

Vision England visit Vision Malaysia

Over the years quite a few students from England have gone to Malaysia to train with Master Tan Eng Kiat. Mr Lear started the trend and lived out there for a couple of years and has made several trips back. Tim Skinner went and lived there for 9 months a couple of years ago. More recently Jay Hill went for a few months over two visits. These three TKD practitioners were accompanied by four other students, Katinka Blau, Claire James, Nathan Robinson and Luke Thompson for a two week holiday that would cover some of the best bits of Malaysia and Thailand.



Sultan Abdul Samad building

The first group of travellers were made up of Jay, Nathan, Tim and Luke. We arrived on Saturday evening after a 13 hour flight. The first thing to hit us, after the pleasant surprise of a much nicer airport than Heathrow, was the heat. Whoa...the humidity was immense. We were picked up by Master Tan, Mrs Tan and Miss Cheang. They took us to the hotel in Kuala Lumpur (KL) and then out for dinner. Little did we realise how often food would be the central theme to our days. Quite a lot of people turned up at the restaurant, not everyone was going on the trip but a lot were. We had some great dishes, including KL special fat noodles (hokkien mee) and barbecued sting ray. It was fantastic and a really change from English food. This was when I was first introduced to Milo, the chocolate drink. Heaven.

After dinner we were taken on a tour of KL at night. The city was still bustling at 2am. We went to see the Sultan Abdul Samad building in Merdeka square, the street markets in China town, some "interesting" nightlife and the Petronas Towers. The city is very impressive, especially when so much of it is lit up. The following morning we were taken to have curry on banana leaf for breakfast. At first it sounds strange but once you have tried it you will want it every week. The group then caught the train into the city centre and went shopping in the KLCC mall, which is at the base of the Petronas Towers. Girls, this is your dream. The shopping centre was huge!

Later on Miss Cheang took the four gwai lo's (westerners) to the night market in Petaling Jaya (PJ). It was very lively with lots of food, clothes, DVDs and nic nacs for sale. Then the five of us met up with Master Tan and Mrs Tan and went for steamboat supper. This is one of the dishes that I never thought I would enjoy but it is now one of my favourites. Then we all went to the cinema which is so much nicer and cheaper than anything Tunbridge Wells has to offer! It was only 3am by the time that we came out so we went to have tea to make sure that we didn't go to bed too early.



Market in China town, KL

Monday was the last day we had in KL before the road trip so Miss Cheang took us to China town for some shopping in the street market, which was completely different in daylight. We relaxed for the rest of the day as we knew what was coming later; training at Arena. It was 8pm but the heat was still high and when we arrived at Arena I felt a little nervous. I had heard so much about the classes here and seen so many photos. Now I was here. It was one of my favourite parts of the holiday. The training session was hard. The heat meant that we didn't need to warm up as much as usual and stretching was much easier than in England but as the class went on the heat would sap at the energy levels. It was a real struggle to finish. My dobok was soaking wet by the end.



After class



Lyonel Tan kicking



Still smiling!

After class we went for dinner, by which point the remaining three travellers, Mr Lear, Claire and Katinka had arrived. The food was needed and I think it took me until the end of the meal to stop sweating and catch my breath. It was to be an early night as we needed to leave early to start the road trip (well, not that early a night in the end).

After breakfast we all got in the cars and headed for Penang. The fifteen travellers were:

- Master Tan
- Mrs Tan
- Mr Lear
- Miss Cheang
- Lyonel Tan
- Michelle Lim



Michelle Lim
 Luke Thompson
 Joanna Miao
 Tim Skinner
 Nathan Robinson
 Jay Hill
 Kate Lian
 Vicky Liu
 Claire James
 Katinka Blauw

