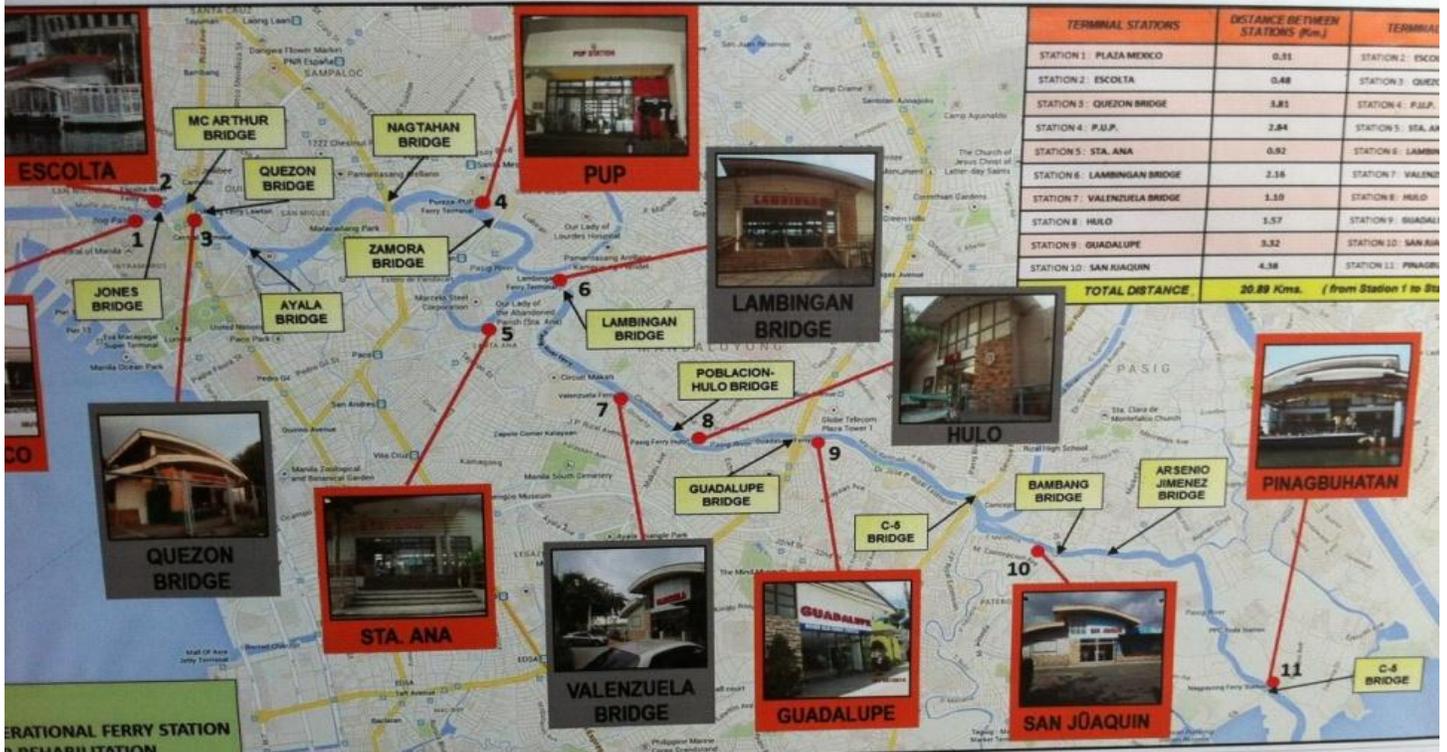


## RIVER TRAVEL

### PASIG RIVER FERRY TERMINAL STATIONS



The river ferry map showing 11 stations, covering 20 km. The other week, I rode downriver from #7 Valenzuela Stn to #1 Stn just past Escolta. Then back again to #8 Hulo Stn. It averaged about 45 minutes each way, about 14 km. I've clocked other means: by 2 jeepney rides, about an hour 20 min. By taxi, or by driving a car, about an hour. Not bad at all. And the atmosphere was not at all smelly and offensive. Perhaps because of the recent rains. In fact, it was fantastic.



Top left, the Ferry approaches the Valenzuela Station which probably is typical of most. A floating pontoon on the river accessed by ramp and stairs to main roadside station, with aircon waiting room, CR, office and ticket booth. It even had a handi-cap access elevator, top middle, which may or may not be working. The aircons were not, but probably to save power. I was the only passenger to board from the station.



Top right, but the ferry goes fast, as evidenced by the wake after passing under a bridge. Top, the ferry holds about 30, and is all fiberglass, made in Cebu. But part of the ceiling is peeled off. Indeed better maintenance is in order.

Left, during GMA's time, these more elegant and larger a/c'd ferries were used.

