Peninsular Malaysia roundtrip

Description

I was bored in Singapore and felt like doing a trip somewhere. Since the wife didnâ??t object I set about planning and decided to make a 5 or 6 day trip in peninsular Malaysia. After a lot of thought (ha, not really) I decided to go up north on the east side and cross over as far north as possible,and came up with a route: sgp->kuantan->Kuala Terenganu->Gerik->Frazerâ??s hill->Sgp.

So I set off on a Monday morning getting out of Singapore at the Tuas crossing. No queue at 10 am so I was quickly in Malaysia.

A note about Singapore/Malaysia border crossings; there are 350,000 people crossing the border and of those 50,000 are motorcycles going into and out of Singapore every day! Quite amazing.

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Anyway, back to my tripâ?¦ I rode north on the north-south hwy until I turned off for Kluang, a town on the cross peninsula route to Mersing. After suffering through the town â?? very slow going with lots of traffic lights, each one taking ages, I came out on hwy 50, which is famous for motorcyclists because of the nice and twisty road. Interestingly, there are warning signs for elephants along the road, not something you commonly see. However, I have never heard of anyone encountering an elephant along any road in Malaysia. Nevertheless, there are 5 or 6 groups with 20-30 elephants in each in the southernmost state of Malaysia, Johor. Of course, with an elephant weighing 4-5 tons you donâ??t really want to hit one, it would be like running into a concrete wall!



Warning for elephant sign!



Food court in Mersing

I made it to Mersing early afternoon and stopped for lunch at the jetty food-court and after a nice portion of chicken-rice I got going on hwy 3 northward toward Kuantan. Itâ??s a nice road with fast sweepers in places and I was really enjoying the ride. After the first half hour, or so, the road goes through many towns and villages and I was passing as schools were getting out so a a lot of traffic. At some stretches the road is right by the coast and you can see fishing implements, clearly, fishing is part of the economy.

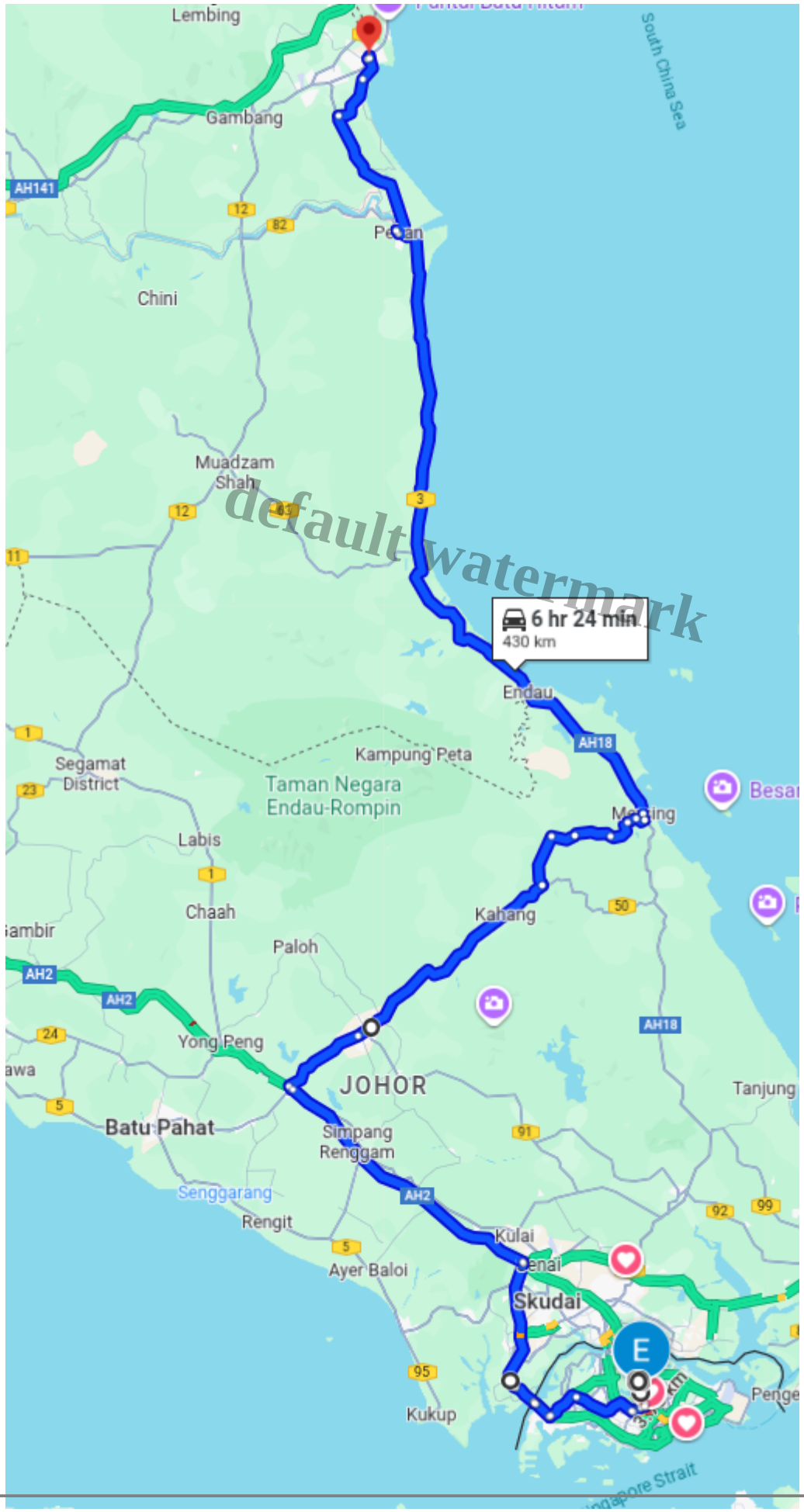
When I was close to Pekan, a town about 50km south of Kuantan, I braked for a traffic light and the front brake was not working! Luckily I was going slowly enough that I could stop in time with the rear brake only! Scary! I got off the bike and found the problem to be in the actuation in the master cylinder. As I was standing beside the bike a car stopped and a guy got out wondering what was wrong, I explained and he offered to show me the way to a mechanic! What a nice guy!