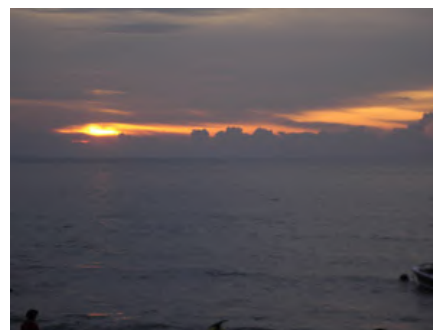


The 15 travellers by their cars

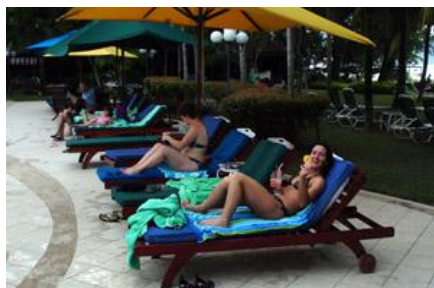
After being on the road for a little while it started to become apparent how important food would be on the holiday. We stopped at a road side stop, similar to a service station in the UK. Order of the day; fruit. And lots of it. We tried so many different fruits that I have never seen before. So far so good and only talk of the dreaded Durian. A little more time on the road and we stopped again, at a similar fruit store. However, this time the Durian is ordered. The smell was strong and the taste was certainly different but it wasn't as bad as I was expecting. The smell stuck around in the car for the next hour. A few hours later and the island of Penang came into sight.

After crossing the largest bridge in Malaysia we were in Penang. We checked into the hotel and then had the opportunity to do lots of sports or just generally chilling out by the beach or the pool. Some of the group went jet skiing, whilst others went on horse rides up and down the beach. A few chaotic games of table tennis later, after the Chinese girls had hustled the English, we all went out for dinner.

On Wednesday we left Penang via the ferry and headed for our next destination, Had Yai, Thailand. On the way we took a three hour detour up a mountain and saw some spectacular views. Miss Cheangs car struggled with the rugged terrain on the way down but we eventually arrived at the Thai border crossing. However, this was not as simple as it could have been. The Thai border officials seemed intent on proving their incompetence and were being ridiculously difficult when it came to processing the two Chinese traveller's visas. Despite everything being above board and all the travellers having everything that was required of them, the border guards continued to be the most useless and annoying officials that I have ever experienced. Eventually we made it into Thailand, no thanks to the Thai border control.



Sunset in Penang



Lounging in Penang

It was late but the whole group managed to get in for a Thai body massage before going out for supper. After a good night's sleep Mrs Tan showed us the local markets. The groups then went and did various things for the rest of the morning. Some went shopping, some had reflexology foot massages (very good!) and some just slept. In the evening Vicky got the good news that she had graduated so she celebrated with a bit of Karaoke. Then we headed out to a Buddhist temple on Municipality Hill, which had some spectacular views. The place was strangely calming and very beautiful. It wasn't long before the sidekick photo opportunities began. Once we had all done more sidekicks than the average TKD class we headed to Songla, where we went to a really good sea food restaurant on the coast. Stuffed crab - delicious! To cap a great night off we went back to Had Yai and visited a local bar.

On Friday morning we had a long day ahead so we left for Malaysia early. The crossing back was much easier. Our destination was Banded Island Resort but we had a few stops to make before hand. First off was the Gua Kelam Caves. The caves were very impressive and the surrounding area was stunning. After the caves we headed to a snake farm (much to Katinka's dismay). There were all sorts of snakes, lizards, monkeys and otters but the most interesting was the King Cobra - especially when it rose up and got a bit aggressive. It was a shame that Tim was too scared to get any closer.

A long stretch of driving came to an end when we arrived at the resort late at night. The hotel was nice although was limited in appliances as the design of the place is to relax with no TV etc. In the morning we realised how amazing the scenery was. After breakfast and taking in the surroundings we moved on and headed for Kota Bharu in Kelantan.



The drive was broken up with food stops in rural towns and a visit to a Buddhist temple. Some of the group checked out the temple and had a gentle stroll as others made wishes, got blessed by a monk and asked Buddha questions about their future. Later that day we arrived at the Renaissance hotel in Kota Bharu. The hotel was gorgeous and was to be our last bit of civilisation for three days.

On Sunday morning we headed for Lake Kenyir. The lake is a man made lake in the middle of the jungle and is larger than Singapore. The plan was to spend three days on this boat, with no mobile phones and no contact with people other than the crew and our group. Up until now the holiday had been pretty busy with lots of travelling and lots of different activities. Now everyone could relax properly.

The boat set sail and we had to travel for nearly 3 hours before we were far enough into the lake. The views were spectacular and the feeling of the warm water against feet as people let their legs dangle over the edge of the boat as it travelled was relaxing. After dinner Nathan and Tim decided to venture into the jungle in the pitch black to see what it was like. After covering 10 metres in 20 minutes they quickly returned after hearing a 'sound'.



