

NEWSLETTER VIAVIA | 1 - 2009

JANUARY - FEBRUARY

New Year started in full spirit for the whole ViaVia family. All of us seem to be full of energy to reach their dreams. The staff of the restaurant are constantly inventing new specials of the day, lots of events have taken place and will take place, the travel staff has gone through an extensive evaluation and starts the new year full of fresh resolutions and a new tour. Our culinary trip explains the history behind the local gastronomy, describing how the city developed and how traditional cuisine is created. It is definitely not a trip for people on a diet!

One of the goals of ViaVia travel is to spread ideas of community based and sustainable tourism. In this light our travel team facilitated a training for Kaliandra last November. Tina tells you the story. Do not miss Ifa's reveries on her black skin and thus her sufferings in a society who considers black as less. Emily, one of the guests in ViaVia shares her experience on joining one of our tours. Dwi, the one and only accountant finished her studies and will return to Bandung. She tells us more about touching Tugu monument and we wish she keeps touching it!



Kasih, announces his upcoming exhibition in ViaVia. He has spent the last 2 months hanging out in ViaVia and he will make a personal account of ViaVia life through drawings and paintings. We want to thank everyone who contributed articles for this ViaVia Newsletter. Once again we want to tell you that we are not English native speakers and that we don't want our writings to be edited to the max. We keep it at "indenglish". We welcome you to share whatever story for our next edition.
Uji



Our new culinary trip Endang and Uji

Jogjakarta is known as a multi-talented city; it is a cultural, educational, and also a culinary city. Tourists who come to Jogja not only can enjoy the atmosphere of the city but can also broaden their experience through cuisine.



ViaVia provides a new trip for tourists, both domestic and foreign, focusing on culinary experiences. With this trip, we invite you to discover and get some tastes of local traditional food. This trip explains the history behind the local gastronomy, describing how the city developed and how traditional cuisine is created.

Starting from ViaVia, our guide will take you by motor to a snack center in Jogjakarta. Here, we will talk about and taste some snacks on our way through the culinary history, including an understanding of the “spirits” in our foods.

Next, we will invite you to see the whole process of making a snack called “Bakpia Pathuk”. This snack is a wrap of a dough from flour, salt and vegetable oil filled with milled green beans or cheese with chocolate. No preservatives are used, meaning that this snack only keeps fresh for three days. People in Jogja call this snack “Bakpia Pathuk” because it is made in the area Pathuk. Visitors can see and learn how to make it by joining the workers in this fascinating factory. We will then give you a chance to taste the snack that you have fabricated.



After enjoying various snacks and seeing their methods of preparation, we’ll take you to another place with food called “lotek”. This dish contains different kinds of boiled vegetables with peanut sauce. You can see how they make the peanut sauce using a volcanic stone plate with its grinder. And you can try to make your own peanut sauce if you feel adventurous.

As the next destination, we go to a restaurant to see the process of making the one and only famous gudeg, a traditional dish from jackfruit. We’ll take you on a trip ‘back in time’ to the restaurant’s kitchen and get the secret recipe. Gudeg is “very” Jogja.

Our last destination is the southern square of the Sultan’s Palace. It’s time for us to enjoy the evening atmosphere with a famous colorful and warm beverage.

If this makes you excited and curious, just call ViaVia to make a reservation for this culinary trip. The trip will give you sweet, fresh and warm memories of Jogjakarta through its culinary treasures.



Kok item banget seh???

(Why are you sooo... dark???)

Ifa

That's a question that mostly people ask to me regarding my dark skin. Some say it in front of my face while most say it in the back of my face. The rest whom do not dare enough to ask will come up with another refined question: "Where do you originally come from?". Hmm... What a question!!!

If I could just be honest, I used to be immensely down by those terribly annoying questions. I used to cry and cry when people started to talk about me and my skin. I complained a lot to my mom because I'm the darkest in the family. Don't want to make it sound so depressing but it feels like I'm just the ugliest creature on earth, that's why people always put me to the side. It does hurt to be ignored, that's why I never had enough confidence for anything. I only could wish for a moment to come when people stop humiliate me.

