

# Essay on A Journey by Car

One weekend my father decided to take me down to Singapore to visit my uncle. So early on that Saturday morning, we started off from our house in Pedaling Jaya.

It took us a good half hour to reach the north-south expressway to Seremban. The road was jammed with vehicles of all sorts. Well, that is the reality of living in the city. Everybody seemed to be going somewhere in their shiny cars and overloaded lorries.

Anyway, it was a relief to be on the relatively empty expressway. My father collected the transit ticket at the Sungai Besi Toll Plaza and soon we were traveling at a superb hundred and ten kilometers an hour. We passed slower cars along the expressway and faster cars passed us in return. There were some real speed hogs on the expressway. One speedster must have been going around a hundred and sixty by my estimate because he passed us as though we were standing still! I made some comments about him and my father assured me he will be caught for speeding or he will probably kill himself somewhere.

Soon we passed by Seremban and got onto the single lane trunk road. On both sides of the road were rubber trees for miles and miles interspaced with kampung houses and small towns. These small towns are slowly growing up. I could see development projects around them. I suppose one day they will lose their rustic charms and take on the hectic pace of a city. Meanwhile, it was pleasant to watch the easy-going style of small-town folks. It was quite a sight to see an old Morris Minor plodding along jerkily right in front of us holding up the traffic behind. always with a mixture of anger and humor when we had to brake hard to avoid hitting the back of such a slow-moving vehicle and then noticing that the driver was invariably a wizened

old man when we finally overtook it. At times we had to brake hard again to avoid goats and cows. It would be foolish to hit any of these animals, especially the cows.

At certain places on the roadside, there were people selling durians, rambutans, melons, and petai. We stopped and bought a bunch of rambutans which we enjoyed tremendously for half an hour before they were all gone.

We passed many towns. I could remember some names like Gemencheh, Labis, Segamat and Yong Peng. In some towns, we encountered police road-blocks, but we were allowed to pass through without any trouble. My father made sure he obeyed the speed limit in the towns. His precaution was justified because the police were operating speed traps in some of the small towns. We noticed some speedsters being booked in Yong Peng, We rolled merrily along, untroubled.

At Air Hitam, we stopped to have lunch. After that, we took some time browsing at the many stalls there. All sorts of things were sold here but we did not buy anything,

Somewhere between Air Hitam and Johore Bahru, we came upon the scene of a bad accident. We had encountered some bad drivers who took great risks in overtaking but we never thought we would see a result of such rash actions. Anyway, it was on a stretch of road surrounded by oil palms that we were brought to a halt by a traffic jam. We could only inch forward bit by bit. After what seemed a long time we finally saw the reason for the jam. A car without its roof stood in the middle of the road. Next to it was a tour bus with its right front portion smashed up. There was debris everywhere. A large crowd had gathered to gape at the horrifying scene. I searched with my eyes but could not see the victims of the

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That was no point in lingering around, so we eased out of the jam and continued our journey.

After an uneventful hour or so, during which I dozed off and dreamt about the accident, we arrived at Johore Bahru. I looked at my watch. Seven and a half hours had elapsed from the time we left home to the time we handed our passports to the immigration officer at the causeway. It was by no means a fast journey, but I was glad it was a safe one.

Soon we were in Singapore itself making our way through the traffic to Kailang where my uncle stayed.