Nathan fishing

The surroundings were unbelievable. Only the occasional torch flash would reveal the reality. Huge trees hanging over us and water levels varying from nearly dry to up to our knees. A thought kept coming to me that this would be the ideal habitat for crocodiles but I kept deciding that this was not a good thing to dwell on. The rain started to fall. The only time it rained on our holiday and we were in the middle of the jungle at 1am. After an hour and 40 minutes the frog hunter decided this was enough and we headed back. We had 10 frogs and the rain was really starting to come down hard. Not like anything that I have seen back home. For most of the way back the water levels were, at the lowest knee high but more often up around chest height. Then the lightning flashed a couple of times. When it did the whole jungle was lit up for a split second. The sights I can not describe. This was such an unreal experience. We caught one more frog on the way back to the speed boat. Soon we were speeding back to the main boat. Lights in the distance, a welcome sight.



Jay enjoying some Milo

We were welcomed back on to the boat with hot Milo and beer (well, what Tim had left!). Some of the group stayed up playing cards, telling stories and doing a spot of late night fishing. The next day we had a lazy start to the day, just chilling out and enjoying the scenery and getting to know everyone. Then we went on a short boat ride to some caves. These were very nice caves and we had some great moments for photos. Back on the boat we played lots of games, which I nearly had to jump in the lake as I was doing so badly. In the evening we got to eat the frogs that we had caught the previous day. I was surprised at how tasty they were.



Captain Jay before sunrise

It was another late night although some stayed up all night into the morning. Once the sun had come up we had to head back to land. On the way back we stopped off at a waterfall. It was stunning. There were lots of TKD photos taken and then we all had a swim before getting back on the boat.

Soon enough we were back on the road and now we were heading for Awana Kijal resort. This was 5 star luxury accommodation - not what we were used to after 3 nights on the boat! The hotel was amazing. It had its own pool and then a private beach out the back. As soon as we checked in we went and quickly jumped in the pool and then went into the Jacuzzi. Then we went out for dinner and then sat overlooking the beach for a couple of hours talking.

The following day people chilled out by the pool or on the beach. Unfortunately there was a red flag on the beach so no water sports were allowed. We headed into town to have lunch with Master Tan's friend Mr Wei. Then some of the group had the pleasure of going to a Durian orchard. I have never eaten so much of something that I am not even sure that I like.

Once everyone was back at the hotel a mammoth game of water polo proceeded. Supposedly fun, it was always going to be competitive. As the game continued more and more people joined. Eventually Mr Lear's team won but not without some creative assistance to Lyonel's team. Suitably exhausted we all got ready and went out for dinner and what a dinner. Simply the best stuffed crabs, butter prawns, fresh fish and noodles. All of the food was amazing. After the meal we had to rush off to reach the beach to see baby turtles being released into the wild. We only just arrived on the beach as they were going to the water so only caught a glimpse but then we went back up to the turtle centre and got to see and handle baby turtles. Another once in a life time experience.

On the Friday we had to leave and head back for KL. On the way we stopped off for some shopping and even had time to visit Sungai Lembling Museum followed by a short trip into the jungle.





Late night conversations

After staying the night in KL at the first hotel we stayed in we went training on Saturday morning at the Chinese school. Mr Lear took the class which was made really difficult by the daytime heat. The only thing that saved me that morning was 100 plus - Malaysia's equivalent of Lucazade sport. Straight after training we went to the Indian barbers. I was not looking forward to this. It had been hyped all week that I was going to get my hair cut. Fortunately I escaped after only having a shave.

In the afternoon we went to the digi mall to do some last minute shopping and then went round to Master Tan's house before going out to dinner. Master Tan showed us some interesting photos from his past and told us some great stories to go with them. For dinner we went to a very nice restaurant out of town. It was the foreigners treat to say thank you to Master Tan, Mrs Tan, Miss Cheang and all of the people who helped to make it such a wonderful holiday. After dinner we went for tea and watched Liverpool win the first game of the season. What better end to an awesome holiday.

This article was supposed to be an objective report but I got so carried away writing about it and remembering all the great times that it got a bit personal. I hope this gives everyone a good taste of what is out there and for those that went, I hope this helps you remember the good times.

By Luke Thompson



Everyone who went on the trip has contributed and written about their favourite part of the holiday...(well, nearly everyone).

Master Tan For the trip, my favourite part was seeing all my students so relaxed & being themselves as well as getting to know each other better.

