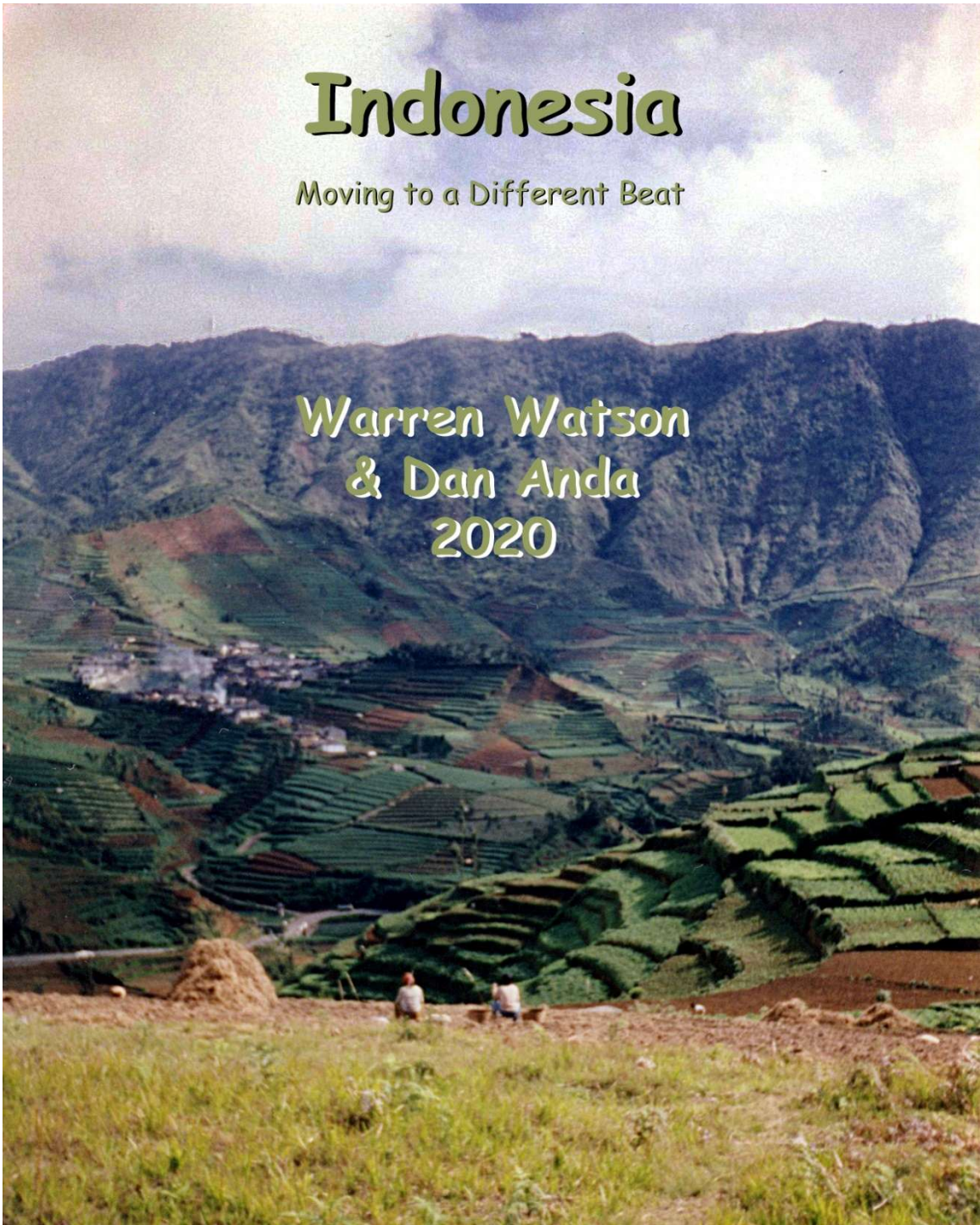


Indonesia

Moving to a Different Beat

Warren Watson
& Dan Anda
2020



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Preface

Why do people travel? Have they created a checklist of things to do before they die? Do they feel they have only accomplished something with their lives when it is filled with more than the ordinary memories or do they enjoy meeting the people that seek the same type of adventure and mode of travel in life?

