

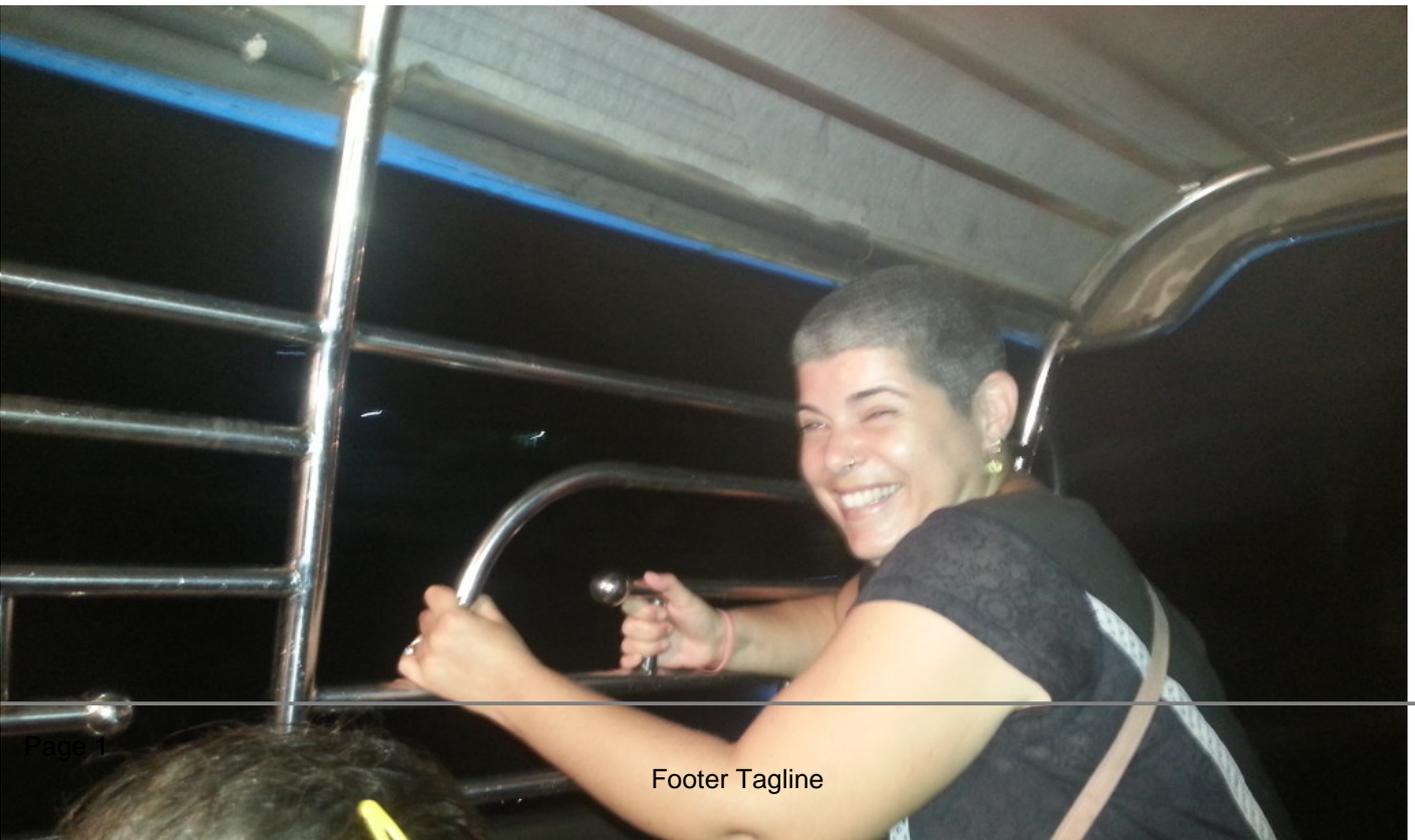


The journey to Myanmar (Burma) â€“ part 2

Description

Myanmar with Kids

We traveled in Myanmar with kids for 16 days, from Yangon to Mandalay making stops in Bagan and Inle Lake. Itâ€™s not rare that once in a while we divert from the beaten track to less touristic parts of the country, but in Myanmar we decided to stick to four primary destinations which are definitely touristic and suitable for family travel. In Myanmar â€œtouristicâ€ doesnâ€™t mean â€œcrowded with people in a way that the original place thatâ€™s been here can no longer be recognizedâ€ like in Thailand for example. Our transitions in Myanmar were done with night buses always arriving in strange hours at their destinations, and itâ€™s actually not easy, but if you take a good bus company the ride itself becomes fairly decent. Itâ€™s a good idea to give yourselves a few hours to regain strength on the next day. ATMs were abundant wherever weâ€™ve been to, so there are no worries of being stuck in Myanmar without cash.



This was our pickup car that took us to the bus station. No seats, all open for the rain to get in, muddy road, 30 minutes. Pleasure!

