

# Essay on A Ferry-Ride

I had the fortune of visiting Penang island one long weekend some time ago. My friend, Ali, who owns a car, had wanted to see a friend in Penang. As the journey from Kuala Lumpur takes three to four hours, I accompanied him, "to keep him from falling asleep". as he said.

We arrived at Butterworth at about one o'clock in the afternoon. Poti guided the car in the directions pointed to by the signs that read "Feri". We stopped at one of the many booths to pay for the ferry ride. After paying the required fare we moved along as directed and eventually found ourselves parked behind a row of cars. I looked around and saw many other rows of cars. I reasoned that they were all waiting for the next ferry to arrive.

I was right. After five minutes or so our row of cars were motioned to drive into a pathway. It was strange to find ourselves on the narrow pathway and ending up behind the same cars again in front of us and behind us. Again we waited.

From where I sat I could see orange-coloured vessels moving in and out of the jetties in front of us. Ali told me that they were ferries. I took his word for it as it was my first trip to Penang and had no idea what a ferry looked like. I could read the name Pulau Talang Talang on the ferry docked right in front of us. Other ferries with names of Pulau Langkawi and Pulau Angsa could be seen getting ready either to dock or to leave, I was not sure which. Anyway, all the ferries looked similar except for their names. Even so, every ferry I saw seemed to have "Pulau something" for its name.

Finally, the lights changed to green in front of our row of cars after I watched a number of cars leave Pulau Talang Talang. Then -it

was our turn to enter the terry. All edged his car cautiously forward and soon we were on the ferry. Ail was motioned to park his car on the left-hand lane. There were altogether four lanes for cars.

After thirty or more cars had entered the ferry. The entrance was closed and I could feel the ferry moving. By that time 'Was out of the car and stationed right in the front of the ferry leaning against the guard-rail looking as nonchalant as possibly could, even though I was actually filled with excitement.

Below me, the water churned and foamed as the ferry picked up power to leave its dock. After a while, the water became calmer and I could see that the ferry was moving at a steady speed. Rubbish of all sorts drifted by. I supposed that pollution had also come to Penang. Surprisingly though, I could also see jellyfish floating alongside the rubbish.

Looking up ahead of me I could see Penang island at a distance. The Komtar building stood out distinctly among the other lower buildings of George Town. Behind the buildings were the pale .blue hills of Penang.

'Looking to my felt I could see the majestic Penang bridge that connected Penang Island – to the mainland. marvelled at its beauty what a magnificent piece of engineering it is. Aii promised to travel on it on our way home.

The short expanse of water on which we were travelling on was filled with sea traffic. I could see some ferries coming from the island while others, like ours, were headed for the island. The flow of ferries seemed endless. As if to add to the congestion, there were a few ships anchored in mid-channel. From the names, I could make out a Scandinavian ship, a Japanese ship and a non-descript hulk that appeared to be rotting in the water.

Ali came to stand beside me and he offered me some titbits he had bought at the back of the ferry. I took some.

All too soon, the docks of Penang Island loomed larger and larger and then it was time to re-enter our car to get ready to disembark. The ferry slowed down noticeably and after a couple of bumps or so we were firmly docked. The ramp was lowered and the cars started leaving. Our turn came and Ali expertly guided his car out of the ferry on to the island. We were now in Penang. My first ferry ride had ended.