Mrs Tan Although it was hard work organising the trip, it worked out well & I enjoyed the whole trip. It was great spending time with Vision family. The best for me is the time we spent up in the Municipality Hill in Haadyai. I like the boat trip to Lake Kenyir too but was too hot for me.

Finally, I think without our great Master, all these would not have been possible....thank you, sir.



Miss Cheang Ah, sorry to say that there is no best bit of the holiday. Every moment was unique and beautiful; more so as these cherished moments were shared and happened among some people whom we have met for the "first" time. It was a very, very good holiday.

And for the holiday to have happened, we would like to say a big THANK YOU to the "maestros" of the trip, namely, MASTER TAN EK and MRS VIVIAN TAN, without whom this trip would never be realised. But also, thanks to everyone who have endeavoured to make this trip a very memorable one by accommodating to whatever comes. This is the true spirit of VISION TKD INTERNATIONAL.



Mr Lear The entire holiday was incredible for me, returning to my Malaysian family and to what I consider to be my second home was just a brilliant heart-warming experience. Seeing the students who made the trip from England have such a wonderful time and being embraced by the Vision Malaysian family gave me the feeling of extraordinary pride.

My favourite part? The road trip and conversations in the cars, the laughs, the advice and the walkie talkies. The Thai Massage, Mango Rice, Tim squaring up to a King Cobra, a guard carrying an M16, the side kicks, all the side kicks. Lake Kenyir, Frog hunting, the rapids, the waterfalls, me catching a 'massive' cat fish!!! The East Coast, the turtles, ice kachang. The last few days in KL, just so many things including all the food, but my favourite part? Believe it or not although all these things were fantastic what I found the most heart-warming and the part that meant the most to me was being able to train once again at PJ Arena, the training hall that has my blood sweat and tears from all those years ago, memories of so many students who trained at that time, a podgy little colour belt kid that we used to nickname 'Conan' who has now grown into the man Lyonel. The unbeatable Vision Sparring team of 1996. The cracked concrete and the rough and the smooth sides. The feeling of training in this hall where the great General Choi had taken a seminar many years ago.



Thank you Master and Mrs Tan for the great trip and helping me to remember those great times many years ago.

Michelle Lim Obviously I'd get used to the quiet life in boat...its not only the destination or places visited that count, its the effort that Si fu and Si mou taken, the trip was well organised for the comfort of us. I believe most of us received some sort of inner message after the trip or during the trip and it doesn't matter where we go, it's the company that matters.

I can even say driving was one of the best times. Well, I'm glad that I did not miss this 'once in a life time' trip, PERFECT!! Thank you



Joanna Miao For me, it is hard to pick a favourite part of the trip, I enjoy every moment of us all being together. As we are all from the Vision TKD family, we having a special pose: sidekick. We accidentally found heaven beside the road, what a pleasant surprise. The air was so fresh and the breeze took away the

tiredness. We laughed and took photos for each other in the warm sunshine. Mrs Ian showed sidekicks with both sides, Mr Lear stood on the railing and kicked to the sky and Ms Cheang side kicked Lyonel...

The first collective set out of sidekick was done on the lawn beside a golden standing Buddhist temple. We kept changed poses until the sun faded away.

The most formal sidekick photos were taken in the waterfall in uniform. We all tried our best to listen to the commands of Mr Lear and keep position. I still can feel the slippery stone, sufficient sunshine and pride being one of Vision TKD family...



Using a language which I'm not good at to express feeling was a challenge for me. Because I not only want to understand each other but also want to know the deep meaning of messages which friends pass on. However, I need not have worried. Communication was non stop. We shared stories every second, even separate by car (walkie talkies).

We made joke to each other, shared the difficult time of life, discuss problems...it was not stuck by language because we were all talking with true heart. The world is so peaceful on the boat. Late at night the fog appeared from the lake water and seemed like a fairytale. Darkness was full of everywhere except the moon and our boat.

The boat life was special and impressive. 'Good morning' considered the start of a day whatever the time it was, the meal was self-service. You will totally forget time. All you need is to enjoy - enjoy the food, fruit and drink (milo and BEER~~), enjoy fishing, cards game and board games; enjoy talking, laughing, reading, drawing and singing; enjoy the jungle, the cavern and swimming; enjoy the darkness, the sunshine, and the wind. There was no end to a day until we said "Good night".

The sea is different from lake. Sea is more unrestrained and sea wave is more powerful. However, the beach is very soft, especially when Vicky and I rode a horse up and down the beach. Could you imagine that 5 people played table tennis on one table with two bats and one ping-pong ball? That's funny and creative. At the end of that day, there was a "push up performance" showing under Mater Tan's supervision.