So I followed his car and after 5km I turned into the mechanic shop just beside the road. Unfortunately, the mechanic couldnâ??t fix the problem but gave me the name of a shop in Kuantan that should be able to. So I gingerly made my way to the hotel in kuantan, a 50km ride without front brake! Since Iâ??m used to doing most or all braking with the front brake I didnâ??t feel comfortable at all and kept a good distance between me and anything on the road. Well, I made it to the Swiss-Belhotel without incidence and felt very relieved! The hotel is located by the beach, but quite some way from the center of town. I checked in and settled into my room which was on the 19th floor with views towards the center of Kuantan.

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View towards center of Kuantan from my hotel room


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Pekan
South China Sea
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Muadzam Shah
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63
3
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6 hr 24 min
430 km
Endau
AH18
1
Segamat District
23
Kampung Peta
Taman Negara Endau-Rompin
Mersing
Labis
1
Chaah
Kahang
50
Paloh
AH2
AH2
24
Yong Peng
AH18
JOHOR
5
Batu Pahat
Simpang Renggam
91
Tanjung
Senggarang
Rengit
AH2
92
99
Kulai
5
Ayer Baloi
Senai
Skudai
E
95
Kukup
Singapore Strait

Map showing my route to Kuantan

I decided to stay an extra day in Kuantan. First I rode to the bike shop I had been recommended and the mechanic quickly found the problem. I had installed an aftermarket brake lever and the rod that pushes the piston that pushes the fluid to activate the brake is adjustable by twisting it, and it had somehow gotten shorter. Possibly, because of the rather bumpy road, but who knows? Anyway, he quickly made the rod the correct length and used Loctite to make sure it wouldnâ??t get short again. Phewð?? ! All for the princely sun of rm10:- (about usd 2.50)

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Mechanic who quickly diagnosed and fixed the problem



My hotel, the Swiss-Belhotel



Cows foraging by the hotel


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Storm clouds are gathering

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Beautiful yellow moon rising

Wednesday to Kuala Terenganu

After a day of recouperating, fixing of the bike and getting the stuff I forgot at home I set off for Kuala Terenganu on Wednesday, It was looking to be a hot day with blazing sun and the usual humidity so I wanted to make it as short a day as possible in the saddle, so I decied to take the fairly new motorway. After the usual traffic light holdups I reached it and set off at a good pace. This road is numbingly boring with nothing but palm tree plantations along it. Halfway I stopped for a mango-smoothie which was nice and cooling and kept me going to the town and my hotel. I could not check in until 1500 and after changing into shorts I found a restaurant by the hotel and had a lunch of sweet and sour chicken, being in the muslim part there was no sweet and sour porkâ?¦

After checking in and a short nap I set about exploring the town. I walked towards the river and soon found myself in Chinatown.

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Gate into Chinatown



Nice looking Ducati scrambler

As I was leaving the hotel for dinner I asked some hotel employees having a smoke outside the hotel where I could go for a beer and a chinese guy walking past happened to hear me and said I could follow him to Chinatown. So I did and we got talking along the way, he was a traveling salesman for powdered milk and had driven from Kota Bahru furhter north on the east coast, actually almost in Thailand. He guided me to a restaurant which turned out to be very nice and with a good choice of

alcoholic drinks. I was expecting the menu to have typical chinese dishes but it was predominantly western and I choose to have fish and chips washed down with a beer.