Years after years, I feel like my life was incomplete without regretting myself for having such dark skin. I tried to be strong, indeed, but I realize that my strength was only on the surface; I'm not strong all the way through. So, when people started to question me about my dark skin, my curly hair, and my appearance, again and again, it feels like the hurricane broke loose my defenses.

I kept on thinking to myself that I actually have been cursed, so I only need to find some potion to change the way I look... but it doesn't make me stronger no matter what.

White skin is hip and iconic, so people seem always to struggle to be as white as possible. Furthermore the fact that having white and fair skin has become a beauty ideal in Indonesia, had also put me into mass culture, and that means I just followed what the majority does. I've absolutely tried on many different whitening products, I put on exfoliating scrubs, fairness lotions and creams, I've visited beauty salons, and I could not forget once when I was visiting a sacred pool wishing that my skin will be fair when I bathe in it, just because of the idea that being white is beautiful... but eventually, I have to accept this bitter pill.

As the time goes by, I got an answer at a moment where my point of life was turned. A moment when I myself begin to understand that every single thing in life is multidimensional, so behind the binary idea of "yes or no", there must be other perspectives too. It isn't so easy and it took a long process to get through that idea, indeed, but you just need to be patient, until the time is through.



Skin color can be a small example back then. As we all know

that human skin color is quite variable around the world, it can range from a very dark to nearly colorless in different people. The color itself is determined by the amount and type of melanin (the pigment) in our skin. There's also a relationship between skin color and distance from the equator. Those who live at the equator are assumed to be darker than the ones who live far from it. So, people from Northern Europe for instance might have bigger problems when they come to the equator and the other way round. Nothing is exactly the same in this world, except the fact that we are just human. Both similarity and differences are teaching us lessons in life. So, it definitely depends on us whether we want to learn and respect each other through sameness and similarity or through differences.

In this case, I'm just glad and lucky to be part of the ViaVia family. It is certainly a great place to be. I've been learning a lot so far. It's a place where differences are considered as common. It is a place where you are able to express yourself, to be just like what you are. ViaVia is just like a tree that provides shelter from the sun, but it can also challenge the sun to come in sometimes. So, when people think you're weird outside, you'll get a chance to be refreshingly weird in ViaVia.

I remember I have had a tiny little deep conversation with Mie in a small motorbike garage at Jl Katamso, somewhere around June 2005. She tried to lift up my spirits to be proud of what I have, she convinced me that it's not a big matter to be a different person, there's nothing wrong about being different than others, because what makes you different, makes you beautiful. When people said that I am different just because my skin is dark, why didn't I take that as a blessing instead of a curse? It certainly took some time to digest the words but thanks to her anyway.

I think its just fabulous to work in ViaVia, the fact that you meet lots of people from another side of the globe, also turns me into what I am this moment. Sometimes I question my self why did I let that way of thinking hinder my path so far, but anyway the experiences people may go through will always become a good lesson to become mature.

Kaliandra Experience

Tina

Starting from the Eco Tour Biz, November 2007, ViaVia was introduced to Kaliandra, and then shared everything about both of us.

Kaliandra exists as a non-governmental organization (NGO) and is located on the lower slopes of Mount Arjuna, East Java, at a height of 850m. They were established in 1997 as a foundation. Their main goal is to support conservation of the Mount Arjuna area through educating the surrounding communities and improving their standards of living through better resource management – resulting in the symbiosis of mankind and their natural environment.

Kaliandra is located in Prigen, about 2 hours south of Surabaya, or 1 hour north of Malang. It is an education and training center, and also a tourist resort. It is encapsulated in 16 hectares of forest, driven by biodiversity conservation, environmental and cultural understanding, and the utilization of local employment and resources. They are a provider of 'Outward Bound' style leadership and team-building activity programs taught by their trained team leaders – always with an environmental and cultural theme– educating groups of up to 120 people. Kaliandra has accommodation–dorm-style 'rumah' of traditional Javanese style forest lodges - to provide for tourists who want to stay away from city life.

