

Day 9 Inle to Yangon

The lake this morning was covered in fog which made it look eerie but gave it a whole different sort of beauty. We took a car instead of the boat from the hotel back to Heho. I missed floating on the lake. But I had to admit that driving along the lake and through the villages was also beautiful. Monks on the morning walks. Fields of sunflowers. A man with his ox. And so much more.



The check-in counter at the airport was one small desk. Porters were everywhere with their hand carts, wheeling the luggage plane side. We got our stickers, and after waiting a bit, our plane arrived, passengers deplaned, we boarded and the plane took off. All in a matter of a few minutes.

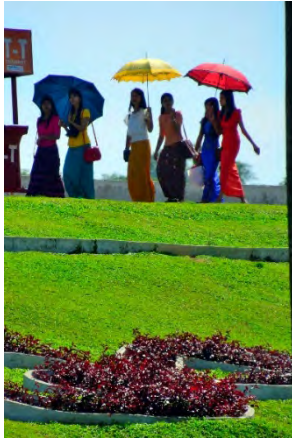
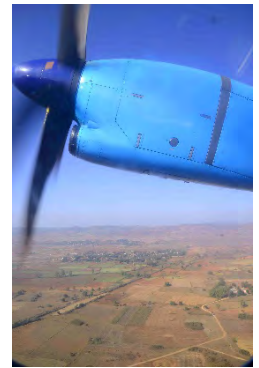




The morning air was cold (or at least some of us thought so; Ben is never cold). We boarded the plane, up the narrow planes.



The hour flight went smoothly with beautiful views of the land below.



And then we were back in noisy, crowded Yangon. On the way we passed the park along the lake, a park that is used by locals strolling along in the sun with their colorful parasols protecting them, enjoying the day.

The traffic was horrendous but we eventually made it back to our hotel, the same hotel we had stayed in when we first arrived, the Chatrium hotel, with its view of the Shwedagon Pagoda and its terraces overlooking a lake.



And then we had lunch at the Strand, a famous old British hotel built in 1901 where Rudyard Kipling, George Orwell, Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham once stayed.

Then it was back to Scott Market to finish our shopping. The Scott market is officially called the Bogyoke Market after the General (bogyoke means general) who is known as the father of Burmese independence. The Scott comes from J.G. Scott who was an administrator during the British rule of Burma. You can get everything here including medicine,

mother of pearl, jewelry, woven products, food, etc etc. Although one of the most famous tourist attractions in Yangon, it was here that I realized I liked the markets in the villages better.

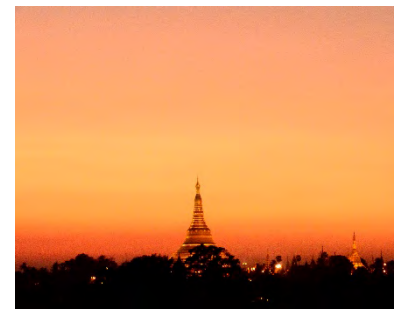
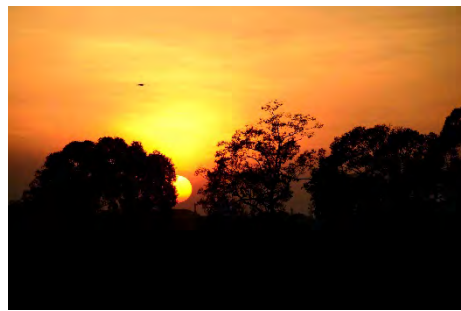




We were supposed to do an hour walking tour of the old architectural British buildings, but we were all too tired. So we did it by car instead and while Toe told us about each one, I must admit I don't know which was which. Nevertheless, the older buildings are all quite majestic with a very colonial feel to them.

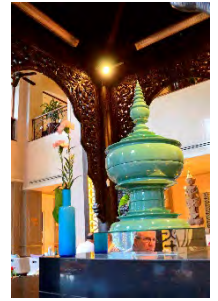
Then it was back to the hotel. Phyllis and Ben were leaving tonight we had a bite at the hotel.

That evening we watched the sun set from our balcony and the Shwedagon Pagoda and buildings around us light up as the darkness descended. There was a graduation ceremony taking place at the pool, down below our balcony, so we got to watch the festivities there that as well as each graduate was called up, as each got his or her picture taken and then as the dancing began.