Do they need to see how others live in all corners of the globe? Are travellers actually looking for the corners of a sphere? By the way, there are no corners, and Earth is not a sphere. It is an oblate spheroid, in other words, a sphere with an equatorial bulge.

Are there others who live their lives oblivious to the goals that travellers deem important? Sometimes people need to leave their own country and family to appreciate what they are missing or perhaps even appreciate their country and family more.

An engineering work term not only proved that engineering is more valuable than Dan Anda sometimes admits, but it also allowed him to see Indonesia from the perspective of a local not of a tourist. Although he had never been in Asia before, he went there fully expecting their culture, government, religion, and ethics to be quite different from Canada; however, he still was not prepared for what he found. Indonesia moves to a different beat.

Comments can be sent to WarrenTheArtist1964@gmail.com. More books and art can be found at WatsonGallery.ca.

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1. The Phone Call

Dan Anda had a rather good job in research and development for an aircraft manufacturer in Toronto, Canada. He worked in graphic design and created a decent resume for himself. However, his passport was empty. The company went through some hard times, and Dan got laid off. He immediately bought a plane ticket to Paris and a three-month Eurail Pass in 1993. During the farewell luncheon, Dan was told he could be hired on a contract basis, but that would mean his passport would stay empty.

Near the end of his European trip, on June 18th, 1993, he got a phone call in Crete from England. They needed a graphic designer in Indonesia. Dan said he could not possibly get to an interview, but they did not want one. They wanted him at work, the coming Monday in three days' time. That would have been the *Amazing Race* well before reality television. He accepted with the caveat he would not start for a few weeks. They agreed. The original request for an immediate start was funny.

On July 22nd, Dan arrived in Toronto from Paris. He stayed with friends and flew into Trail, BC on the 24th. On the 30th, he was on his way to Indonesia.

When he landed in Vancouver, BC, he had three hours to get to the Indonesian consulate to get an entry visa. They initially refused. From what he was to find out in Indonesia, he probably needed to put a fifty-dollar bill in his passport. He was an idealist at that point, and a bribe did not even occur to him. He should have asked, "What is the penalty I need to pay to expedite my entry visa application?" The word bribe is never said. That is dishonest. A penalty or a tip is euphemistically said instead. Dan had not yet learned that technique, so instead, he pleaded with the clerk. He eventually got the visa and got back to the airport with half an hour to spare. He spent it relaxing in the Empress Lounge. He was a virgin when it came to luxury travel. This was the first time he flew business or first class.

Dan flew in the bubble of the Boeing 747-400. His company paid full fare, and the upgrade to first class was inexpensive. It was extremely comfortable, and the service was so good it was almost persistent. Near the end of the flight, Dan asked to visit the cockpit. The flight attendant relayed his request, and the pilot agreed. This fact alone indicates this flight was well before September 11, 2001. The cockpit did not even have HUDs or GPS yet.

Dan enjoyed talking to pilots. An uncle of his made the sage comment that an aircraft engineer who did not fly was like an automobile engineer who did not have a driver's license. Dan knew wise advice when he heard it and took glider pilot lessons once in a while, with time and money permitting. He had a stick (control column) and so did the instructor in the seat behind him. This was the tandem seating arrangement. Dan did not get good enough to steer the glider when it was being towed without instructor assistance, but he loved side slipping the plane on the approach to landing.

That was how Air Canada Flight 143 on Saturday, July 23, 1983 turned a Boeing 767 into the Gimli glider¹. The plane ran out of fuel and had to make an unpowered landing at Gimli, Manitoba. The pilot arrived at Gimli with too much height to land properly with the correct speed. Without power, he could not circle the airport. Therefore, the pilot side slipped the 767 to lose speed and altitude and landed safely.

