

d i s t r a c t i o n s

Tommy Travels

A Deaf, Dumb and Blind Travel Guide For The Debutante Traveler
by Murray Thorpe

One can escape from the mad, mad world by seeking haven in a mountain hide-away.



Artwork by Nina Botten

Away from bustling population centres one can escape the mad, mad world in a mountain hide-away.

The Dieng plateau, at an elevation of 2,093 metres in Central Java, Indonesia, seems appropriately named, as its name comes from the words Di Hyang meaning "Abode of the Gods." It is located not far from a city of three million people, Yogyakarta. It is pronounced Joe Jah Carta which made me ask whether the Blue Jays were visiting the area. They were not. However, any visitor to this city must take in the Ramayana Ballet. The beauty and grace of the dancers' hand movements and their apparent ability to glide across the stage left me spellbound.

Getting away from the becaks (bicycle taxis) and throngs of people in Yogyakarta, I donned a small pack and headed out for what I thought was to be just a day trip to some of the religious monuments of Central Java. At the largest ancient monument in the Southern Hemisphere, Borobudur, I met a Swedish couple who were talking about the Dieng Plateau. I was intrigued and the three of us left for the volcanic



John, Paul and Ringo. So where is George? Dieng Plateau.

plateau of Dieng.

We travelled there in small buses called Ang Kutans (referred to as Colts in the Lonely Planet's *Indonesia Handbook*). Riding one of these vehicles can at times be very crowded with more than the normal limit of people, produce and animals. The large backpacks carried by the Swedes did not help matters any.

This did not deter us as we negotiated a price all the way to the Dieng Plateau. Ten minutes later, the driver told us that this was as far as he was going, but we could catch another colt at that spot. We politely thanked



Sunrise behind Mount Merapi

him and got out. Not getting what one has paid for is usually grounds for complaint, but it would not have served any purpose here. The ride was fairly cheap which made us forget about paying multiple fares for one trip.

After two more colt drivers took us for ten minute trips, we got to the Dieng

Mining is no longer a source of revenue for this community but Rossland serves as a bedroom community for the smelter town of Trail (named for the Dewdney Trail), as well as for the skiing, tourism, forestry and surveying industries. Recently, I had a chance to talk to a former UNB graduate living in this area.

Martin Kruus graduated from UNB with a Bachelor of Science in Survey Engineering in 1991. He is currently working in B.C. in his field. He lives in lower Rossland on what he refers to as the back-side of Deer Park Mountain. "It is one of those places furthest from big cities in Canada, and yet right on the American Border ... it feels like a little mountain get-away. You can't even find a Globe and Mail newspaper. That's one way to judge whether a place is small ... it attracts eccentrics (and is) like a little California."

We hit the sack so we could get an early start. The Dieng Plateau was noticeably cold, so cold that I had to use the infested blankets I was provided

with. Hitting the sack several times did not kill all of the wildlife in those blankets. There are no four star hotels on the Dieng Plateau, just hospitality and scenery one cannot resist. My skin still crawls when I think about that night. However, I would do it again for the "atmosphere" of the Dieng Plateau.

At three in the morning (ughh), a group of us hiked up to a perfect vantage point and watched as the sun rose in behind Mount Merapi. After this religious experience, we spent the better part of the day trekking around the area. Ancient monuments, boiling mud, relatively fewer, but equally as friendly people and a peaceful pastoral setting made this place a great mountain hide-away.



Full Moon From Deer Mountain

his brother was living there and he started working with another UNB graduate, Al MacDonald. Al is now working out of Nelson, B.C. which is fifty minutes away. Nelson was the setting for Steve Martin's Roxanne and has great hiking (Kokanee Glacier), spelunking (Cody Caves) and hot springs (Ainsworth). Swimming in the area is what one may call brisk even on the hottest day in the summer. The lakes are glacier fed.

For outdoor activity, this seems like a great spot. Martin Kruus described stepping out his back door to go on Moonlight cross-country trips or dragging his brother around on skis with a snowmobile. In addition, hiking, mountain biking and all forms of skiing are popular activities. Last year, the Rubber Head Race which is the Canadian Cross-Country Mountain Bike Championships was held in the area. Furthermore, 50 miles of the Dewdney Trail are being set aside as a heritage site linking it in a project called "Rails for Trails" which converts old unused rail beds into mountain bike trails.

After any physical activity, Martin prefers to sit back and relax in the "Flying Steam Shovel," put back a freshly poured Okanagan Springs Classic Brown Ale and munch away on his curly fries while looking out at Deer Mountain through the large window. He described it as, "just like two butt cheeks ... [I chortled] ... oh yeah ... no one ever calls it Deer Park Mountain and I'll leave it for you to figure out what we call it."



Martin Kruus
UNB B.Sc. S.E. 91



Where in the World #3

photos by Warren Watson

Martin first came to the area because