

Sumatra Highway July, August 1995, from Bandar Lampung to Bengkulu

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More pictures in our slideshow. Pictures are available on request.



Introduction

This is a short, partial, record of a journey with my wife and I set off for in 1995. We travelled from Bali, Java to Medan on Sumatra. We took the ferry to Sumatra, from Merak (Java) to Bakauheni (Sumatra). This ferry shuttles 24 hours a day, mostly every 30 minutes. The voyage takes 1,45 hours and costs only a couple of dollars. After that we continued our private tour with a hired car, driver and guide to our ultimate goal Medan. We can recommend to do a railway trip from Bandar Lampung to Palembang. We did not do so ourselves, but friends did so with great pleasure.

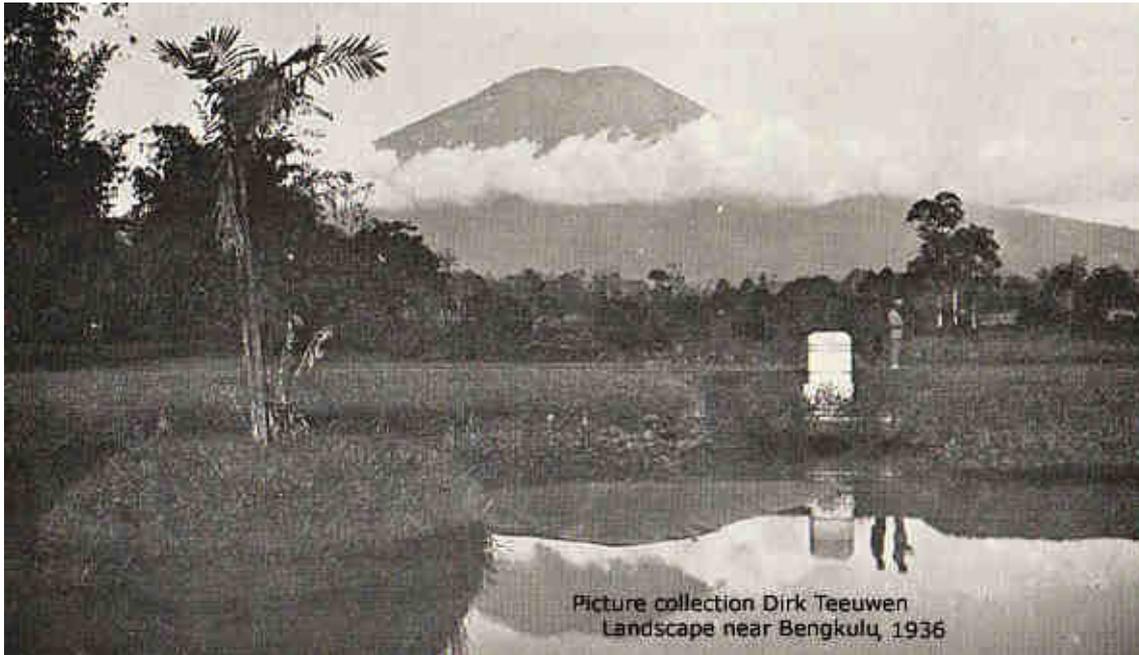
In this article I describe some details of the first part of the trip. Some short remarks about history and religion concerning the region we travelled through during this part of the journey in 1995.

Casual remarks on South-Sumatra's history and religion

De European interest in pepper fell during the 18th century. Because of that rulers of Aceh and Palembang lost a lot of their control over their producing hinterland. In 1663 the Dutch established their headquarters in Padang. In 1685 the English theirs in Bengkulu, searching for pepper, after being kicked out of Banten three years previously. In 1719 people of Bengkulu chased away the English temporarily until 1725. In 1760 the Frenchman D'Estaing and his sailors occupied the town for three month. Another Frenchman, Linois, sacked Bengkulu's fortress as well as its town in 1803. In 1824 Bengkulu became Dutch until 1950.

In 1663, I said so before, the Dutch came to Padang. The Dutch position in Padang was as delicate as the English position in Bengkulu. In 1781-1784 and 1785-1816 Padang came under British rule. From 1825 the Dutch controlled the sultanate of Palembang.

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Picture collection Dirk Teeuwen
Landscape near Bengkulu, 1936

Islam became widespread in Indonesia mainly in the 16th and 17th century. Hinduism stayed on Bali only. But Indonesian Islam came to terms with existing traditions. Muslim women have a lot of freedom in the archipelago. Indonesian men can have two wives, but with the consent of the first one only. Women have the right to divorce. The Minangkabau on Sumatra are strict Muslims, however their adapt laws dictate matriarchal rule. Most of the Indonesian Muslims are very consequent believers, but are very easy to get along with Christians.

