

I've taken the ferry from Singapore to Batam so many times, I could do it with my eyes closed. It's usually a peaceful 45-minute ride, blue skies, still water, maybe a short nap or a quick scroll through my phone. That morning felt just the same. I found a window seat, leaned back, and watched the skyline disappear behind us. The boat hummed gently as we glided across the water. I could taste the salt air drifting in through the cracks of the door, light and sharp on my tongue.

But about twenty minutes in, things changed. There was a sudden lurch, then a sharper swerve. A few people looked up, puzzled. Then came another sharp turn, and the boat tilted hard. Cups rolled off tables, a child screamed, and nervous laughter bubbled up in different corners of the cabin. I could feel the cold water on the handrails as I gripped them for support, my palms tightening with every jolt. The calm sea had turned into a racing track.

The ferry began to move like it was dodging obstacles at high speed. We weren't just rocking, we were drifting. It felt like we were in a high-stakes action movie. Spray smashed against the windows, and the engine growled as the captain steered hard through the churning water. Someone behind me shouted, "This is Tokyo Drift at sea!" It was half-joke, half-panic. The sky had gone grey, and the wind howled as we zigzagged over the waves.

Later, a crew member explained that a sudden squall, a small storm, had appeared on the radar too late to avoid entirely. To stay ahead of the worst of it, the captain took an aggressive route, speeding through open water, cutting between dark patches on the sea. A maritime expert we spoke to said the drifting wasn't reckless, it was skillful. "In weather like that, it's about staying in control while moving fast," she explained.

When we docked in Batam, just minutes behind schedule, everything had gone back to normal, sunshine, calm seas, and a quiet terminal. But none of us were the same. People clapped, laughed, and patted the crew on the back. I saw strangers swapping stories like they'd been through something together. That ride turned us from quiet passengers into a small, slightly soggy team of survivors.

Looking back, I realise how quickly nature can flip a routine on its head. That short trip reminded me that the sea isn't just a background for holiday plans, it's alive, and full of surprises. The ferry ride I almost slept through became the most thrilling journey I've ever had. And I'll never look at the Singapore Strait the same way again.