

San Isidro de Labrador Day Trip

Quezon Province celebrates Pahiyas Fiesta in honour of San Isidro Labrador, patron saint of farmers. The fiesta is to thank and pray for future good harvests. It is held on May 15 the anniversary of San Isidoro de Labrador's death.

We joined a tour organised by 'Arrival Survival Manila' and guided by Old Manila Walks.

Our morning meet time was an unbelievable 3.45am for a 4am departure for our hectic day ahead.

Arriving in Quezon Province for a Philippine buffet breakfast and then onto the town of Lucban.

Houses along the parade route are decorated by the owners with colourful decorations called pahiyas and other farm produce. With each house decorating bigger, better and more colourful than their neighbour, it was an amazing sight. We spent a couple of hours here walking along the parade route, watching the parade, taking photos and buying bargain goods in an atmosphere of excitement.

Obviously (we are in the Philippines) we were famished so it was off to Graceland for a Buffet lunch- No sightings of Elvis.

Then onto our next town Sariaya, where we were to watch another parade, a visit to an Ancestral home with time for dress ups and photos, and of course Merienda.

We were invited into a home on the parade route for Merienda. We had a wonderful warm welcome by an elderly couple who were going to entertain us no matter what. Grandad was on Guitar and Nana serenading us. And then the unexpected..... out comes the coconut Liquor; a custom to welcome people into their home. Nana sings and dances with a shot glass on her head. After many verses you are given the shot glass, which you place on your head and dance and sing and respond to the welcome. We did well with only 1 person having a coconut liquor shampoo.

The parade was small with marching girls, a brass band and San Isidoro icon police escort, but with many people. Once the parade has passed the decorated house all hell breaks loose. All the produce from the decorated houses is up for grabs. The fruits vegetables and pahiyas are ripped off the houses and stashed in booty bags. Just near us was a money tree (20 peso notes inside water bottles and tied to a bamboo tree; as you can imagine hugely popular. It was chaos but then the parade moves on and calmness is restored. We then had a chance to speak to some of the house owners and they were very generous in giving the foreigners some of their decorations. I was lucky enough to meet up with Mabel and she gave me a triple layer chilli basket.

It was an amazing, exhausting fun filled day (we arrived back home about 9pm). It was a wonderful experience.

So set aside May 15 next year and be part of a Philippine Fiesta!

Sue Mellor