This religious liberalism is a result from the friendly character of the Indonesian, Muslim believe in respect, but also from Dutch colonial influence. Influence of Christian is great, but their numeral strength is little. In some regions they are (sometimes) a majority: Bataks on Sumatra, Minahasans and Toradja on Sulawesi as well as people of Flores, Ambon and a part of West Irian. Christian churches can be found everywhere in Indonesia including Sumatra. Of course Christian influence is a result of the Dutch period.



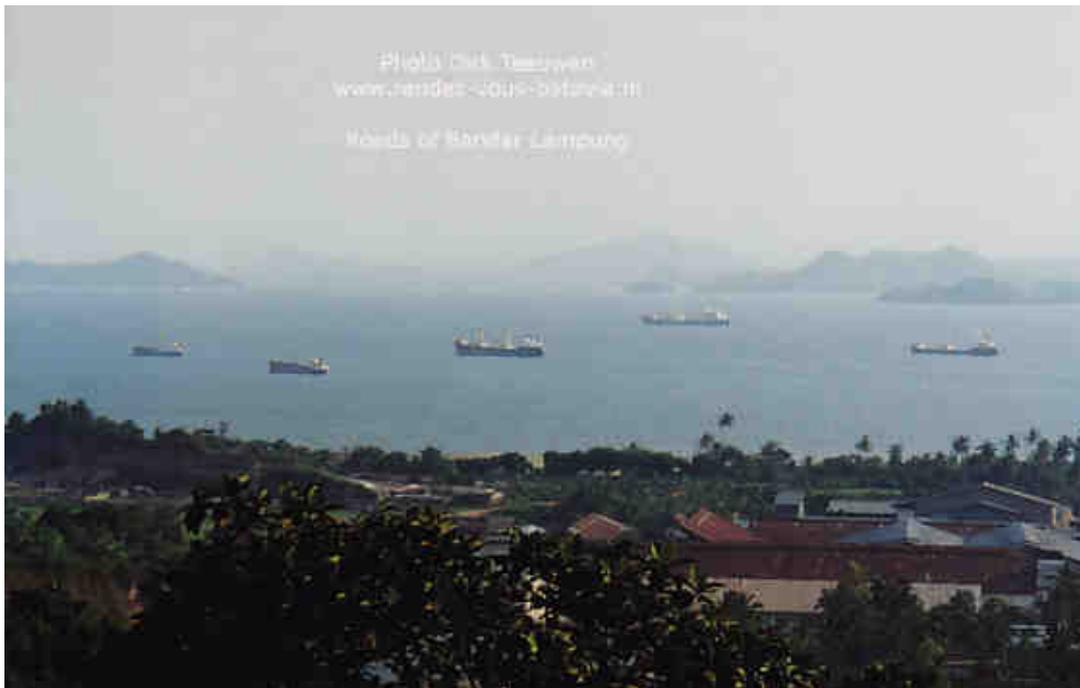
Picture collection Dirk Teeuwen
Bengkulu, English graves, 1936

In South-Sumatra, specially in Lampung there is a Javanese dominance. This is, and was, caused by transmigration. Transmigrations started in the Dutch period because of overpopulation of Java.

