



Pagsanjan Falls

One bright and early Thursday morning, fourteen of us escaped the hustle and bustle of Manila for a day trip to Pagsanjan Falls. The town of Pagsanjan is about 100 km or 2.5 hours drive from Manila.

This particular excursion was organised through Gray Line, a well-known provider of sightseeing tours worldwide. Omar was our helpful, knowledgeable, and might I add, rather comedic guide.

Apart from a pit stop at one of the original buko (coconut) pie shops along the road, where we were able to rapidly top up our sugar levels on buko, pineapple and cassava pies, we were soon gearing up for our boat ride to the falls. Helmets, life jackets and seat cushions provided.

There were three of us to a narrow canoe-like boat, and so, it was definitely a cosy ride. We had two boatmen, one at front and one at back, to paddle, navigate and on occasion skillfully heave us over rocks in order to proceed up river.

The peacefulness along the river was absolutely lovely. The river cuts through a steep gorge. The vegetation is lush and tropical. Iguanas sunbathed, monkeys played in the trees and a kingfisher was spotted by a lucky few.

The dramatics of our boatmen, who were determined to express the arduousness of their job with Oscar-worthy performances at every opportunity to up their gratuity, interrupted the peace slightly, but were somewhat amusing, and admittedly, the boatmen do work hard and we all got up and down the river safely.

The waterfall is worth seeing and experiencing. Sitting on large bamboo rafts, we were able to pass through the falls and into a small cave behind. The pressure of the gushing water was intense, maybe a little too intense at times, but the coolness of the water was so refreshing and a free massage can hardly be turned down.

The trip downriver was quicker and smoother than upriver. Since it is dry season, water levels are low and the ride relatively sedate. In the wet season, however, the rapids are supposed to be more thrilling. We then returned to the basic, but perfectly clean and friendly little resort to change into dry clothes and eat a typical buffet lunch.

The drive back included a quick stop in a neighbouring town that is famous for raising ducks and producing balut, boiled fertilized duck egg, which is a delicacy in the Philippines. Although none of us were brave enough to try it ourselves, Omar, our guide, showed us how it was done and purchased more than a dozen to bring back to friends and colleagues in Manila.

We were home on time despite the infamous Manila traffic. All in all, a fun day out!

A break from Manila to fill ones lungs with fresh air and to enjoy the company of others.

Kate Thompson