Also as an engineering student, he jumped out of a plane seven times. However, passengers hate a pilot with that ability, and engineers usually do not see the need if the plane is designed well. Furthermore, he also talked to pilots whenever he had the opportunity.

Dan's student aerodynamicist days ended when he got hired by De Havilland of Toronto, Canada. As he was learning the ropes, he took all the tours of De Havilland subcontractors he could get. He was looking for ideas to expand De Havilland's business. He had nothing concrete, but he imagined discovering a business that could be located near a good ski hill and still be connected somehow to De Havilland. He wished he thought of a company to build the Turbo Beaver before Boeing destroyed the manufacturing jigs. They wanted to wash their hands of small planes. He very much liked his Advanced Design group, bosses and coworkers, but he also liked skiing and bridge.

Getting bored as a passenger and needing to stretch his legs was often a good excuse to seek permission to visit the cockpit. They did not realize he was following the advice of his artsy uncle. He often asked the pilots, what they would request if they had a chance to talk to a designer like himself. That just sidetracked the conversation to their asking what he actually designed. Dan

¹ Air Canada 143 Becomes Powerless and Falls from the Sky | Boeing 767 | Mayday: Air Disaster, YouTube, Retrieved March 31, 2025 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wnja3h70DM>

would proudly state that he designed the armpit of a high wing turboprop. It was a smelly job, but somebody had to do it.

Dan would eventually take pilot lessons when he worked for Bombardier Canadair Division in Montreal. He flew a Cessna 172 and a Piper Warrior with an instructor beside him with identical controls. These planes were trainers because the instructor could take over control of the plane from the student if he needed to.

Dan actually never became a pilot. He failed the physical because of his lack of depth perception and his mental illness (Schizoaffective Disorder). The mania and the depression got the most attention from the psychiatrists, but the worst part of the disease that wrecked personal relationships was the paranoia.

The mania and depression caused problems, but they were recognizable. Dan seemed to know not to make important decisions during these periods because he was hospitalized for mania or incapacitated with depression. When depressed, he often just laid in bed when he could. Psychiatrists also seemed quite comfortable prescribing medication for mania and depression.

The paranoia was harder to recognize and was more devastating. For Dan, it is like thinking everybody is talking about him all the time. Quite frankly, people have their own problems and could not care less about him, but why did Dan always hear his name, Dan Anda? Whether he heard his name or not, the paranoia was constant and made relationships based on trust impossible. Dan conquered his paranoia when his psychiatrist prescribed Zyprexa in 2007 and the generic version, Olanzapine in 2011. It was not until the early 2020s that Dan and his psychiatrists fine-tuned the quantities of his medication so that he took the minimum amount needed to manage his disease properly and at the same time to minimize the side effects. In most of his career, moving every few years was necessary for Dan, but it made getting psychiatry difficult. He spent a lot of time on waiting lists or with poor psychiatrists nobody wanted.

Dan was not that surprised or upset he failed the physical. He could have probably been told his mental illness was a deal breaker at the very start, but then he would have missed the fun and the learning he very much enjoyed. He really only wanted the lessons for which he paid for the gas and Bombardier paid for the instructor. Being a full time pilot would be an expense Dan did

not want. He wanted a family of his own (that never happened) and strove to do well at work. He also desired to ski and to travel.

With his flying lessons, Dan did about fifty touches, bounces and goes. A bounce was added to a touch-and-go because of his poor depth perception. The instructor told him he had not seen somebody fly so well after the bounce. He was a nice instructor so good diplomacy was not surprising. He also liked any student that gave him business but especially one who wanted to do wingovers in addition to the requirements of the lesson. Wingovers were a lot of fun and something a pilot could never do during a commercial flight even though they had the skill and the desire for more than flat and level flight. Albie was about to witness several hours of flat and level flight on his way to the other side of the globe.