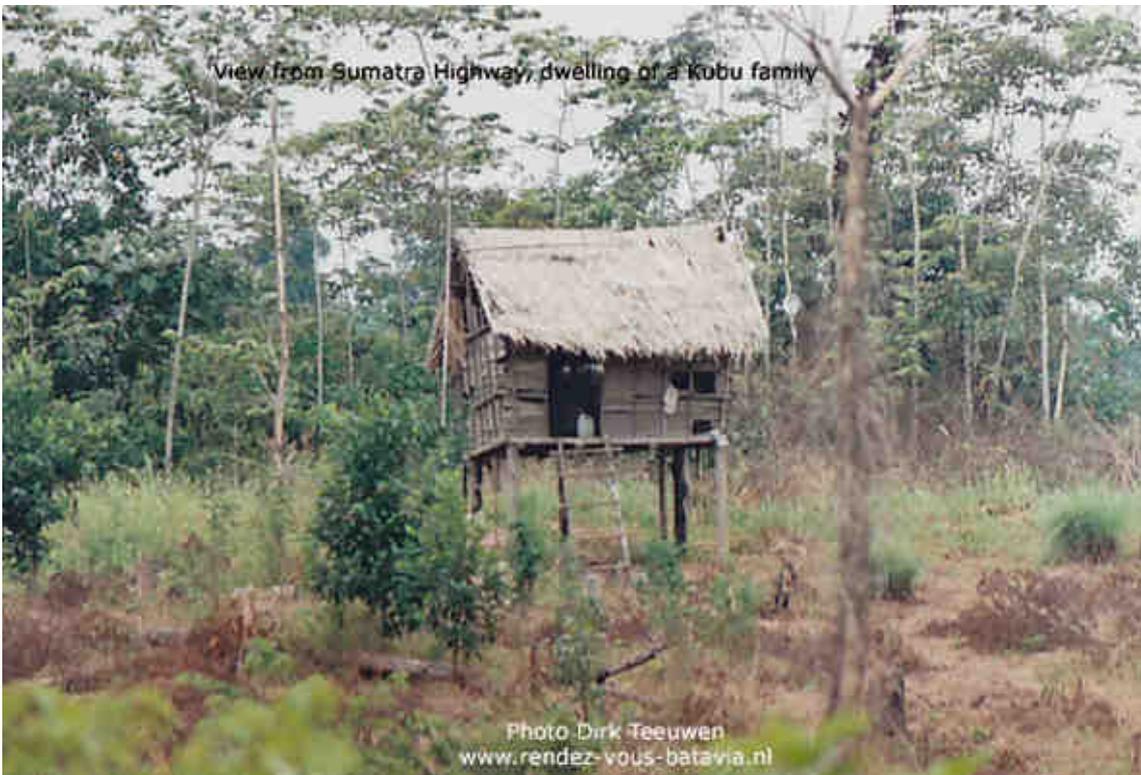
Travel route

- (- Bali and Java overland)
- Ferry from Merak to Bakauheni
- Via Way Kambas National Park to Bandar Lampung / Tanjung Karang
- Bandar Lampung, hotel Marco Polo
- Bandar Lampung
- From Bandar Lampung to Pagar Alam, hotel Mirasa
- Pagar Alam (historical remains)
- From Pagar Alam to Bengkulu, historical colonial town
- Three nights in Bengkulu
- (-Overland from Bengkulu to Medan and by air to Singapore)

I can strongly recommend to pay a visit to Sukarno's exile destination in Bengkulu: a luxurious villa with many photos, a library with Dutch books and his Dutch bike, which gave him the opportunity to explore the countryside.



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View from Sumatra Highway
Tanjungraya, Musi River



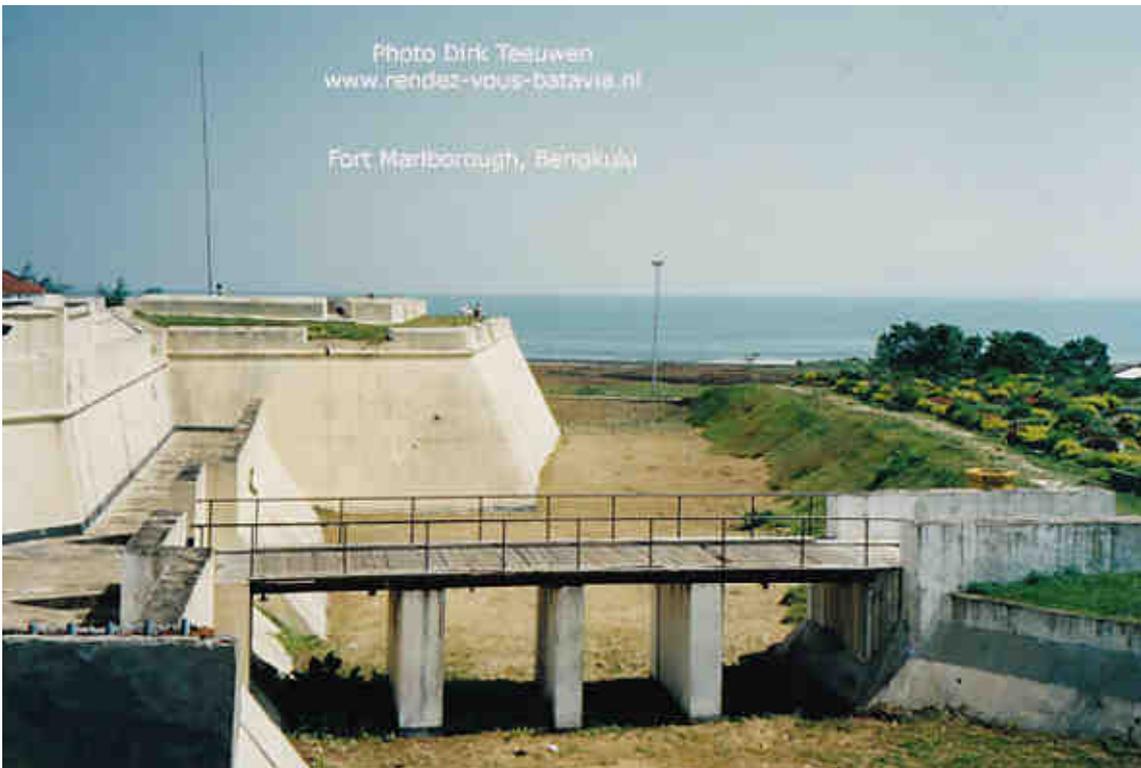
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Bengkulu Beach

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