



Landing in The Philippines

Description

Weâ€™re in the Philippines for a week now. And itâ€™s not that I have nothing to say. Boy, I have so much to say. I just canâ€™t seem to find a way to start a logical narrative in this chaotic week, this unlike anything weâ€™ve experienced so far week. I think Iâ€™ll just start and see what happens next. Same as what we do anyway for almost a week now.

We arrived in the Philippines on a flight from Bangkok. We were in Bangkok for the third time in this journey and it already feels like home for us. We feel here quite nice and comfortable. The guesthouse was good relative to Bangkok, no one was sick relative to Bangkok, we ate just fine and within our budget limits relative to Bangkok. In short we had few days to mentally rest and we even enjoyed the water fights in the streets during the annual Songkran festival, the Thai new year. The Natives had a great time.



Water fights in Sonkran festival in Bangkok

We had an easy flight. Only a few hours long. By now for us itâ€™s nothing. What is it comparing to 17 hours in a night bus that smells like public toilet.

We landed in Luzon island where Manila is located. And so it happened that in the first night in the Philippines we stuffed ourselves in the only guesthouse we found on the internet for a price that was double our daily accommodation budget in a small room with five single beds, a toilet with a real flusher and hot water, more or less. Quite lame for the not too excessive conditions we got used to so far. After all we are traveling for six months nowâ€™!

We started realizing that the Philippines is a whole different story.

During the next week we had more interactions with the daily local life outside of the tourists bubble more than anywhere in our last six months journey. We met David and Marissa, a charming couple. He is an ex-Israeli who arrived in the Philippines 18 years ago for work matters, fell in love with Marissa and the rest is history.

The Natives and Josh, the son of David and Marissa, found common language within minutes. We enjoyed a genuine Israeli-Filipino hospitality, including a Friday evening dinner with their wonderful friends that we were so happy to meet and a day in the awesome country club that David and Marissa are members of. In short it was very interesting!



With David in Tagaytay



An awesome day in Highlands country club, Tagaytay

The thing is that we got here almost by mistake, mainly for the purpose of touring the amazing place that is seen from everywhere in Tagaytay â€” the **Taal Volcano**, a huge lake located inside a giant crater. So there youâ€™ve got something that in the first place sounds like a joke â€” a lake within a volcano within a lake. We really didnâ€™t plan to stay there for a week, but it turned out this way somehow eventually. Weâ€™re still trying to decipher the Philippines and what goes on here.



The lake within Taal volcano



Lava threads

For example we still not get a full hang of the transportation issue here.

There is a jeepney and there is a tricycle here. The jeepney is actually a bus line. Meaning that if you want to get from one place to another you might have to change three jeepneys since every one of them uses its own route. It sounds simple but go figure where to change the jeepney and what is the name of this place you are trying to get to. Not that simple. Additionally, the roads here are filled with tricycles, which is some kind of a motorcycle with a sidecar connected to it. We can easily get the whole of us inside a tricycle. I sit in the sidecar with two Natives and the third sits with The One behind the driver on the scooter itself where some sort of a relatively broad "passenger seat" is installed. Without the backpacks it's not a big deal. But it seems that tricycles here are another sort of public transport that run on certain routes and it's not always possible to take them from any point to another like a special taxi for the matter. Mentioning taxis, there are none here in Tagaytay, and it's not a small or primitive town! Strange. What you can enjoy most in a tricycle ride is the free breathing of all the exhausts of motorized vehicles in a radius of one kilometer around you because the face of the tricycle passenger is just at the same height as the standard car exhaust. Awesome.



The jeepney (one of them) from the inside

So there aren't any taxis here. Buses it seems are also a complicated saga. It's not easy to move here from place to place. It's a bit weird to us after Thailand for instance where you can move easily and cheaply from everywhere to everywhere and most of the routes are pretty much well packaged, very "tourists friendly". Here as we see it for now it is a whole different story.

So what do we have a lot of here ?!

There is a lot of junk food, a lot of music and this feeling that the best word to describe it is "Caribbean". A Caribbean atmosphere.

The Filipinos are tanned, smiling and full of charm (sometimes only in their own eyes. Anyway if you are suckers of broken or missing teeth then you've reached heaven).

Their language is called Tagalog and it very much sounds like Spanish but everyone speaks here pretty good to excellent English and also some kind of a lingual mix of Tagalog and English called that they call "Taglish". A totally formal mix. Try selecting Taglish in the ATM and see for yourselves.

This combination of Spanish like language, the vibe of the people here, the great weather (now. In two months there will be typhoons here), the volcanic earth, the wannabe admiration of all that is American especially money and its symbols. All of it together clarifies very quickly that we are not really in South East Asia. The Philippines is a whole different story. Totally different.

Two days from now we fly to another island called **Palawan**. We don't know what to expect. We hope for the best.

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