A year after we met, which was a great pleasure for all of us, ViaVia, accepted the invitation from Kaliandra to go there and facilitate Eco-Tourism training for two days, on 27-28 November 2008.

A week before, we prepared everything from A to Z. We considered the the variety and backgrounds of the participants who were to join the training, the size of the group, and the goal of Kaliandra with this training, so that we would be well-prepared.

Kaliandra asked us to bring all our information about sustainable tourism and Eco-tourism, and how to implement these ideas. About 20 people joined the group, including Kaliandra staff and villagers from nearby. The program was so special for both of us, Kaliandra and ViaVia.

We proudly accepted their trust to facilitate the training as the first step to opening their village trip. In the future, Kaliandra and the villagers can work together, hand in hand, to implement the ideas of sustainable tourism.

As a final preparation, for saving time, since it takes about 7 hours driving from Jogjakarta to Prigen, we decided to leave for Prigen at 9 pm, so

that we would arrive early in the morning. And it would be six of us who would leave for Kaliandra – Rita, Vita, Uji, Lisis, myself, and Mr. Rojo as our driver.

Since it was the first time for all of us visiting Kaliandra, when we arrived to Prigen at dawn, we were a little bit lost. Uji made a call to one of Kaliandra staff, Sugi, and he gave us directions to a place where we could wait for him. After not so long, he arrived to pick us up and then took us to Kaliandra. It took more than an hour to go up to the hill where Kaliandra is located.

When we arrived in Kaliandra, opened the doors and stepped out of the car, we were stunned by the hills and mountain views, green surroundings, and of course the weather. After a few minutes enjoying the view, Sugi showed us our room so that we could relax for a while after 7 hours nonstop driving. Before breakfast, we took a shower. But we got a surprise, no hot water in the cold weather. When we asked about it, they said that they wanted to keep everything natural. So, that is why there is no TV, no hot shower, and no toilet tissue there. Those are their principles, so there was nothing we could do about it, except sun bathing after we took a shower, just to warm up our bodies. After having breakfast, we had our briefing for the first day of training.

Day 1

We started our training after lunch. For this session, we first talked about the basics of culture. We talked about the physical form of culture, the habits of Indonesians, traditions, and everything else about culture. We looked for and tried to explain the core assumptions of Indonesian culture. When the foreign tourists are coming to Indonesia for the first time, some kind of culture shock would be the issue for them. But also the host can undergo culture shock when first coming into contact with a foreign culture that tourists bring. So, in this situation, we need to know how to deal with it and understand how to minimize the culture shock before



it becomes a problem between us. We do not only need communication, but more specifically intercultural communication and open mindedness as the next step.

After we finished talking about culture, culture shock, communication, and intercultural communication, we had a break and at night we continued.

For the second session of the first day, we watched a video about tourism in Gambia of about 45 minutes long. Then we discussed the video. The video is about tourists from England visiting Gambia for Christmas holiday. They are picked up by big buses to take them to a big hotel. They have a tour guide from England, who gives them a briefing about their program during their holiday in Gambia. One day, when the tourists visit one of the Gambian villages, there are a lot of children asking for money or pens from the tourists. Especially when the tourists ask for pictures with them, then the children ask for something in return. Also the video shows artificial tourist attractions.

When we come to the discussion, all the participants felt pity when they watched the children ask for money and pens to the tourist. They said that is because the children are poor and lack education. They did not see that it was the kind of tourism and the guide that might be the main cause. Anyway this is not what we want to be happening in our society. It depends on the guide who takes the tourists to the village. The guide let that sort of thing happen. As a guide, we should remind the tourists in the first place not to give anything to the children or the villagers even if they look so poor. Because that could make the villagers be spoiled by tourists. We do not want to create beggars. And we do not want to make something on purpose into just a tourist attraction, because that would not make the activity go naturally. Then all the participants agree with that. If tourists want to help the poor, we can give them possibilities to give money to some good organizations instead of to the children.

