

We got in a good early start, leaving before sunrise. As we were biking up a hill towards the rising sun I pulled out the camera to take a photo and then... I dropped my brand new camera!

We arrived in Bilin at about 7:30 in the morning, we had already passed by this place on our way up and knew a place where they made good roti. So we sat down. Soon the guy running the place started chatting to us and showed us his Facebook account. And there was a picture of the two of us having rotis at his place about a week ago when we were there first time. Turns out the guy who had posed for some photos with us when we were there first time posted the picture of us on Facebook and now there was a whole discussion going on about us in Burmese. So we took some more pictures, this time with the guy running the place. No doubt these will land on Facebook as well. Actually, so many people come up to us and ask if they can take a photo with us that we are probably all over Facebook in Myanmar!

219

We took a hike up a immense flight of steps up to a pagoda on a hill for sunset. It was quite a hike up, however the view and the experience was well worth it. We then walked down again. We are very fit, but our muscles are not at all trained for hiking, especially downhill. At the bottom my knees were shaking uncontrollably. I was sure I would feel my muscles in the next days!

We then went for something to eat at a place where there was no English menu and no-one spoke a word of English. With signs and pointing at pictures and imitating a hen laying eggs we ordered noodle soup with egg. When the soup arrived it was with two chicken eggs and about half a dozen quail eggs. They certainly got the egg part right! And it was a delicious soup. Quail eggs have a really nice taste, I never realized.

We got back to the hotel for an early night, not really knowing what the next day would bring us. We had been anxiously following the weather forecast. There was quite powerful Typhoon moving up the east coast of India and WeatherPro was announcing huge amounts of rain and thunderstorms. However, the forecast was changing by the hour, so we didn't really know what to expect.

At about 3am in the morning a massive clap of thunder made us jump out of bed. It was followed by torrential rain drumming on the roof. There was no window to look out, so we didn't really know what was going on outside but it certainly was violent. One flash of lightning was instantly followed by the roar of thunder. That lightning bolt probably struck something quite close by. After a while the thunder faded, but the rain continued and we fell back to sleep again.



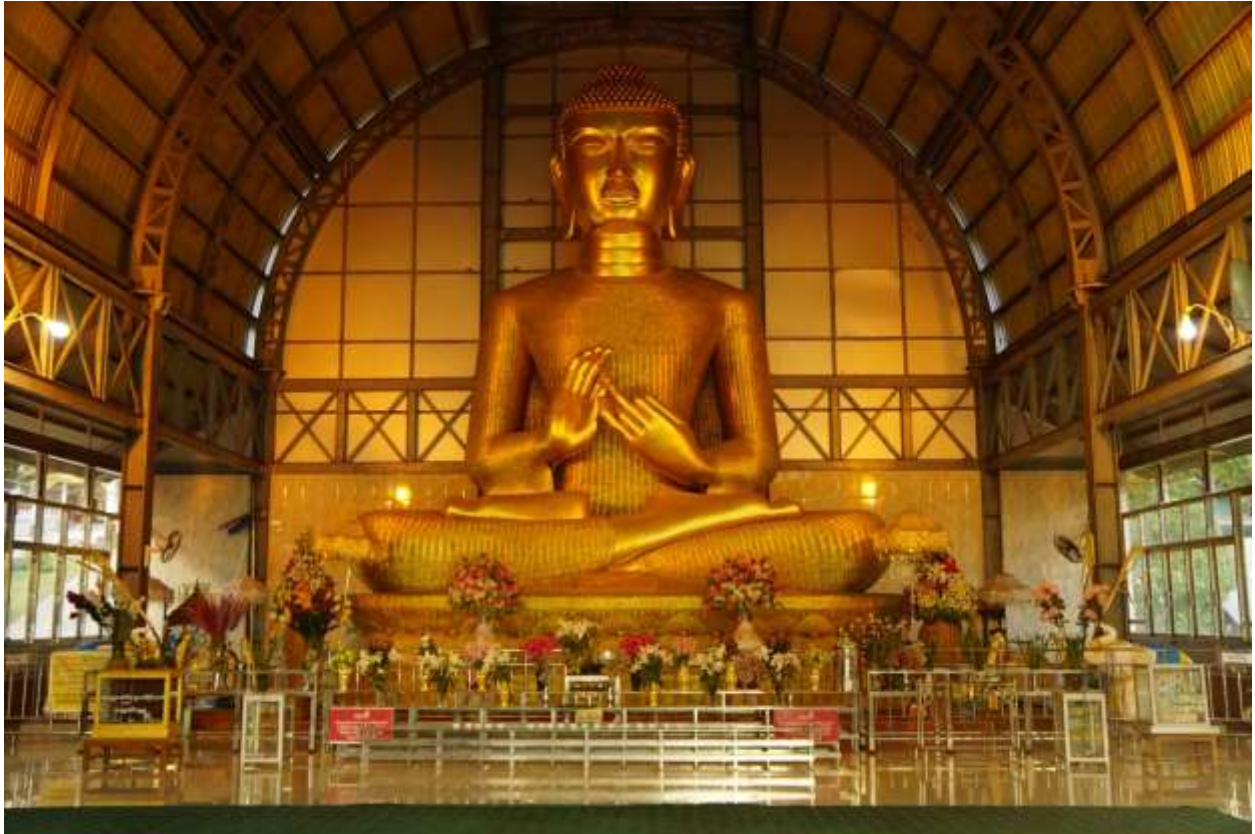
















Th 19.5.2016, day 312. Some nice caves (Thaton – Hpa-An, 60 km)

