

Club Visit to Philippines: 13-18 August 2014

23 RCRC members and spouses led by President Corina and spouse Richard visited the Philippines in August 2014. The purpose was to attend the Installation Ceremony of our sister-club, the Rotary Club of Makati North (RCMN). Other members of the team were CP Low Siew Joon, PE Sigrid Zialcita, Intl Services Director IPAG Johnson Tan and spouse Juliet, IPP Jeffrey Chan and spouse Susan, PP Jimmy Daruwalla and spouse Jothy, PP Low Cze Hong and spouse Elizabeth, PP Rajaram and spouse Indrani; PP Aaron Tan, PP Chin Koy Nam, Chris Mertz and spouse Jean; plus a number of more recent RCRC members such as Geoff Hogg and spouse Kathy, Mark Chng and spouse Siew Chin and Judy Tan.

The Induction Ceremony was held at the lavish ballroom of the Peninsula Hotel and saw the Induction of President George Mercado to take over the helm of RCMN from PP Chris Bellinger. During the buffet dinner, a video of this year's Installation Dinner of RCRC was screened for all to enjoy. We delighted in reminiscing that very enjoyable evening, including our dancers in their polka-dotted skirts. Entertainment for the evening featured nuns rocking away to dance music. Nuns?? Also a choral play by RCMN members of a true love story presented entirely through lyrics and tunes of popular pop songs. The best part was the dancing. RCMN provided a number of very good looking young men and girls as dance partners. These "PDIs" (professional dance instructors) are a feature of Filipino hospitality. PP Cze Hong and IPP Jeffrey did try their best, but the dancing skills of their partners showed up the limitations of theirs.



Following the Induction Dinner the RCRC delegation basically split into 2 groups. One group, led by President Corina went made their way to the Tagatay crater for an overnight stay at the boutique “Theodore” hotel with 10 rooms of different themes overlooking the Taal Lake & volcano. The Tagatay group had a great time and spent most of their time eating and shopping. On the first day of the tour, they had seafood lunch at Josephine’s Restaurant. The highlight of the day was the dinner at the beautiful Antonio’s Restaurant. The food was excellent and the ambience was perfect in the company of good friends. The group had their own local guide – our own Judy Tan who has a special relationship with the Philippines and the Filipino people. On the way back to Makati, Judy brought the members to have seafood at Seafood Paluto Restaurant followed by a visit to the casino.



The Tagatay 🇵🇭 Fun Group

The other group led by PP Jimmy left a day later for 2 days in Cebu. The Cebu group’s programme was arranged by a Singapore travel agent and it was excellent. We stayed at the Radisson Blue Hotel, the best hotel in Cebu town, which, happily for the ladies, was linked to the biggest shopping mall in Cebu. Our day tour of the historical and cultural attractions of Cebu brought us to the Lapu-Lapu shrine where the explorer Magellan landed and was killed by local hero, Rajah Lapu-Lapu, and his men in the Battle of Mactan (27 April 1521); a visit to a guitar factory where we enjoyed great guitar music; another stop at a huge Taoist temple overlooking Cebu city which obviously has great “feng shui” (so several of us got our fortunes assessed by the deities); a viewing of the Cebu Heritage monument and finally a visit to Magellan’s cross, planted by Magellan himself and is a revered relic of Cebu city; and to the Basilica del Santos Nino , the oldest church in the Philippines, which featured the statue of the Black Holy Child Jesus, given to Queen Juana of Cebu by Magellan himself.

The Cebu group also enjoyed excellent food, including dinner at a local restaurant where the total bill was just a bit over the cost of rental of the hotel vehicle to get us there; and an excellent buffet in the hotel courtesy of PP Jimmy. Quite apart from these, a number of us also indulged in the good life in the hotel with its extraordinary swimming pool and super-relaxing massages in the spa.

The RCMN Rotarians arranged identical programmes in Manila for the Tagatay and the Cebu group, but on different days. This featured visits to Manila attractions, lunch at the Wack Wack Golf course , shopping and dinner at the Tower Club and a Thai Restaurant respectively. So they made sure that we were kept well hosted during our time there.

The final evening in Manila was a “despedida” (farewell dinner) at the home of PP Pabling and his spouse Maribel. His home is something to behold. It’s a new house built just next to his existing house and it is a work of modern art. The architect was his son, Carlo, a man with many talents who is not just an architect but also an artist, sculptor and restaurateur. The design and concepts that went into this house was quite amazing. Then there was the food – absolutely superb!, featuring favourites such as large pan paella, Philippine roast sucking pig, mushroom with truffles and the tenderest roast beef you have ever tasted.



Our moment came when PP Jimmy announced that those of us in the delegation have donated \$100 each to RCMN for their projects, making a total of \$2300. Additionally 11 of us have agreed to donate \$500 each to support RCMN's project to replace fishing boats lost by fishermen during Typhoon Haiyan (called Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines). We are also asking other RCRC members whether they would join us in this.

This trip to the Philippines was a most enjoyable experience for all of us. But we were all humbled, once again, by the friendship and hospitality of our Filipino hosts.

Now the challenge is for us to do the same, and better, when they come over to visit us!



Reported by IPP Jeffrey Chan, 22 Aug 2014