Day 1 had finished. We were back in our room. Suddenly we came up with an idea to visit a "red light" area in one of the villages near Kaliandra. It took about one hour by car to go there accompanied by Sugi. It was funny when Mr. Rojo, our driver, opened the window and looked around, suddenly a man runs to our car with his motor bike offering him whether he wanted to be accompanied by a girl. He said no, then he pointed at us and said to the man that he had enough with 5 girls in the back already. Then we all laugh. And



when we step out of the car to have something to eat, all the men there were looking at us, the ladies, with the look that they want "something" from us. For me, personally, I felt weird with that situation, because that was the first time for me to go around to the red light area, even by car. There is always the first for anything.

Day 2

We started the training at 8 AM. The program for day 2 was a short discussion about guiding and then we continued guiding practice. The guiding practice was a little bit difficult for both of us. Since they are used to be the trainer for Outward Bound for Indonesian people, their technique is a little bit different. Then we had to make sure they understand that this time they had to be a guide for a trip for foreign tourists, not for Outward Bound. We also gave them a situation to show them the real conditions when we guide a foreign tourist.

The conclusion was that they have to be open-minded for everything. Some of them stick with their practices and are defensive, but they would understand when they face the real situation. So we practiced a whole day through all kinds of roleplays. That was our experience in Kaliandra for the first time. Before we left, we exchanged addresses and phone numbers. It seems that they have a great enthusiasm to implement sustainable tourism. We were pleased to hear that.

Before we were leaving for Jogja, Sugi once again took us to Kaliandra conservation forest to look around. Because we had been so busy for the training, it was the perfect time to go around. That was a beautiful walk for me. We hiked a little bit, and then in one viewpoint, we can see all the landscape, mountains, and hills. We were surprised that we can see the villages of Bromo area and Semeru area. What an astonishing panorama.

After not so long, we leave for Jogja and bring with us a new experience for all of us. We arrived back in Jogja that night.

Keep your spirits up Kaliandra.

Story Behind Tugu Jogja Dwi

Do you know the story behind Tugu Jogja? Tugu Jogja itself is a monument located at the intersection between Jalan Mangkubumi and Jalan AM Sangaji. I remember when I came to Jogja for the first time, a friend of mine told me that this monument is unique and that I should go there. But, when I went there, it was nothing special!! It was just a white pillar and seemed totally uninteresting.

I asked to my friend, "What is so special about this monument?,"

and he started to tell me the story behind Tugu. For the local people, Tugu is a mystic monument because it is located in one



straight line between Mt. Merapi, the Kraton, and the Southern Sea. This is why it has a mystic power. You can often see the remains of gifts or offering for the spirits, called sesajen, on and around Tugu. When the earthquake happened in 2006 many people ran to Tugu Jogja, because they believe that Tugu has the power to protect them from disaster.

For newcomers, it has a different story. They believe that any newcomer who comes to Jogja and touches this monument will fall in love with Jogja and won't want to leave this city. At that time, I really doubted that story.



How come by touching that monument I could fall in love with Jogja? To prove it, I touched Tugu, and I did not feel anything. I said to my friend that he was lying. Time goes by, and it is the time for me to leave Jogja. Funny things happen, I feel it is so hard to leave this city. Many things happened here and I enjoyed every single day I spent in Jogja. But like it or not, I should go. Lately I remember the story of Tugu, and maybe it is hard to leave this city because I had touched Tugu. Curious enough? Touch it, and feel it! You will be happy you tried it!!



keroncong night-dec08



rhythm of survival-jan09



keroncong night-dec08



gipsy night-dec08



rhythm of survival-jan09

Next Exhibition
“Rekaman Kunjungan”
“Visitor’s Diary”
Kasih Hartono
17 Februari-Maret 2009