2. Weekend in Hong Kong

It was a long flight of around fourteen hours. It really felt like fifteen. The fantastic part of the trip was not the Empress Lounge but landing in Hong Kong. It felt like the plane was going to land right on top of the city in amongst the buildings. Dan almost expected to see people scurrying out of the way. It was so dense with high rises, there had to be people everywhere, and there were. The plane descended, and at what seemed to be the last minute, a runway appeared. Ker plunk, the plane landed.

At the time, Hong Kong had a population density of 5,645 people per square kilometre². In 2016, its density was 6,300 people per square kilometre³. The same year, New York City had a population density of 28,209.72 residents per square mile⁴ which was 10,891.83 residents per square kilometre (28,209.71/1.609344²). Also in 2016, the density of Vancouver was 5,492.6 people per square kilometre⁵ and not to brag, but Trail, BC was 220.7 people per square kilometre⁶. Are there partial people walking around? What does a .6 person look like? Are they less of a person than .7 or .83? What about significant figures. Every person is significant even a politician, but seven significant figures are not really necessary. New York is about twice as crowded as Honk Kong and 50 times crowded as Trail.

Do writers take shots at politicians when they can? Yes, and they should. However, lawyers should be included as well. In 2025, British Columbia does not have intercity buses because of politicians messing with energy (which includes hating on fossil fuels) and lawyers ready to pounce with liability lawsuits. Even a poor country like Indonesia has cheap intercity buses which Dan would discover.

² Country Economy, Hong Kong Population, Retrieved May 21, 2020 from <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/population/hong-kong?year=1993>

³ Demographics of Hong Kong, Wikipedia, Retrieved May 27, 2025 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Hong_Kong

⁴ Table 2: Population, Land Area, and Population Density by County, New York State – 2016, Vital Statistics of New York State 2016, Department of Health, Retrieved May 27, 2025 from https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/vital_statistics/2016/table02.htm

⁵ Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census, Vancouver City (CSD), British Columbia, Statistics Canada, Retrieved May 27, 2025 from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=eng&GK=CSD&GC=5915022&TOPIC=1>

⁶ Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census, Trail, City (CSD), British Columbia, Statistics Canada, Retrieved May 27, 2025 from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=5905014>

At the airport, Dan got talking with Tony, an accountant from Ireland. Do you know him? He would have loved the previous paragraph full of numbers.

Tony told Dan he knew of a good place to stay. It was the Chung King house in Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) of Kowloon which had TV and air conditioning. The heat and the humidity were incredibly uncomfortable. Dan could hear the humidity dripping everywhere, but it was not raining. The hotel was a firetrap, and there was a sign not to use the A/C because the wiring was faulty. Dan thought the spelling should be faulty but the Microsoft Word spelling and grammar checker disagreed. Tony and Dan had dinner and a pint at Harry's Bar & Café. The A/C was nice there.

The next morning, Dan took a ferry to Hong Kong Island. He walked to Victoria Peak for a great view of the city. It was a splendid view despite the brief showers. The showers just added umbrellas to the pictures. Hong Kong appeared to be even more densely populated than the view from the plane indicated. West Vancouver near Stanley Park is densely populated but pales in comparison to Hong Kong's Kowloon. Dan took a bus to Causeway Bay, then to Repulse Bay and then to the Stanley Market. The market was a beehive of activity of vendors and shoppers. Were the sights and smells fantastic? The sights were good and the smells were not repugnant. The air was free. Sure, there was the normal pollution associated with a large city, but Hong Kong was free. Britain handed over control of Hong Kong to China effective midnight on July 1, 1997⁷. That was a mistake like the sale of the Panama Canal by the US for a dollar under President Jimmy Carter and defending the Falkland Islands for a huge cost in British pounds and lives under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990⁸). Winning the Falklands War increased Thatcher's popularity at home and showed the vulnerability of ships to modern weapons.