But the real reason I took the ferry was two fold. Lately, I have been playing around with Google Earth maps to see the "street views", where one can virtually "drive" down a street and see the left and right views, and I find that there are no "river views", at least in the Phils. This trip would allow me to take river views. Secondly, I wanted to view those sections of the river where about 50 years ago, I was most familiar with. On the Makati side, the marine company I was working for rented an old house with a big lot beside the river, tore down the dike, and built a tugboat which we launched into the river. On the Mandaluyong side was EEI, that powerhouse contractor, where we built a self-propelled barge with two bullet-like tanks holding about 400 tons of LPG. This eventually would ply the Pandacan oil farms to the Bataan refinery. The design of the barge was crucial. It had to be low and squat, to navigate under 4 bridges. It had ballast tanks to fill with water when LPG load was empty. But even so, at high tide, it couldn't go under the Panaderos bridge. Launching the barge was quite an event because between the EEI shops and the river was a road. EEI built a temporary slipway during launch.

But on this trip, 50 years later, none of those sections of the river looked familiar. EEI had moved out from Mandaluyong years ago. And on the stretch of river on the Makati side, there weren't anymore any old houses. See photos below.



Part of Pandacan tank farm



Some factory alongside the river.

Didn't see any squatter shacks or hovels anywhere.



And I saw a tugboat abuilding. Wonder how they'll launch it.



As a matter of fact, the writing on the wall above says: "CHARM AND SPLENDOR OF PASIG RIVER"



The back of the iconic Post Office Bldg



A shipping container yard



River cleaner barge. Skims water lilies

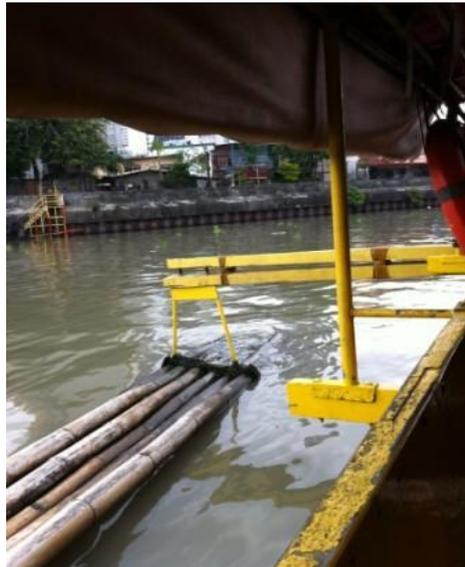
Riding on the Pasig ferry can be very interesting. It is well patrolled, with coast guard stations at strategic locations. There always is a coast guard personnel who is on board when the ferry navigates in the area of the Malacañang Palace. He watches and prevents passengers from taking any pictures. And the ferry slows down to a crawl when in that area. And when boarding from any station, one has to fill-in the passenger manifest: name, age, address. I guess with all of these rules, the Pasig ferry cannot become a mass transport system like the MRT. And they run every hour only. But if I worked in Escolta and lived in Makati Poblacion, I'd take the ferry. It is faster, though more expensive at P45 versus 2 jeepney rides totaling P16. Cleaner air (maybe smelly at times) than street diesel fumes. All part of the equation.

One interesting part of the equation is that the stations are located on either side of the river. When I boarded going down river, I got on at Valenzuela Station on the Makati side. On the way back, I got off at the next station, Hulo, which was on the Mandaluyong side, but closer to the Makati Poblacion. On many points along the river, there are crossing stations where big motorized bancas shuttle back and forth across the river, operated by private entities. The Pasig River system is operated by the gov't.

Below are pictures of the Hulo crossing station banca.



The Coast-guard approved sign stated it can hold 38 people. Note the life vests near roof.



The out-triggers for stability



The steering wheel

It took only 7 minutes for the banca to get a full load of passengers, who paid P4 for the 2 minute crossing. Seniors and students pay only P3. When I got to the other side, I walked 10 minutes and I was home.

In closing, I would like to show some other river pictures taken in Tanjay some years earlier.



That's me with some guests at the Tanjay river mouth, after braving the rough sea. We had to eat our picnic lunch on the banca because we couldn't scale the levees or embankments upriver.



Some kids on a home-made raft of banana trunks.



Sand quarrying the river and loading it on a "gakit", a flat-bottomed banca.

Imagine if the Philippines had mighty rivers like the Mississippi? Then river travel would be even more awesome. The Pasig river is being further cleaned up, and the earlier but bigger ferries are being refurbished for use again. Remember that the Pasig is the main outlet of Laguna de Bay, which finally is to be dredged and cleaned up. Conceivably, the ferry system could extend to around the Laguna de Bay. Wouldn't that be great?