Bagan

A Burmese man weâ€™ve met in one of the temples in Bagan told us that you canâ€™t say youâ€™ve been in Myanmar if you havenâ€™t been in Bagan and that you canâ€™t say youâ€™ve been in Bagan unless youâ€™ve visited the **Ananda temple**.

Bagan is a popular tourists destination due to the more than two thousands temples scattered all over its surroundings. Excuse me, did I said scattered? I meant that there is a temple within every two meters, oops, I just stepped on one. You can rent a bike to tour between the temples, or electric bike or a carriage with a horse which was what we did. We just checked before we took it that the horse looked healthy and well treated.



Horse and cart is one way to travel the plains of Bagan.

The view from the temples you can climb on is super super spectacular. And thinking that what you see is just a remnant (more than two thousands remnants more precisely) of more than 12 thousands temples, pagodas and shrines that littered the plains during the passing centuries is mind blowing, got to admit it. And Ananda? Thatâ€™s some interesting temple. It happened that we found there an excellent guide that poured out his vast knowledge with great English and so we had the chance to gain more of the experience of visiting Ananda. There are three corridors: the kingâ€™s corridor, the royal familyâ€™s corridor and the common folkâ€™s corridor. There are wall paintings, giant Buddha statues facing the four winds, one Chinese, one Burmese and two Indian Buddhas. The Buddhas change their facial expression according to corridor where youâ€™re standing from serious to smiling, I kid you not.

The smiling face is seen from the corridor of the common folk, in case you wondered.



The view of Bagan temples is incredible.





The Buddha in Ananda temple smiles from remote.

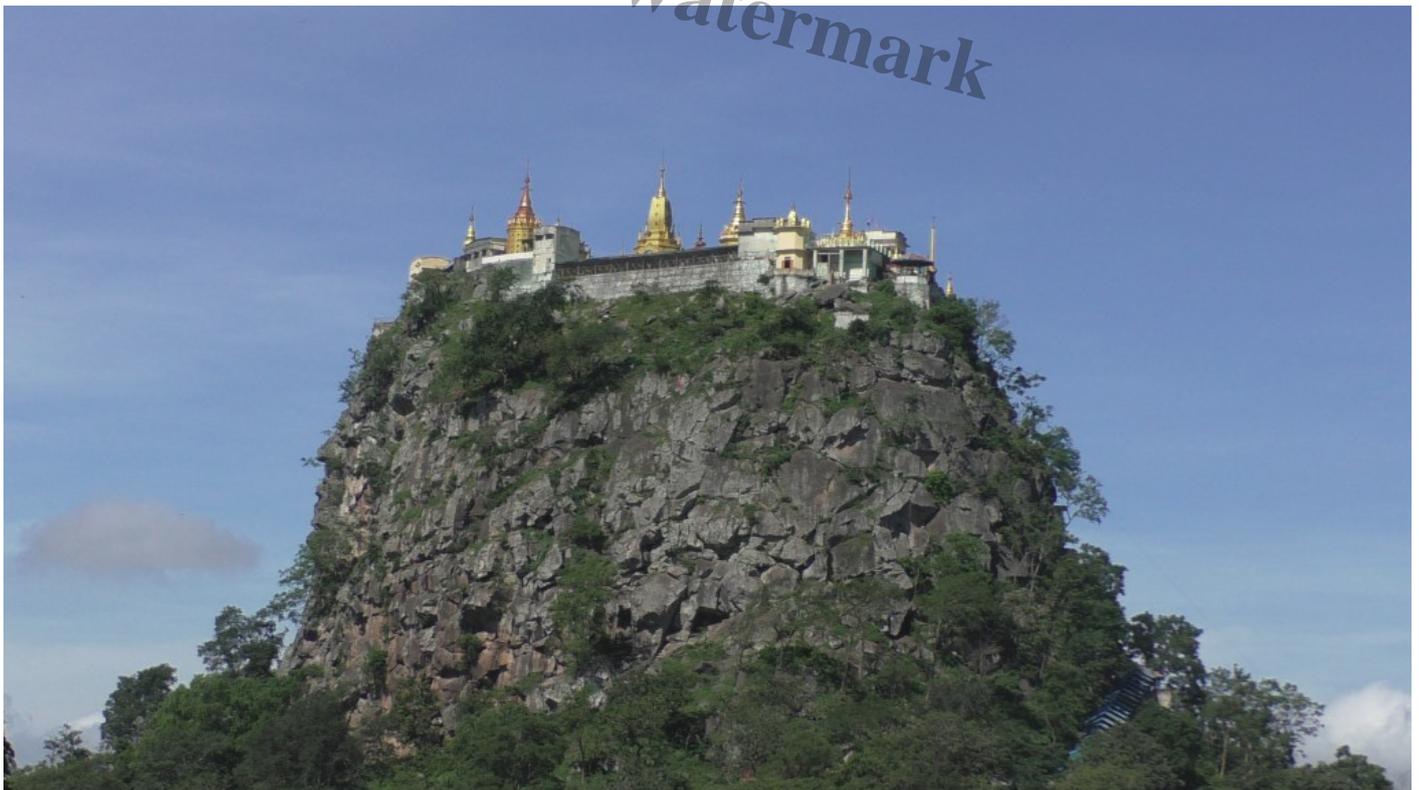


and becomes serious as you get closer.