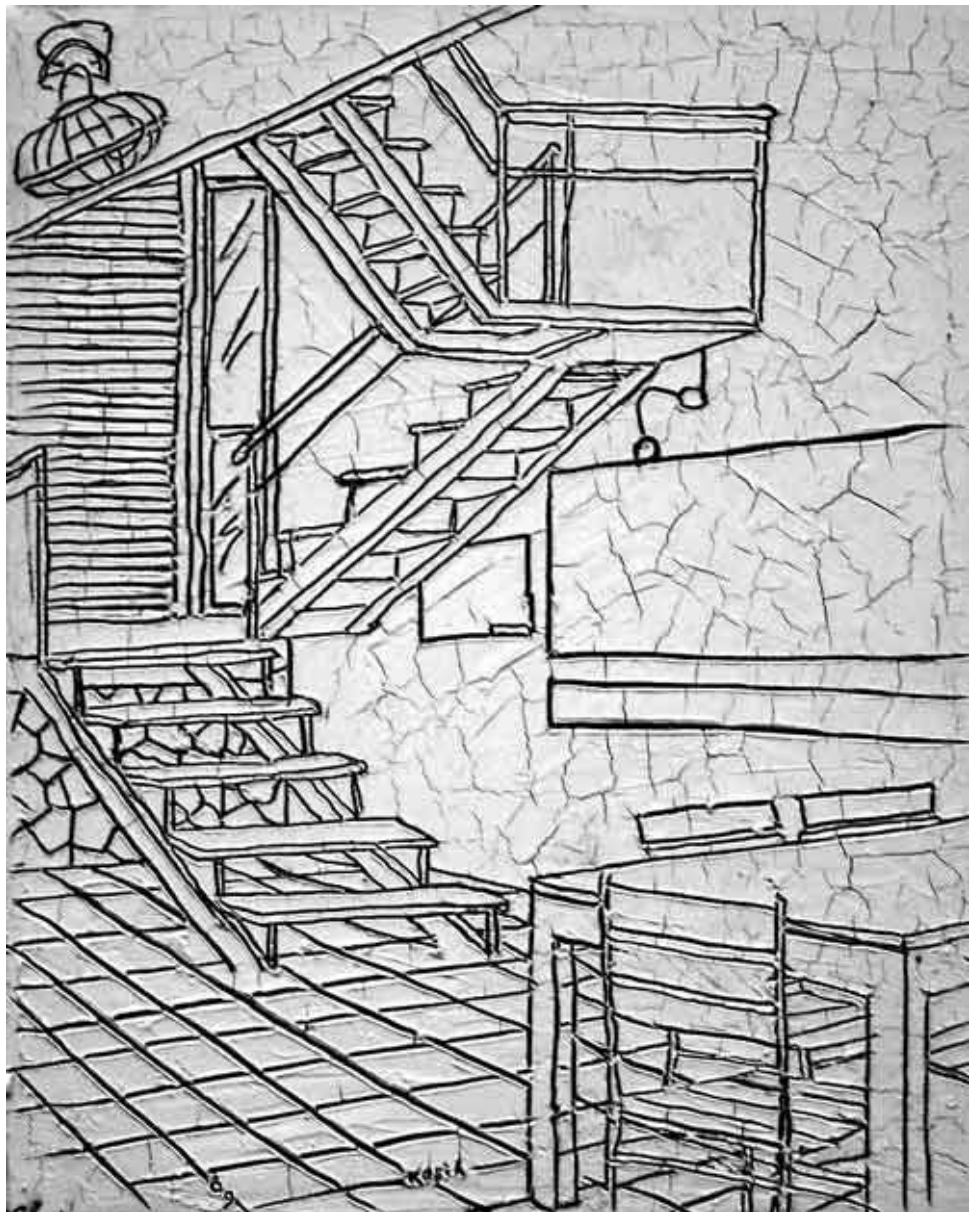
ViaVia hosted many visual artists, musicians and performers over the years and ViaVia is a place that contributes a lot to the progress of arts in Jogjakarta in general.

The artwork in my next show in ViaVia stems from spending time there. They are my personal notes in my own style.

Thanks to ViaVia for all these chances given. Thanks also for 14 years of sharing space and time with artists, musicians and performance artists.

My artwork consists of posters, sketches of the building and its interior, of the music performance, drawings and paintings of the staff and ViaVia friends.

Kasih Hartono
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and please provide us with comments, input, critiques, ...**