At 6am we were greeted by a lovely cloudy sky and beautifully clean fresh air. It looked as if it was going to be a wonderful day! It was quite amazing how the night's rain had cleared the dust from the air and there was a lovely smell of moist earth and plants. What a contrast to the usual stench of burning leaves and plastic!

Just outside Hpa-An there are a couple of caves that we thought might be interesting to visit. Close to the caves there was a Thai restaurant marked on MapsMe. We headed there and it turned out to be a fantastic place. A whole family had pulled together to open the restaurant a bit more than one year ago. The food was excellent and the whole place was done up wonderfully with a great garden full of mangos, papayas, herbs and vegetables that went straight out of the garden into the kitchen. When we were there they were just working on paving the public road leading to the restaurant as they said that there is no point waiting for the government to do anything. There was such a good energy going at the place, it was fantastic. For me it was very much like what permaculture is all about. Only thing missing was a composting toilet!

We then went to visit the two caves and they were both fantastic. The first one was quite a big cave with a walkway leading all the way through from one end to the exit on the other side of the mountain. When we were there a Burmese film crew was shooting some sort of movie. It was fun to watch. They had loads of equipment and at least 50 people, maybe more, on the set.

The second cave was far smaller but packed full of Buddha statues.



We then biked on into Hpa-An and checked into the Golden Sky Guest House. In the evening we met up with a Belgian Couple, Bif and Val, who are trying to bike from Cambodia to Belgium via Myanmar, India, Nepal and Tibet on a Pinot bike. We heard about and got in contact with them via J. P. and Justine, the couple biking on a recumbent and a tricycle we met in Dawei. Such a small world, the biking community! It was great meeting them and exchanging some experiences. I certainly wish them best of luck on their travels. Especially visa wise it will be a challenge for them!





















































Fr 20.5.2015, day 313. Last evening in Myanmar! (Hpa-An – Kawkareik, 98 km)

After a quite a substantial breakfast of Chapattis and rice with egg we headed off. The bike ride was actually very nice, the only problem was that there was quite a bit of traffic. Many heavy trucks and also smaller old trucks with the bolt-on twin cylinder diesel that seems to be used to run everything from trucks and boats to sugar mills, tractors and rice threshers, some of them belching out quite disgusting black clouds of nastiness. The riding was not really very fast, as the road constantly climbed and dipped. Getting on for noon the temperature got quite unbearably hot, so we stopped for quite a long break, first having a nice fruit shake. Then one of the customers directed us towards a place to get some food and after a huge meal we went back to the same place for a second fruit shake. The sky was starting to cloud over, so we headed off. Soon it began raining hard. It was actually quite refreshing biking in the rain, only problem was, that the road got extremely slippery. This certainly doesn't make biking any safer!

After maybe 30 minutes the rain eased off and the sun started to poke through the clouds, soon the road was dry again, we were dry and it was as hot as ever.

In Kawkareik we checked into the Honey Guesthouse, quite a nice place with a well in the middle of the hallway. Electricity was only available from 6 pm onwards. For our last evening out in Myanmar, we ended up having chapattis and sweet rotis. It was great!





Sa 21.5.2016, day 314. Back into Thailand! (Kawkareik – Mae Sot, 59 km)

We had a very fatty breakfast at the same roti place we were the evening before while having a very long chat (or actually it was more of a monologue on his part) with the former head master of Kawkareik. We then headed off taking the brand new road that has been built, replacing the old mountain road, that was so narrow that it was only good for one-way traffic. As a consequence, they used to have traffic from Thailand and into Thailand on alternating days only. The new road is wide and as smooth as silk and passes over a 450 m high pass. It was a very nice ride in spite of quite a bit of truck traffic.

We biked pretty much non-stop to Myawaddi, the border town on the Myanmar side, where we had a quick stop for a fruit shake. Crossing the border was a breeze. A quick stop at the Myanmar side, then a ride across the Friendship Bridge, changing from right lane to left lane at a traffic light in the middle of the bridge, then a quick stop at the Thai immigration and that was that!

We went straight to the Green Guesthouse, a place recommended by J. P. and Justine, two bicyclists we met in Myanmar, went for some fantastic Thai food at a place close by and then had a nice long afternoon nap. In the evening we had a quick stroll, a Pad Thai and discussed our further plans. We were both feeling quite battered and decided to rest the next day, to hang out in cafés and to simply give our legs a chance to recuperate. We both still had stiff muscles from our jaunt up to a temple a couple of days ago...