We arrived in Bagan from Yangon on a 9 hours night bus. The bus was surprisingly good operated by a local company called **JJ Express**. The price is a bit more expensive than other companies (14\$ per person) but for good reasons. There were comfortable reclining seats, blankets and even a nice smiling stewardess that firmly asks to secure the seatbelts before takeoff. Take into consideration that entering Bagan zone requires payment of some sort of tourists tax of 20\$ (!) per person. It's annoying, but there's no other way. Luckily we were not requested to pay for the kids. We stayed in [Shwe Na Di](#) hotel, a very nice hotel with a very nice staff for 40\$ a night for two double rooms with breakfast included.

A half day trip in Bagan with a horse and a carriage cost us 11\$. The price depends on the season and we were there on the low season. Renting a bike will cost you about 1\$ for regular bike and 4\$ for e-bike.

Another short day trip in the area near Bagan is the trip to **Mount Popa**. It is an impressive cliff watching over the plains of Bagan. In the past it was an active volcano that was plugged after its last eruption by a huge rock. The sight of the temples on the mountain is beautiful and the view from the top of the mountain itself (after climbing 777 stairs through beggars and packs of monkeys) is breathtaking. On the way to Mount Popa the driver will probably stop by several tourists shops where you will see how they make peanut oil, palm sugar and others. We hired a local taxi driver for 30\$ for the whole day.



Mount Popa



Making peanut oil



This woman is preparing Tanakha, the ubiquitous yellow make up you can see on every Burmeseâ€™s face.



Weaving birds nests in Bagan.

Inle Lake

A beautiful lake with a cute town by its side. In the lake you can take a day tour in a boat, visit a local market, authentic villages, floating villages and stuff. It's really very very pretty. The fishermen on the water, the water plants and the birds, the temples that are present everywhere also here. What else can I say? Perfection.

But Inle is more than just a lake. It's also a small and pleasant town, where you can take treks from, eat good food at and even do a cooking class.

Which I did of course. It was a great class and it included a guided tour in the wonderful local market with some ingredients that are unique to Burma and of course hands-on cooking of some of the best dishes of the Burmese cuisine, like the famous tea leaves salad, which is, I promise you, a delicious treat.

The next day we found ourselves in a trek, marching together with a cute local guide who spoke pretty decent English, eating lunch together with a nice and warm local family who cooked us an awesome noodles soup and finishing it in a winery. A real winery with a glass of wine in front of a wonderful Tuscany-like view.



Fisherman in Inle Lake on a traditional fishing boat



Wooden houses built on the lake



Shopping in the market for the cooking class.



Burmese food cooking class



Children monks study in Pa-O village school



Exhaustedâ€¦!



Silver smith



A winery in Myanmar. We got confused for a second thinking it was Tuscany.



Breastfeeding ads

We arrived in Inle Lake from Bagan with an almost 9 hours bus for 10\$ a person. Entering the Inle Lake zone, like Bagan, requires payment of tourists fee of 10\$ per person. This time we had to pay for the kids as well. Annoying, but yet again, thereâ€™s no other choice. We got to our hotel in Inle Lake following a recommendation of our hotel in Bagan (his brother/uncle/in lawâ€™) and we found it to be a very nice recommendation. The hotel was very good. The price was 40\$ per night for two double rooms with breakfast included. The hotelâ€™s name is [Manaw Thu Ka](#).

The lake tour is the main and necessary attraction around. It takes all day long and can be booked through the hotel or one of the many travel agencies scattered all over the town. We paid 10\$ for the boat.

Another interesting thing to do, especially with kids, is to go to the traditional Burmese puppets show. We came without too many expectation to what appeared to be a very pleasant surprise of an authentic experience that felt like traveling back in time. The place is called **Aung Puppet Show**. A ticket to a half an hour show cost 4\$.

Trekking is also very popular near the lake. We had a one day trek with a friendly guide named Aung and it included a visit in a Buddhist meditation cave, village of the Pa-O tribe and a local winery. The price was 26\$.



Aung puppet show



Trekking near Inle lake



That's a dragonfruit tree

Mandalay

Mandalay was our departure gate from Burma back to Thailand and we didn't have a chance to explore its area too much. Mandalay itself is the second largest and important city in Myanmar after Yangon.

We arrived in Mandalay with a night bus from Inle Lake. We learned from our mistake and this time we booked with JJ Express. Ticket's price was 12\$ per person.



The views from U Bein bridge in Mandalay





Category

1. Food
2. Myanmar

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