Nice restaurant in Kuala Terenganu

Thursday to Gerik

Todayâ??s ride was going to be the highligt of the trip going on windy roads to the highlands and back down again. I started at 0700 without having breakfast and quickly found my way out of Kuala Terenganu towards the north. After 100kms I stopped at a petrol station for something to eat and had an unhealthy breakfast consisting of a bread roll and a Snickers bar together with some 100+. Itâ??s OK, once in a while I told myself. After another stretch I arrived at Jeli and started on the fantastic part of the road going from 150m to 1050m above sea. Nice asphalt with turn upon turn brought on a big smile inside the helmet, mind you, I wasnâ??t pushing it 100 or even 70 percent, just enjoying the road and views without taking any risks. After 60 km I reached the plateau and stopped at a rest area, Amiza Titiwangsa, to enjoy the view and lower the adrenaline content in my blood.

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View from rest area towards the north and Thailand



More views from the same vantage point

Half an hour later I was back on the bike now going downhill towards Gerik, again a lovely road for a motorcycle! As I was going downhill along the twisting road doing about 90kph a guy on a chicken-masher (moped) was keeping well up with me and after a while he passed me. Must be a local who knew the road very well I told myself ð???



Route from Kuala Terenganu to Gerik

I arrived at the Cottage Inn hotel in Gerik around 1300 and was told, as usual, that I couldnâ??t check in until after 1500. I kept pestering the receptionist asking for a place I could change into â??streetâ?• gear and after a while he told me I could check in and gave me the roomkey.



Cottage Inn hotel in Gerik

I was hungry after the unhealthy breakfast and no lunch and I found a stall just by the hotel, spring rolls and samosas turned out to be very tasty!



Samosas and spring rolls at stall outside hotel

Later I strolled in to town, about a km away. Gerik, certainly does not look like a prosperous place, and with the economy shifting from historical logging and tin mining towards a future centered on eco-tourism and rainforest conservation the town is, perhaps, in between with not a lot of money to fix the place up.



Downtown Gerik

I mentioned elephants previously and found an article of wild elephants deciding to stay on the Gerik-Jeli highway for three hours and blocking all traffic in both directions in June this year.



See: https://www.motorist.my/article/4710/elephant-pair-cause-massive-traffic-jam-in-gerik-perak

For dinner I found a place 100 meters from the hotel serving a variety of food. I chose to have a few chicken satay pins and a huge hamburger.



Lady serving Satay



Dinner food court

Friday to Kuala Lumpur

I decided to skip Fraserâ??s Hill and go to Kuala Lumpur instead, a distance of about 300kms. I got up early and was on the road by 0700, it was nice and cool that time of the day. The first 100kms was

along a nice country road going through a few small towns. After an hour and a half I hit the north-south highway which at this point goes through a mountaineous area making it the most interesting part of the highway. Before reaching Ipoh the road leads up quite a steep hill zig-zagging across the landscape and goes through a long tunnel at the top before zig-zagging down the landscape on the other side to reach the exits to Ipoh. Itâ??s a very nice section for a motorcycle! A bit further and I was starting to feel hungry so I took the exit to the next rest area. It turned out to be very large with a great selection of eateries, I must admit that I wasnâ??t very adventurous in choosing a Subway outlet. After a 6 inch BMT, coffe and a biscuit I felt ready to tackle the road to KL.

I reached the outskirts of KL right after 1100 and after filling up with petrol I mounted the bike for the last stretch on the fairly confusing road-system of the city. I made it without any wrong turns and got to the hotel by 1130. I was given a room straight away and went for a short rest before exploring the city.

I havenâ??t been to KL in more than 10 years and the skyline has certainly changed a lot in that period with new buildings everywhere. As I was walking towards KLCC, the area with the twin-towers, I heard my name being called and to my surprise saw that it was an old colleague who happened to be in the city! Incredible! So after the initial greetings we decided to have dinner at the Hard Rock Cafe that evening. After finding my way to KLCC and walking around the area with the obligatory pictures, I finally found a coffee place where I had a tiny bit of lunch and a coffee.

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SURIA KLCC

Kuala Lumpur Twin Towers

We later had a very pleasant dinner at Hard Rock, reminiscing over our times in the seismic industry. At 2200 live music with a very good local band came on. What a nice evening!

Saturday back to Singapore

I woke up feeling terrible on the Saturday and realized Iâ??d had too much to drink the previous evening. I was considering staying an extra day but after some breakfast I felt well enough to ride back to Singapore. It was quick to get on the motorway going south out of the city, must be a new road since I was here last. I missed a turn but kept going south but more towards KLIA, the airport. No big deal and I was soon back on the N-S Hwy towards Singapore. I reached home at 1630.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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