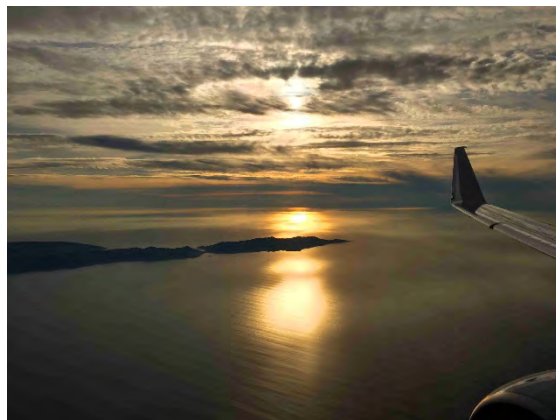
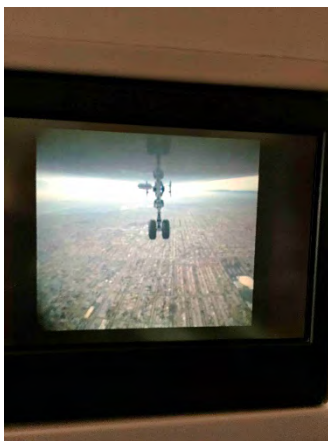


In the morning we had just enough time for breakfast and then to was off to the airport, reversing the path we had started on. Past all the construction. Past the welcome sign, and back at the airport.



And thus another adventure ends. I loved Myanmar. I loved the people. I loved the colors. I loved the smells. I loved the tastes. I loved the sounds. Thank you Toe for sharing your country with us.

And then, before we knew it, it was wheels down and we were back home.



Other facts about Myanmar:

All names in Myanmar are personal, that is, there are no surnames, even within the same nuclear family. When Burmese nationals publish or travel abroad, one of their names may be used as an unofficial surname for practical purposes. Names are normally preceded by a title based on a family designation: *U* (uncle) for a mature male *Daw* (aunt) for a mature female *Ko* (elder brother) a male somewhat older than the speaker *Maung* (younger brother) a more junior male *Ma* (younger sister).

Money. If you use US dollars, they must be crisp new ones. Dollars are good for street vendors. But in restaurants you get charged more if you don't use local currency. And if you are going to change money, you get a better rate with a hundred dollar bill than with lower denominations.

Army is voluntary.

Burmese tend to be early risers as they were farmers once so are used to getting up early, as soon as sun up.



In the village they go to sleep early. In the city they go to sleep around 10. They take naps (siesta) when possible, but if they work, they can't. Shops do not close in the afternoon. Government workers work from 930-430 but have no lunch break. In the private sector, they work from 830-530 or 6 with an hour for lunch.

To be a guide, you only have to train for 3 weeks. You do have to pass an interview before and after your training. Toe, our guide, has been a guide for 23 years. She knows everyone and everyone knows her.

The cars are right hand drive, but they drive like we do in the states, ie, left handed.

Myanmar is tied with the US for being the most generous country.

Medical care is free from the government. But they are short on medicine so patients have to buy the medicines from outside. There are private hospitals, but then you have to pay out of pocket. There is no health insurance. Monks and nuns get free care and have their own hospital. Even the doctors and nurses there volunteer their time.

Some companies have health insurance for workers.

Most families live together. For example, Toe has her own apartment but it is in the same building as her parents and in-laws. And they all eat together. Grandparents take care of kids

The population of Yangon is 4 million. The population of Myanmar is 50 million.

Exports from Myanmar include rice, jade, beans, and south sea pearls. 37% of exports are to China. They also export petroleum to France Great Britain, from off shore and land,

Time change 14.5 hours. And why 30 minutes off? Some time zones are just that way.

The country is being run over by billboards. Sad. You actually see many billboards that say: This space available.

In Myanmar death penalty for drugs trafficking. But rarely caught. In lake area they grow poppies. Your fate is decided by a judge, but there are 3 levels of courts.

Monks here in red. Buddha say color of bark. Monks from Thailand are in Orange.

A word about Burmese cuisine. It is characterized by extensive use of fish products like fish sauce and ngapi (fermented seafood). Owing to the geographic location of Myanmar, Burmese cuisine has been influenced by Chinese cuisine, Indian cuisine and Thai cuisine. Mohinga is the traditional breakfast dish and is Burma's national dish. As I said, we tasted it once. Never again.

Tea leaf salad is one of the most traditional foods. You give it as an offering. You bring it to friends if you had a fight. You bring it when you go to visit. You eat it at home.

Seafood is a common ingredient in coastal cities while meat and poultry are more commonly used in landlocked cities like Mandalay. Freshwater fish and shrimp have been incorporated into inland cooking as a primary source of protein and are used in a variety of ways, fresh, salted whole or filleted, salted and dried, made into a salty paste, or fermented sour and pressed.

Burmese cuisine also includes a variety of salads (*a thoke*), centred on one major ingredient, ranging from starches like rice, wheat and rice noodles, glass noodles and vermicelli, to potato, ginger, tomato, kaffir lime, long bean, lahpet (pickled tea leaves), and ngapi (fish paste). These salads have always been popular as fast foods in Burmese cities.

Some words in Burmese:

Hello: min go la bar; Thank you: kyeizu tin ba de; Yes: ho de; No: ma ho bu