



Two Family visits to Zoobic Safari

The Mills Family

This was our first Christmas in the Philippines and since we had been building up to it since September I thought I would throw myself into it wholeheartedly. Sarah gave a lovely talk on what to do over the December period and places to visit, so with bored teenagers at home I followed a few of her suggestions with varying results.

The first place we visited was Zoobic Safari Park at Subic Bay, which boasts the only tigers in the Philippines. Whilst not Christmassy it meant a trip out of Manila and away from the shopping malls. The trip is doable as a day trip, however I would advise to leave as early as possible and not just before eleven in the morning. We drove ourselves using our sat nav, it worked fine until we took the wrong turn on the NLEX. We spent 40 minutes visiting Clarke and its (in)famous go-go bars. Who ever said that getting there is half the fun has never been in a car with an irate husband and a bored teenager. We finally managed to reach the safari park just before 3 o'clock with the help of a stop or two at Starbucks.

The key to visiting the park is to remember that you are in Asia as the first thing you encounter when entering the park is the tigers in cages which may jar with the animal rights activist in your party. The highlight of the visit is the tiger and lion safari where you ride jeepneys around the enclosure. Before entering you can purchase raw chicken and your guide will let you sit next to the window seat whilst he feeds the tigers who are so close you can smell their breath. Even our bored teenager thought it was an amazing experience to be up so close and personal with these magnificent animals.

We left the park about 5.30 and headed to Subic Bay for dinner before driving back to Manila. This was easier as leaving Subic you hit the new bit of the NLEX which takes you all the way back to Manila.

We visited the Auyala triangle lights on a Saturday evening and had to wait to the end of mass. However once the lights came on they were very good and definitely worth the wait. The triangle is a lovely garden area in the middle of the concrete jungle and it would be a great place to take younger children to run around for a while. There was a strip of restaurants but they were full to capacity so we went to Hard Rock cafe which was a hit with the teenagers.

Lillias Mills



The Knee Family

With my two teenagers over for their extensive "Summer" holiday from boarding school in Australia I called on Sarah for some ideas to at least inspire them to get out of bed before midday and get off their computers. She suggested Zoobic - so it was time to brave a two and a half hour car trip with our four kids. We had our driver for the day so thankfully my husband could relax and enjoy the journey (as much as you can relax while listening to my 15 year old daughter's choice in music!). The usual wrestling ensued in the back seats with our two boys but it was mostly good natured. I made sure to pack lots of snacks and drinks to keep everyone busy and to minimise the whinging.

Once out of Manila the scenery is beautiful and the younger kids enjoyed spotting cows and horses in the passing fields. Our driver gave us a running commentary of the history and geography of the areas we drove through.

On arrival at Zoobic we were put into a tour group and led around the park to see the birds and animals. I had never seen a bearcat before and I fell in love immediately. A camel fell in love with my 14 year old boys and started following him around and trying to lick his t-shirt much to my son's amusement. Our two younger children enjoyed feeding the baby goats with bottles of milk. After the walk through we saw a dance from the local tribe while the kids ate ice cream. After a short wait we were loaded onto our fortified jeepneys for the tiger safari. We had bought some chicken for the big cats to eat. Our truck stopped near the lions but they were already full and not interested so we moved on to the tigers. A tiger jumped onto the roof of our van and we could see his feet padding across the skylight above us. He came up to the window beside us and ate the chicken given to him by the guide. The kids were in awe seeing the sheer size of its mouth and teeth.

Another highlight of the day was the crocodile enclosure - again you could buy raw chicken which was hooked onto a sort of fishing rod and then you could dangle the drumstick in front of the open mouthed crocs until they snapped. My 10 year old had a bit of a wrestle trying to hold onto her pole as the string didn't break off when the croc bit - she had a good giggle while she was pulled backwards and forwards with the crocodile.

We stopped off at a shopping centre on the way back for a bit of dinner and then the younger two had a snooze for the rest of the trip back. Zoobic turned out to be a good day trip for a family with a big age range - there was something there for everyone.

Carolyn Daunt

