

SEANET CONVENTION 2008

POST-CONVENTION ACTIVITY

'IOTA' ISLAND OPERATION FROM MANIKAR BEACH RESORT, LABUAN (OC-133)

John, 9M6XRO, and I visited the Manikar Beach Resort on Labuan from Sunday 16 March to Tuesday 18 March 2008 to check its suitability to host an IOTA Island activity for SEANET delegates following the 2008 Convention.

The resort can only be described as "perfect" for our requirements. Here's why:

- A perfect radio location with sea take-off to all areas
- Comfortable accommodation
- Very reasonable rates
- Good food
- Extremely helpful Manager and staff

The Manikar Beach Resort is located on the northernmost tip of Labuan, about 15km from the ferry port and airport. Transportation can easily be arranged for a small charge. The resort is set in 15 acres of nicely landscaped gardens right on the beach. Accommodation is in three four-storey blocks with a total of over 300 rooms, yet the resort was almost completely empty when we were there.



The Manager, Mr Jonah Tan, was extremely helpful and is very keen to assist in future amateur radio operations from the resort. In fact, when we were discussing our requirements with him, he said that when he was at school in Penang 20 years ago he had been a Scout and had been to Jamboree on the Air (JOTA). He even remembered the callsign, which was 9M2FK. This callsign belongs to Eshee Razak and when I said that I also knew Eshee and had met him in Penang everything went like clockwork! It is appropriate that Eshee was also one of the founders of the SEANET Convention.

Of the three accommodation blocks, Block 1 is currently being renovated, so at present is not normally open to visitors. However, Block 1 is the best for siting antennas, being closest to the beach, and Jonah kindly allowed us to use a room in Block 1 free of charge to set up the station while we stayed in Block 2, which has already been renovated.



From Block 1 it is possible to mount a vertical antenna right at the high-water level on the beach, within a few centimetres of the sea at high tide. This is the best possible location for an amateur radio antenna system (recent experiments have shown that a simple vertical located so close to the ocean will perform better than a 4-element monoband Yagi mounted on a 40-foot tower!) The location of the resort at the northernmost point of Labuan means that there is a clear take-off across the sea for hundreds of miles from west to east through north, providing an absolutely perfect take-off towards Europe, Japan, South East Asia and North America. We certainly found that signals on all bands were extremely strong and far better than from our home stations in KK using beam antennas. We made over 1500 QSOs in one and a half days of operating. This location really is excellent for amateur radio!



The best rooms to book for November are 1009, 1010, 1011, 1012 and 1013, which are the five adjacent ground-floor rooms facing the sea in Block 1. The rooms are very large and include twin queen beds or a single king-size bed. The floors are stone tiled and there are recessed ceiling lights. There is a ceiling fan and two air conditioning units. The rooms have televisions but at present only one satellite channel (Star World) is available. The bathrooms are of polished marble and have wash basin, toilet, full-size bath tub and separate glass-walled shower cubicle.



The resort has a large swimming pool and a small children's pool. There are spa treatment facilities available and outdoor





cabana units were being built for this when we visited. There is also a gym but this was closed for renovation during our visit.

Note that by November 2008 all the renovation work at the hotel should have been completed.

There is a comfortable bar area (pictured above) with karaoke to be installed soon (unfortunately, in my opinion!) Beer costs only RM6 for a 0.5l glass (cheaper than at any hotel in KK). The restaurant serves both Asian and Western food of good quality and at reasonable prices, although no wine is served.



The normal daily rack rate is RM 288, but we were offered a special corporate rate for SEANET Convention delegates of RM 150 nett per room per night. This rate is for either one person or two people sharing a twin room, and includes an excellent *a la carte* breakfast.

If we book at least 15 rooms for five days we will get one additional room free of charge for the use of the station. Depending on the number of people who wish to take part in this post-convention activity, it would also be possible to set up a second station at the resort. If the second station was in Block 3 there should be sufficient separation between the two stations to allow both to operate simultaneously without causing too much mutual interference, although this would need to be tried out.



Manikar Beach Resort main reception area.



It is my opinion that some SEANET delegates who are also keen CW operators will want to stay for a full week, until Monday 1 December. This is because the CQ World Wide DX CW contest runs from 8.00am Malaysian time on Saturday 29 November until 8.00am on Monday 1 December and they could take part in the contest from Labuan. Others may want to do the CW contest from another location, such as Langkah Syabas, and so they would stay only until the Thursday or Friday (27 / 28 November).

I thoroughly recommend that we offer the Manikar Beach Resort on Labuan as the 'post-convention activity' for SEANET 2008.

Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX
20 March 2008.



Block 1, with ground floor rooms 1013, 1012, 1011, 1010 and 1009 from left to right. Note the absolutely straight palm tree, about 70ft high, immediately outside room 1011!