

Mandalay day 5b
Mandalay second day – U Bein Bridge



The U Bein Bridge in Amarapura was our next stop. The U Bein Bridge is a long wooden bridge left over from the days when the Palace stood there. It is 250 years old, and is the longest teakwood bridge in the world, at $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. It is named after the mayor who built it. While it was once a local passageway for the locals, now it is more of a tourist sight covered with souvenir vendors. The wood used for the bridge was from the former royal palace in Inwa. It has 1086 pillars stretching out over the water of the Taughtaman Lake. We were there in the early afternoon, but later in the day, closer to sunset, the bridge is covered with monks in their crimson robes,



streaming over the bridge from one end to the other, bicyclists heading home. And fishermen.

On the lake side of the bridge, the water was like a mirror reflecting everything above it. The colorful boats, the women in their colorful dresses in the boats, people walking or walking their bicycles on the sand banks due to the low tide.



And the fisherman. There were several fishermen with their large nets each on a large frame. And the sun was at just the right angle to reflect it all in the water.





And when we turned to face the other way we saw fields with colorful field workers. And further out, the rest of lake covered with boats and fishermen standing on the edge of their boats. We didn't understand it yet, we wouldn't until we reached Inle Lake, but this is the way of the fishermen in Myanmar. We could not help but smile as we took in all the sights and sounds.



And on the bridge we were joined by lots of vendors following us and trying to sell us necklaces and other local objects, and ice cream. It was fairly relentless. We are already too late in coming here. I imagine a few years ago there would not have been so many tourists or tourist traps. Imagine now that Myanmar is becoming even more popular, what this will be like in a few more years.

As we walked off the bridge, there was a market with all sorts of vendors selling not just souvenirs, but food and local items. For the first time ever, I saw a moving market on bicycles. The bicycles had bags hanging from them from which vegetables and fruit were being sold.





And then we went to another real market filled with fruit and vegetables and things we couldn't identify. Corn, Tiny round eggplants. Straw brooms. Tofu. Spices in high mounds. Potatoes. Tomatoes. Even someone sewing. We keep going to market after market. Some might say, enough already. But this is always our favorite part. I never tire of seeing the local people in their everyday life. The ones selling the things they grew on their farms. The ones buying food for dinner. We can only imagine their lives as they take their food home, go to their kitchens, cook for their families. Sit around the table eating. In so many ways the day to day things they have to do are exactly the same as in our lives. But in so many more ways, their lives are likely simpler but harder. We will never really know, but we can watch, we can observe, we can smile at each other and we can imagine.

