

Lombok and how things are going.

Ok, so this is a mixture of gossip and a report. It will not follow a formal structure but will range over the things I have been doing for the last 2 months in Indonesia.

I went over in the middle of January to meet with the school (SMPN 7) and to find a house. While I was there I had a look at various houses and shops. The houses came in a variety of sizes (I did turn down a mansion it just wasn't me) and levels of furniture. Eventually I found one just over the road from the school.

The house is not large by Australian standards. I have attached several photos to the document literally every room of the house. The kitchen is the size of a toilet and the entire bathroom is a bit smaller than that. But perspective is important in this. It is an average sized family house in Indonesia. It even comes with a garden. People at school tell me I got ripped off on the price, once again perspective is important. They see an annual rent of 30000000rp and think it is ridiculous, I transfer that back to \$A and it is \$3000 for a year, I'm ok with that. There are obviously ongoing fees like the rubbish collection (daily) and the security (there is a gate and someone there most of the time) but at rp75000/month (yes that is \$7.50) again not an issue.

The biggest surprise was the prepaid electricity meter. It has several different alarm sounds to let you know when you are running out of electricity. At least I know that now. I ran out on the first day, managed to use my google-fu to find out what was wrong and where to buy more credit. Then I had to figure out how to input the credit (did that) and then nothing worked in the house. I found out later there was a brown out due to high winds but at the time I did have a feeling I had broken the house.

The differences in cost are taking some getting used to. I have managed to get the house set up to as close to Australian standard as is possible. There are some restrictions on that which are purely logistics. For example there is hot water in the shower but as the entire house operates on a gravity feed it is a 15L tank system that literally plugs into the light socket. On the up side you know when it is on. There is A/C in both bedrooms (the house came with one system and I bought the other total cost of \$250 including delivery and installation) but you can't turn the oven on while the A/C is running because the fridge motor kicking in will trip the RCD. Upside, I have a working RCD (actually it will also trip when an earthquake large enough to rattle the chandelier in the front room hits, if it doesn't rattle the lights the electricity will still work, yes this has been tested several times).

While I do have a kitchen it has only really been used to reheat things and the occasional set of noodles. It's not really laziness it's more the fact that the street

out the front of the housing complex has a large number of street food vendors that show up about 5pm, if you eat there you don't even need to do dishes. Prices vary but an average meal for one is about \$2.

I didn't bother with a washing machine because of space and having 5 laundries within walking distance that will wash and iron clothes on a 24 hour turn around for rp5000/kg, yes that's 50c.

These are local businesses operating in the area even the students use them (you can tell with the laundry as you see the school uniforms out the front drying).

The school is pretty easy to describe but you really need to see it to believe it. I have attached a large number of photos from some different classes and of the entire school assembly (every Monday).

The school follows a standard design in Indonesia. This one actually has one of the largest campuses in Mataram. The school was designed to have 3 year groups with 10 classes in each year group and 40 students in each class (1200 kids in total). It currently houses 3 years with 13 classes in each year group and an average of 45 students in each class (1650 students in total). In order to house all the students the school no longer has many of the speciality rooms needed to deliver the curriculum. There is one science lab and 2 computer rooms, each of the computer rooms has LAN points for 35 computers but comes with 20 computers. The library is literally the coolest room in the school as it comes with A/C and fans, the books may go mouldy otherwise. I have attached a video of the room it is the whole library not just part of it.

The classrooms are actually pretty large. They are all tiled which makes it easier to clean. The kids do the cleaning in the rooms, there is someone hired for the bathrooms and teacher's room. It's actually not a bad idea making the students responsible for the cleanliness of their classrooms and the veranda out the front of their rooms.

In addition to tiles they all come equipped with a white board (well white at one stage, most are a yellowy brown now) wooden desks and chairs. The students sit 2 to a desk. They don't change rooms, the teachers do.

All of the rooms have window frames. Some even have glass in them. I haven't seen one room that has all the windows with glass but I have seen a couple with no glass at all. All rooms have light fittings, some have lights. I have seen them working in one room, however this was the room with a hole in the ceiling that, from certain angles, matched the hole in the roof so you felt like you were in a spotlight, so I don't think that they were used much. There are fans in the teacher's room but the switch is so high that only 3 of the teachers can turn them on and in

one classroom. I asked about this and apparently if the student's want anything beyond what is provided by the government they can do it themselves, 9.9 did.

The smallest class I teach is 38 students and the largest is 48. The students are from a relatively poor background. Most have a single income family and that income is from jobs like taxi driver, gardener, maid or day labourer. Some are from higher income families with jobs like office worker and up to nurse or notaris (that one doesn't translate well, a cross between a JP and a solicitor). Most of them want to learn with very few acting out, unlike Australian students of the same backgrounds and ages.

Year 9 is the last year of compulsory education in Indonesia so the kids leaving year 9 are going off to work or to senior high school to learn a trade or to get into University.

Working with the local teachers has been really interesting. Teaching is a valued profession in Indonesia and all the teachers are quite highly trained. All have a Bachelors degree, most a Masters and about 30% have a Phd. However, once they get a government job there is no requirement to commit to ongoing training.

School starts at 7am on Monday with an assembly and runs until 1:10pm. There is a change in the national curriculum at the moment with year 8 and 9 using the old one and year 7 using the new one. The most obvious part of the change is that year 7 goes until 1:10 and year 8 & 9 finish at 12:30. They have an 8 period day Monday to Thursday, 6 on Friday (the first 2 are religion) and 6 on Saturday. I don't work Saturday. Monday to Friday I teach 26 different classes.

The biggest complaint so far is from the 13 classes I don't teach. I have started dropping in on some of them from time to time for just a single lesson which does seem to reduce the complaints. I come in and play a language game for 20-30 minutes and the kids get to say that they had a lesson with the foreigner.

Like everywhere some groups are really good and some are less so. I haven't had any truly awful groups while I've been here and I hope to keep it that way.

I am really enjoying this chance to be in Lombok, working with kids that otherwise don't get the chance to have lessons with a native speaker and just enjoying teaching.

Things are set up so that the next teacher will arrive with the new school year. The students and the staff are really supportive of having someone at the school and are looking forward to it continuing.



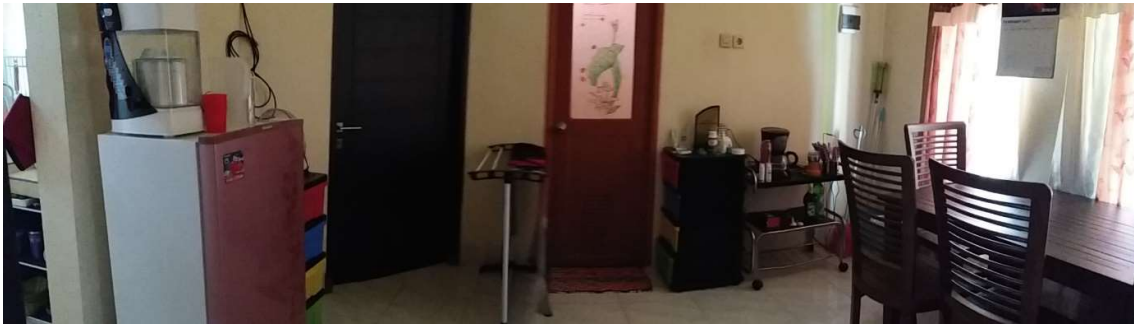












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Mataram, 8 Juni 2016
Kepala Sekolah

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