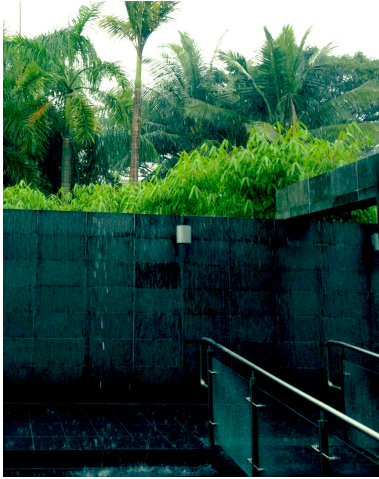


Welcome to my blog posts from partlycloudy.co.uk, the travel journal I wrote when living in Singapore from 2012-2017. Not wanting to do away with website content, I've made PDFs of some of the posts and uploaded them here, to keep the adventures alive.

Il Pleut

Sep 25 2012



My mother-in-law was terrified of rain. As she lived in the UK when I knew her I always thought it was an extreme reaction to what was only ever, as I saw it, a few drops. She was horrified if we allowed her small grandson to play in it without fully waxed-up coat and boots, and she refused to go for a walk if clouds were looming. I chalked it up as one of her sweet idiosyncrasies. That is, until we started visiting SE Asia and the phobia began to make sense.

Today it is raining in the UK and news of this fact has made me homesick because it is tangible, familiar, something that I can imagine. Actually it's major news, has taken over all the big websites in the way that large UK storms tend to. Our home country is getting the sort of lashing for which my mother-in-law would have gone into total lockdown. Still (and I know it's not a competition) I can't help but think of the storms we get here.

When the skies open over this island the whole world is shiny. I'll be cosily tapping away at my computer when it hits. From our living room window the rain will be so thick that it obscures the view. I can just about make out the pool, where the droplets blur the blue depths. You can see them as they fall from the clouds, double-size splashes of water, dashing down in needle-straight lines. But this rain has not made front-page news, it is normal. People are walking in it. The builder in the flat upstairs has simply moved his drilling inside. Cars are going past. No one is building an ark.

Yes, rain stops play, makes things tricky. The school bus will be late, the public bus will be late, you can't get a cab and you don't want to be stuck somewhere other than home when it hits because otherwise you'll be out for a while. Don't bother with 'proper' footwear here, and don't expect to wear trousers and not have them stick to your legs. One of the first cabs I ordered for me and SmallMonkey had to wait because we were faffing. The driver rang me twice in five minutes. 'Ma'am,' he begged on his second call, 'please hurry up it's about to rain.'

For all the palaver, it is normal palaver, expected. And we've not even hit proper rainy season yet. Last Friday afternoon I was cooking in the kitchen when several huge explosions went off somewhere down our street, or so it seemed to me. I dashed to the window but no one was running, the sky was not full of flames, no sirens or bells, just an old lorry chugging past and someone walking a dog on the sidewalk. I yanked

open the patio door, waved at a neighbour: 'Was that thunder?'
She replied with a sympathetic nod.

Not such a stupid question if you've ever heard Singapore thunder. It's no chubby rumble but a crazy static fizz, and not just one explosion but a series of them, crack crack crack. Then a deluge that's like the prolonged unzipping of a giant market stall cover that has been sagging in a storm and now splits. Re-enact the scene and then make it go on for half an hour and you'll get the picture.

After the cracking thunder we had the deluge, and the school bus was late. We're new here and a late bus still makes me worry, as back in the UK I always walked SM to school. There he was, hopping down the bus steps like a tiny wet sparrow. And as I held our huge bought-for-Singapore golf umbrella high (thanks for making us buy that, Mr PartlyCloudy) I strained to hear my boy's voice over the clatter:

'It's OK Mummy, I told the driver how to get home in the storm.'

At least someone in this family has a bit of common sense.