

SOMEWHAT ADRIFT AFTER GRADUATING from the College of Charleston, Jenny Adams decided to take a six-month trip to New Zealand for a little soul-searching. While there she booked a flight to Thailand via the least expensive airline. Thanks to a goofy Kiwi travel agent, she found herself on a five-day stop-off in Brunei.



TEN THINGS I LEARNED IN BRUNEI

BY JENNY ADAMS

1. Brunei is not an island. When you are at the travel agency planning a trip and you see the word “Brunei” written on the map in the middle of the ocean, it is simply because Brunei, bordered on all sides by Malaysia, is only the size of Delaware and the word will not fit across the country on the map.

2. Brunei does not have giant orangutans—the travel agent had it confused with Borneo. But smaller, slightly less exciting monkeys can be seen in the trees. Watch out for flying objects raining down from above.

3. Brunei is governed by the Sultan of Brunei (think oil). He is worth approximately 250 billion dollars.

4. Brunei is an alcohol-free country under Muslim law. This would not be considered a party place, which is why, I think, the Sultan travels frequently.

5. Think left. Bruneise drive on the other side of the road and in a fairly chaotic fashion.

6. Phenomenal orange juice accompanies every meal. They throw two oranges in a blender with a spoonful of sugar and a little milk and serve it over ice.

7. The main language is Malay, but the average citizen of Brunei speaks enough English for an American who is fairly adept at charades to manage.

8. When the menu says “chicken satay,” it means grilled chicken on a stick. When the menu says “beef satay,” it means grilled cow on a stick. When the menu just says “satay,” don't do it—trust me, you don't want to know.

9. There is a rampant stray cat problem in this part of the world. They breed faster than mosquitoes and all look too disgusting to touch, even for an extreme cat lover. The locals cut the kittens' tails off when they are born so that as they mature they cannot jump onto tables or balconies. This is, I guess, the only form of control, except maybe the previously mentioned “satay” option.

10. Blonde hair, men over six feet tall, and women speaking and acting freely are extremely rare. Cover your ankles and wrists if you are a female and avoid direct eye contact with men, unless you are going for the “prostitute” look. **ET**