Dan took a ferry to Lantau Island for a scenic bus ride to the Lo Min Monastery where there was a thirty-four metre Buddha statue. The island was sparsely populated in comparison to the other areas he had seen. This was a pleasant change. The sun was setting, and Dan caught the last bus for a ferry back to TST.

⁷ This Day in History, Hong Kong Returned to China, History.com, Published: November 24, 2009, Last Updated: May 27, 2025, Retrieved May 28, 2025 from <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/july-1/hong-kong-returned-to-china>

⁸ Prime Ministers of Great Britain, Historic UK, Retrieved May 28, 2025 from <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Prime-Ministers-of-Britain/>

The next day, Dan got to the airport in plenty of time and went to the end of the runway. The runway was fenced off of course, but a city road ran along the fence line. Dan had a lot of fun taking snapshots of planes landing and taking off. He then enjoyed the Cathay Lounge. After boarding the Lockheed L1011 Tristar, five hours of flight got Dan to Jakarta, Indonesia.



Hong Kong from Victoria Peak



Kowloon: High Population Density of Hong Kong

3. Taxi Meester?

The company said Dan would be met at the airport. He was not. Erwin, the representative, showed up the next day. Figuring this out was not as simple as it might seem. A taxi driver, who latched on to Dan, was a continual bother. He did not understand, “Get lost.” His reply was, “Meester, you lost?” However, he did have a purpose. He translated the call with Erwin. Erwin spoke English but it was hard to understand. Dan got some local currency in addition to the US dollars he was carrying.

Dan later found out that the drivers who accost a person in the airport drive their own personal vehicle and are illegal. The illegal driver wanted \$20.00 USD, and the official taxi driver said \$12.50 USD. Both were extremely overpriced. Both had the “You can afford it” tax or “You are not a local” tax. Dan had a side goal of becoming a local.

The driver complained about all his expenses and agreed to \$15. He even asked for a tip. The locals would have paid less than \$2 if it had been run on the meter, and in the private car, there was no meter.

Even with legitimate taxi drivers, a person could not ask how much a trip would cost. The driver would turn off the meter and see if he could get ten times the actual price. A tourist was best to take whatever the meter said because that was the legitimate price the locals paid. Dan wanted to be a local. However, the tourist usually never saw this amount because he was simply told the meter was broken. There are no broken meters in Indonesia, or how would they collect from the locals?

Dan stayed a cool night at the Sanno Hotel. This was quite luxurious for someone with a backpack. Only his backpack arrived safely. His other luggage got lost and came on a different flight. He would have to pick it up at Jakarta cargo at a later date (section 14.1).

In packing for the trip, Dan did a few things that were not wise. He did not have much time to pack, but it still surprises Dan how sometimes he can emulate a stupid person. Perhaps, he is book smart and not so street smart. He brought a guitar and a ghetto blaster. Yes, music was very important to even someone with a tin ear. It raised his mood. However, in the light of the hassle of shipping and Indonesia having a different power grid, that decision was

silly. Those items could have easily been purchased locally. Frequenting a music store would have been a good way to meet locals and to hire a guitar instructor.

Bringing a backpack fresh from travelling across Europe was actually a good decision. It did not have wheels like a modern suitcase, but it had the all-important shoulder straps and waist belt.

The next day, Erwin picked Dan up and drove him to Bandung. The drive was wild, and the vehicle had no seat belts. The car should have been equipped like those in a NASCAR race.

In Indonesia, the cars drive on the left side of the road, but that is not set in stone. If there is not an ox cart in the way, there is another vehicle coming the other way, trying to pass. The road to Bandung was winding and hilly. Mountainous was a better description. However, mountains were mostly volcanoes, some of which were active.

The road was terribly busy. Buses and trucks and every vehicle under the sun as well as people pushing carts and driving bicycles were in the road. The bemos or collective taxi vans could stop anywhere. There were no official stops. They were just where a prospective customer waved. The buses and bemos had callers who yelled the destination at any pedestrian of which there were many. These callers also served as pushers to get as many people as possible into the bus. When the bus was crammed full, the pusher hung on to the outside of the bus.

