

Day 8b Inle Lake

The rest of day was spent riding our boat around the villages. Watching the people in the boats, in their homes on stilts, in shops, in restaurants. Many women were washing their laundry in the lake. Other men and women were bathing (but always covered up even while bathing), themselves or their babies.



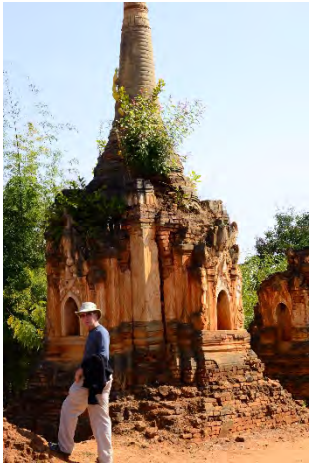
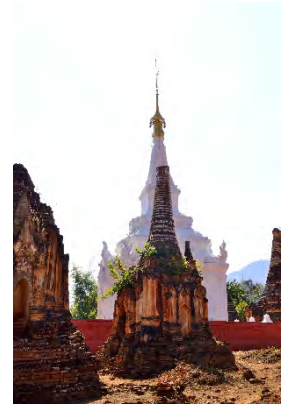
We did stop at one temple. To get there we sailed down a narrower tributary of the lake that had small dams. We would go up the dam, the nose of the boat would sail into the air, and we would gently land back down.

The temple, Shwe Inn Tain is near the Indein village on the Western bank of Inle Lake. It is known for its market along with two groups of ancient pagodas and stupas. We walked along a dirt path until we got to a small reservoir. There we were greeted by an old woman enjoying her cigar. Along the way there were stands of colorful scarfs (which they promised were lotus but were clearly cotton) and other items for sale. Everyone has their way to make some money. We were only too happy to help.





Eventually we got to the long colonnade or covered walkway, close to half a mile long, lined with stalls where I was able to buy some local beads. And this led us to the temples built from the 14th-17th centuries. This was one of the temples where we had to pay a fee to take a picture. The stupas were all very old, a bit broken but some of the most beautiful we have seen. And there were stupas as far as the eye could see, in fact 1054 of them. Some had trees growing out of them. A few have been rebuilt and painted white, but those were not the beautiful ones. The beautiful ones were the color of sunsets. Most had the Buddha images missing, but a few were still there and quite old and quite beautiful.



We then made our way back through the colonnade, back to our boat and then sailed back through the tributaries, back over the dams, to the main lake. And all along the way our senses were bombarded with interesting and often beautiful sights and sounds and smells. Like the monks washing their motorcycle. Or the two women walking by the water's edge carrying twigs on their heads. Or just the beauty of nature.



Lunch was at Mr. Toe's (no relation to Toe) where we were treated not only to great food, but great views of the action on the lake. Boat after boat filled with the local PaO women and their packages from the market floated by, birds following them. Around the corner from the restaurant was a large golden temple and a "garage" for the gold swam boat used in festivals.



After lunch, we continued through some more villages. It was just the right time of day to see the houses with the colorful doors and laundry reflected in the water as if it were a mirror. The water was a deep, deep blue and the sky matched it. There were electrical lines running above the water. There were a few satellite dishes and solar panels. And we saw more laundry being washed, more bathing, more boats. Vibrant colors, vibrant reflections, vibrant villages, vibrant lives.





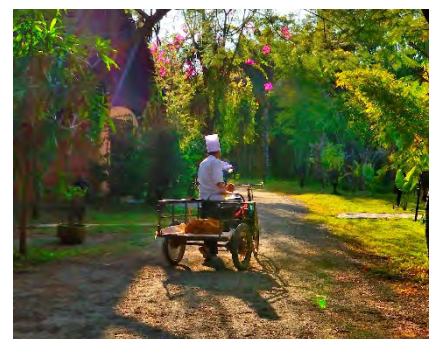
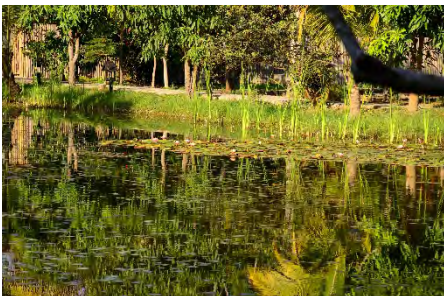
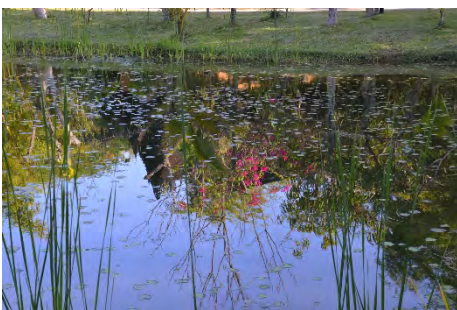
And as we hit the more open part of the lake, we were surrounded by birds. Birds in the sky. Birds skimming the surface of the water. Birds just floating. Egrets. Cormorants. One with thin, long red legs. And patches of lotus flowers, just starting to open up. And more fisherman standing on one leg. And people waving at us, just excited to see us as we were to see them. And just as the houses had reflected in the water, so did the mountains. And Ben and I snapped pictures trying to capture all that beauty.



So most of the day was just spent observing life on the lake. I could floated and watched the local life for hours.



Back at the hotel, Andy and I took a walk and discovered a garden where all the vegetables for the meals are grown as well as workshops for ceramics, sewing, making paper and carving wood, all of which are used in the hotel.





We again had drinks and watched the sunset, not quite as brilliant as last night, but still beautiful. Every night, every sunset is different. Then dinner and to bed.