We met lots people during the trip; some are Master Tan's friends and students. Some Malayan kids are like sprites from paradise; earthy, nature and simple-hearted. Some are friendly people, they joined us in activities and we had good times together.

You won't forget the fantastic time in the swimming pool—a mammoth game of water polo... I believe the jungle part is a brilliant memory...I'm sure the three different types of caves followed by different experience made a smile showing on your faces...have you count how many bridge we passed~~...Monkeys on the way to the hill, have you taken photo quickly enough? Also the monkey in the iron box, you can watch them so closely...Snakes; the first one was dead with blood, I'm afraid to look but the king cobra in the snake farm was interesting due to Mr Lear's phone ring and Tim's special...Shopping in Thailand, in local town, in tax-free shop...massage...food... .. make a wish in front of Buddhist temple... ..feeling...



Listening the music from sea, we shared the favourite part of trip at the end of trip; listening the music from sea, we were quiet because of respect and appreciate to Master Tan who organized the trip that let us meet under the sky of Malaysia; listening the music from sea, no sounds because we don't want to disturb the time; listening the music from the sea, we all know the melody will be keeping in our heart forever...

Its just "too much", "too much" of heart-warming moments. Every photo had a story behind. It's hard to pick up a favourite moment...



Jay Hill The dark jungle night lit up with a flash of lightening, everyone hugged me goodbye and told me to come back safely, however, I was pumped and ready... Our speed boat sped into the darkness leaving the safety of the others, perhaps forever. I felt nothing except total commitment. There was no going back. I was up to my waist in fast flowing river water, I kept on tip toes to stop the coldness getting higher, we pushed on fully focused on the torch lit, skinny pair of legs in front of us. If we lost sight of the Frog Hunter we may be lost forever. Time past, leaches came and went, "things" caressed our bare flesh, we waded ever onwards following the wisp of light. Victims were snatched and bagged, then the storm broke. All around us deafening thunder roared and torrential rains soaked us to the skin. I asked myself would goggles help? It was too dangerous, we turned back. Everywhere was flooding, the torches were failing. Nothing looked the same. The rocks we had previously clambered over were now as slippery as ice. Core strength can't help us now! "Must keep up with the Hunter". Black water everywhere... for an eternity. Then a sliver glowed in front, the boat. Silently we stole away from the flood. "Imitate the action of the tiger: Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood." "Henry V" (5.3.44-51)



Kate Lian My most memorable part of the trip was the boat house trip in Lake Kenyir. When I was there, I thought I would find it boring, due to the isolation from civilization. However, while I was on the trip, I found it fun getting to know everybody, and bonding with them.

Also, having late night sleeps, and waking up with less than 5 hours of sleep.

Anyways, I thought I note this since Lyonel's been believing that it was the best part of the trip for me - beating Lyonel's group in Water polo at Kijai.

Vicky Liu The boat part of the trip is most beautiful one. No watch, no computer, no TV. That's totally different from our normal life. We have time to think, rest, have fun. Fishing, Climing, Playing cards, singing, reading, swinging..... I can not forget anything. If can, I want to lose my way in that peaful place.

The nice scenery is made by the nice mood. I am always thinking why I was soooo happy in the trip. Now I think I got the answers. Beacuse you are all in the trip.

Finally, thanks for Master Tan and Mrs Tan to organise this trip that is soooooooo wonderful. And thanks for Michelle, I think Kate and me were very happy in her car.



Katinka Blauw For most people the favourite part was the jungle - it was pretty special as we all got to know each other that bit better and the views, visits to the rapids and caves were just amazing! The whole experience to Malaysia was pretty special for me, driving in convoy (4 cars), the walkie talkie conversations we had were extremely funny, the hourly food and toilet stops (yes those lovely holes in the ground - I appreciate my toilet now!!!), it became a standard joke if we had driven that bit longer. Doing six point turns on mountains in Miss Cheangs car is an experience in itself! I will never forget holding on so tight - it took hours (she must have got hungry on the way up and down.....)!!! The last few days in KL were great too! Claire and I went on a shopping spree taking the train from Asia Jaya to KLCC - the Patronas Towers are amazing when they are lit up at night. Yes, we did do some training while we were out there - learned so much by just watching the others.....I would love to go back there one day.....