If a pedestrian waved or stuck out his arm or even scratched his nose, the bus or bemo would lurch to a halt. The bus would also stop when a passenger yelled, “kiri.” Kiri means left. Had vehicles been driven on the right side of the road, they would have yelled, “kanan” which means right.

Dan once wanted to flag down an empty taxi which was following a bus. Tailgating and following translated to the same word in Indonesian. Dan did not want to wave too soon because the bus would stop, so he waved at the last second. The bus driver, seeing what looked like an affluent customer, swerved, cutting off the taxi and stopped for Dan. The taxi avoided an accident, but barely. Dan never got the taxi because it crossed the centre of the road to miss the bus. There was no centreline. Even if there was one, it would be ignored.

Becak was the Indonesian word for a bicycle taxi. It essentially was a seat for two passengers on two bike wheels pushed by the rear half of a bicycle. In the populated areas, a becak could be seen everywhere.

There was also livestock occasionally on the road. The animals walked along the shoulder herded by the owner and oblivious to the passing traffic.

There was even a portable gas station. A fellow was pushing a dolly that had jerry cans of gasoline on it. Others were pushing food carts. Indonesia was full of industrious people busy at work or going somewhere.

At times, Dan and Erwin were far from a town but not far from people. It was quite the contrast to driving in the interior of BC. There, a person could easily travel an hour without seeing a pedestrian or a house.

Was Erwin happy that cars had to drive on the left? No, he must have been unhappy with the law because he was never on the left. Perhaps he was trying to make Dan feel at home. However, he was always passing even on a corner. His horn and lights were not safety devices. They were offensive weapons that told the approaching traffic to yield or else there would be a collision.

Erwin never aborted a single attempt to pass, he just pushed harder on the horn. He liked the game of chicken, but he never hit a chicken or another vehicle. He often passed on corners, and these roads were just as busy as one would expect on an island of 120-million-plus people. He always met someone and had to squeeze three vehicles across.

Dan wondered if Erwin actually knew that he did not save any time passing. The road was so busy that the traffic was solid in both directions. The only thing Erwin achieved was not driving on the left as much as he should have. He was quite effective at making his passenger feel less safe.

Erwin was surprised to learn that the Americas (not Surinam, Guyana, and some islands like Jamaica), China and most of Europe drive on the right. People in England in addition to Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, South Africa, and Japan drive on the left⁹.

⁹ World Population Review, Countries that Drive on the Left, Retrieved May 21, 2020 from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/countries-that-drive-on-the-left/>

Despite his white knuckles on the dashboard, Dan did notice the passing scenery. Down near the sea, there were many rice paddies and higher up there were tea plantations. They stopped at a restaurant (Rindu Alan) that overlooked the tea plantations in the Puncak Pass (pronounced pun-shack). It was a view to die for. Unfortunately, so was the food. Dan ate a big lunch. The food seemed fine, but the spices would take some getting used to.

However, afterwards, he had trouble finding the restroom. It was usually the foulest smelling room of the place. That was not the case here. Dan stumbled into the kitchen. Even though the air was cool being up high among the tea plantations, it was not cool enough for the uncooked food that was left out in the kitchen. Furthermore, the place smelled bad. Washrooms in a truck stop in Canada were cleaner than this kitchen.

After a total of five hours of Formula One racing, Erwin arrived at the Bandung Sheraton. Bandung had a pleasanter temperature than Jakarta with less humidity, but it was still hot. Did Dan enjoy the cool hotel room and what seemed like improbable peace and quiet? No, not exactly. He was sick at both ends for a couple of days. That was the price for the lunch with a fantastic view. It was also Dan's mistake for not hopping on the train instead of agreeing to be "met."



Rindu Alam Restaurant

Fantastic view on the west side of the Puncak Pass overlooking tea plantations and the crowded highway between Jakarta and Bandung.



The Sheraton of Bandung