

## Timor-Leste – Trish Bourke

Last June 2013, I headed to Afalyca Community Arts Centre in Baucau, Timor-Leste. I had checked out online tourist destinations, hotels in Dili and Google Earth. I was looking forward to leaving behind Melbourne in winter.

I flew to Darwin with Jetstar and the following morning boarded the Airnorth flight. This is one of the best flights I have ever been on. It was a brand new plane, only about 20 passengers on board, and fabulous service. The flight from Darwin was about 1 hour across the Timor Sea. The mountain peaks of Timor-Leste poking through the clouds, we rounded coast and flew into Dili airport across the Wetar Strait.

I hit that wall of humidity, grabbed my luggage and headed for a cab. The cabbies were waiting at the airport door hustling for a fare. I had been pre warned to bargain for the fare before I entered the taxi. Most taxi rides around Dili are about \$3 but not knowing how far out of town I was, I bargained from \$20 down to \$10. Feeling pretty pleased I followed my driver to his car. I think I got the worst cab in Dili. Every panel had a dint, the windscreen was cracked and held together with stickers making it hard to see out the front window but the driver knew his stuff and I arrived in one piece at my hotel.

I had a few days in Dili so I headed to Arte Moris.



Lonely Planet Timor-Leste: 'Set in the vast remains of an Indonesian Museum, Arte Moris encompasses everything weird and wonderful about Dili.

I spent some time here speaking to the artists living in caravans. Their English was excellent and their need for art materials evident. Afalyca started under the Arte Moris banner and has only recently become an independent arts community.

There is still evidence of the war in the streets of Dili but slowly a new modern city is emerging.



New infrastructure is being built in and around the city.

The bus to Baucau costs \$4 and the buses leave when full. There were passengers standing in the doorways and sitting on the roof of the bus I travelled on. This is a common sight and the passengers that stand get a reduced fare. The 'great ocean road' is spectacular and after many stops along the way and several hours, we arrived in Baucau.

The Lonely Planet map and directions to Melita Guesthouse left me guessing where the hell I was. I wandered through the market asking directions and people were pointing me down the hill. Off I stumbled with my 30kg of luggage.

I could see the Portuguese influence on the town as I pulled my bag along the neglected footpath of a once grand avenue. I was feeling hot and flustered when a young woman approached me "Trish, Trish you stay with us". Paula was out doing the market shopping and I handed

over my hand luggage and pc to her brother on a motorbike. As he rode off I realised he had all my cash and travel documents and I wondered if I had been stooged.

We arrived at the guesthouse and there was my luggage. Melita Guesthouse is a family compound with a wonderful terrace which captures the afternoon breeze from the ocean below. The family were very hospitable and I enjoyed my time with them.

Most mornings I would sit and draw on the terrace over a pot of strong coffee with sweetened condensed milk.



It was thanks to Andrew from *The Friends of Bacau*, Ballarat and Aneka at Afalyca that my trip went so smoothly.

Aneka was coming to the end of her 12 month placement at Afalyca as a volunteer through Youth Ambassadors for Development and had a great understanding of the issues and accomplishments of the musicians and artists of Afalyca. Her language skills were invaluable.

Andrew organised accommodation and suggested I travel with small denominations, new American dollars. I took \$300 in one dollar and \$300 in five dollar bills and it was very useful. Change is often in very old bills and surprise, surprise no ATM's or credit facilities in and around Baucau.



The first few days I spent watching the students make paper mache and create 3D works of art on board.



The paper mache was allowed to dry for several days and then painted. There were masks made previously decorating the wall.





The following week I took a class each afternoon. I started with botanical drawing and watercolour.





Finally we started on the Water Project for BHCAC. The energy and enthusiasm for lino cuts was evident. These students were hungry for any art experience. I can't wait to head back to Afalyca and Baucau. I would like to introduce the students to a range of different papers for watercolour and lino cuts. I would also like to introduce them to watercolour washes on their prints.

***Thank you Neil Wallace (Heidelberg Fine Art Wholesalers), Ray Jones (Box Hill Art Group) for the donation of paper, paints and other art products, these were greatly appreciated by all at Afalyca.***

*I hope to head back to Baucau in 2015 and will once again be looking for art materials to take. If anyone has grey lead pencils, erasers and other materials not being used, you can contact me at:*

*[trishbourke@optusnet.com.au](mailto:trishbourke@optusnet.com.au)*