigilant 4-legged crew kept any possible stowaway away! Next morning, we dinghied to the town center near the new Seahorse monument we saw when entering the river. Took a taxi to go to immigration and Customs, located in building #2 and 4, next to each other. Apparently the Jabatan Laut office moved 30km away in the new port of Baram, but luckily, small yachts are no longer required to check in & out with Port. Customs does issue the exit clearance when checking out. Since diving around Miri has a good reputation, we went diving with Coco Dive. While we did not see anything extraordinary we enjoyed our 3-tank dives with this well-run dive operator. Went to explore the famous Niah Cave at the National Park. The ride took about 90 minutes (120km away from Miri) then after visiting the information museum, it took us about 45min easy walk (no up/down) through the rain forest on mostly wooden paths to the cave entrance where you find bathrooms & small food vendors. The park did an amazing job in building an extensive wooden plank walkway that leads you all around the different areas of this gigantic dry cave system. Discovered in 1958, these caverns & caves with multiple entrances and skylight openings have been a source of bird nests collecting (still nowadays during specific brief periods of the year) and you can see poles and lines used by the collectors. Getting to the impossible places where the swiftlets built their saliva nests, collectors deserve high prices paid for their efforts! From Traders Cave (the first cavern) to the Painted Cave (furthest away) took another 45 min. Entrance fee is 20 Rm for foreigners + 2 Rm for 50m boat transfer (a short bridge could have indeed being built!). The cave is well worth a visit and we were especially surprised to be all clean after the whole visit! Wear anti-slippery shoes and light clothing, with a light rain jacket should rain be pouring when you walk I the forest as it did in the afternoon when we visited! Since the time left before the departure of the coming Sail Malaysia rally was getting short, we decided not to stay too long in Miri so after Jackie provisioned at the public market and Luc cleared us out, we left for Kuching. Clearing out of Miri was simple: went first to Customs who issued a port clearance document and then to Immigration next building who said we did not need to check out with them since we were going to Kuching, still within Sarawak. The coming week wx was predicted all calm and having nothing to attract us in Bintulu, we decided to go direct to Kuching. We motorsailed the whole 285nm but could have just sailed the last 100nm as we finally got some wind (and lots of rain). We arrived in Kuching river early afternoon. Not having a good layout info about the marina and reading stories about boats bashing each

other when entering the marina during strong tides, since nobody answered our phone calls at the marina, we decided to anchor in Sijingkat, the only permitted anchorage in river, about 4nm down from the Kuching marina. Luc went to check the marina by dinghy as well as clearing in: 1st the Port (Jabatan Laut) right at the marina (they own and run it in a relaxed and jovial manner) then 2nd to Immigration (turned out they did not need to see us as we came from Miri) and 3rd to Customs, the last one. No way to guess what is required or not as every place is different as are their forms ... Best is to do the standard thing, checking in with these 3 and be done quickly when it was not needed! Looking at the slack tides coming, we elected to wait the next morning to go to the marina to have the best conditions with us since the marina is small and we are not easily maneuverable ... At 2Rm/meter/day (same for multi) or 30Rm/meter/month, the price is more than reasonable if you need a place to store your boat when away or for a short stay if ready to use taxi/grab to go in town 20min away. I went to SLS a company specializing in bearings with offices all around Malaysia, Singapore, ... Vivien, one of the Kuching employees was super helpful and knowledgeable. Replied to our earlier emails from Kudat right away with technical details, determined which speedy-sleeve we needed and had it delivered from KL in 2 days at no extra cost. Helped me fitting it on our Jabsco water pump shaft (see separate article soon to be published) . Looking for waterfalls to bathe, as always, we arranged a day trip with one of the Grab drivers I met. Took us about 90 min to get to Gunung Gading National Park near Lundu. Entrance fee 20 RM/person. A moderate 1 hour hike leads you along the river to 3 waterfalls named #1,3 and 7 (others in between without access??). The best one is the last one (#7) so don't give up before getting there! You are $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way when at #3. You could hike to the summit if you are into more strenuous walk or swim in the artificial pool right at the entrance.. On the way back we stopped at Lundu fresh market to get a few more veg/fruits before on longer passage to Singapore. And back in town, we invited our driver to The Eleven BBQ Steamboat buffet restaurant he recommended. You pick and cook food yourself at your table for just 26 RM/person. Next morning, we let the current slide us out of Marina Kuching and had the current giving extra speed to sail to Pulau Lakei, just 17nm away. We first anchored on the NE side of it but conflicting current and wind made the boat move around in all directions so we up anchor and went around to the South anchorage. We could have gone from the NE to the S anchorage but the short way presents a uncharted rock we risked not to see with the bad visibility! Went explore the shore and some beaches in the Park islands. Saw the rangers from far away. Next morning, we set off for Pulau Satang Besar, deciding to bypass Santubong this time around. We anchored in front of beach with Park office. Turtle nesting grounds ... beware of sand flies on that beach! No rangers, only someone from a different gvt dpt. Next day we had another easy 34nm motorsail to Tanjung Datu in front of Park building behind a nice clean beach. Nice rangers too, no fees. Swam to the beach to meet rangers. But the swell coming around north headland rocking us combined with the absence of Celcom internet signal made us re-anchor just a mile south in front of Gun Malaka village. Here we prepared the boat for the direct passage to mainland Malaysia near Singapore. Wx forecasts predicted another week of very mild wind if any (I guess we are still inter monsoons). We had a uneventful motorsail across the 344nm to Pengelih, just East of Singapore... that is until the last hours when we got hit by torrential rains and thunder & lightning. We had read several accounts of such lightning hits from other sailors seemingly all in the Singapore vicinity ... and here we joined the list of unhappy cruisers having to deal with electronics repairs & replacements ... If we were afraid of not finding anything to spend our time on arrival, problem now solved, ah ah! But from a first inspection, it looks as we were quite lucky with only minor problems that could be fixed over the coming months instead of right now! From here we will explore the west coast of Malaysia joining Sail Malaysia !