BAMBOO PIPE ORGAN TOUR DECEMBER 2, 2008

I just want to let you know that this was only my 2nd MVP tour that I signed up. My tennis friend Gerke asks me to write my experienced. So here goes!!!!!

There were twenty lovely ladies that met at the San Antonio Church in McKinley on December 2, 2009 for a day tour to the Bamboo Organ in Las Pinas, the Museo De La Salle in Das Marinas and Las Pinas Arts & Crafts Center in Las Pinas.

It took us about 45 minutes to our first stop. The Bamboo Organ, housed at St Joseph Parish Church, Las Pinas City, is located 10 kms. South of the center of Manila, on the way to Tagaytay. It is only 10 minutes away from Ninoy Aquino International Airport. On the way there we passed the busy and crowded town of Las Pinas. As in most streets in the Philippines there was lots of constructions, overall the ride was very pleasant. Thanks to the Linda and Gerke who are our MVP tour directors and a comfortable bus ride with a nice driver.

The Church, made of adobe (volcanic) stones, was constructed between 1797 and 1819. It was built in the so-called “earthquake” baroque architectural style. The church ground was very clean. There was also an elementary school in the same premises. Inside the church were decorative paper-Mache roosters hanging by the arch windows. They were made of very Christmas colors: red and white. One of the members said that this rooster was represented by St. Joseph who was the Saint holding the rooster that is why significant of these decorations were significant. White parols hang from the ceiling. The ceiling was made of bamboos and so were the pew chairs. There were two brightly lighted Christmas trees by the altar that made it very festive.

The Bamboo Organ is located on the second floor of the church. The Organ seems to be larger in pictures. However when our tour guide played for us, it was an amazing feeling. The magnificent Bamboo Organ sounds something that I have never experienced. It gave me chills. Diego Cera, The first Parish Priest was the Organ builder. He was the first parish in Las Pinas and lived between 1795 and 1830. He was a Spanish missionary for Graus (Huesca, Spain). The Bamboo Organ is known as the only pipe organ in the
world whose pipes are made of bamboo. The total number of pipes is 1,013; 902 are made of bamboo and the remaining pipes are made of metal. It took Fr. Diego Cera 8 years to finish the organ (1816-1824). A typhoon followed by an earthquake destroyed the roof of the church in 1880’s so that stones and water fell inside the organ what made it unplayable for several years. In 1972, a contract for total restoration was awarded to Johannes Klais Orgelbau in Bonn Germany. The organ returned home March 1975 to a joyous welcome by the Filipino people.

Today the Las Pinas Boys Choir, the equivalent of the Vienna Boys Choir in Austria and the Regensburg Domspatzen (Cathedral Sparrows of Regensburg) of Germany are some of the attractions at the parish of St. Joseph, aside from the Bamboo Organ. The choir offers services during weddings, corporate functions, and other occasions.

Our second stop was the Museo De La Salle. It was heavy traffic, with road constructions to widen the streets. We saw food vendors for fresh fruits, vegetables and Sari-Sari stores that sell everything you need. Christmas Lanterns (parols) and Christmas lights decorations everywhere with bright colors of red, blue, yellow, green and whites.

By the time we got to the college everyone was ready for lunch. Lunch was served outdoors. It was sunny and cool weather. Perfect for outside dining. Buffet layout of chicken and seafood dishes was served. My favorite was the eggplant lasagna. We had two deserts which one of them was very unusual. This was my first time to try fried Halo-Halo Lumpia. It was delicious. Yummy! After lunch we head on to the Museo tour. We needed to walk off the delicious lunch we just ate.

The building itself takes its design inspiration from the 19th century bahay na bato, a two-story building with stone, brick and mortar structure at the ground level, and usually a wood one at the second level. The emergence of the bahay bato marked the remarkable lifestyle of the 19th century Christian Philippines. A bahay na bato was filled with fine furniture and objects to showcase the owner’s wealth, personal style, and status in society. The interior design details of the caida, sala, mayor, despacho, cuartos, oratorio, camedor and cocina such as color, woodwork, hand painting and period interior decoration were guided by extensive research, particularly into pertinent styles during the Spanish Colonial Period from the early 1800s’ and Philippines Art Nouveau in the 1900s to the early American Colonial Period. The Outside tile-roofed structure is walled with adobe, which keeps the ground floor interiors cool. The façade is typical of the era, which wide tall doors; iron grilles for ground floors windows, and details such as ventanillas lined with balusters de torno, bandejas and molduras or mouldings. The baranda on the second floor was my very favorite it wrapped around the entire floor. I could feel the cool breeze of fresh air blowing. We then returned to our van to continue our tour around the ground of the college campus. The tour guide was professional and helpful. The college consists of 11,000 students. The biggest enrolment is in the Business administration department. The school had been opened for only 30 years. It’s a beautiful campus, with lots of tall Acacia trees that sit on a hill in Dasmarinas, Cavite. The weather is much cooler than in Manila. No pollution. It appears that it was a well-run school very clean and it has theaters, sports facilities too. There is a new educational building for young kids in jails, to live there and learn and to have a better future. There is a hotel under construction to help with conventions and facilities accommodations.
Our third stop was at the Las Pinas Arts & Crafts Center in Las Pinas. This is a project head by the Congress lady. Inside there were woven baskets made of a water lily, wooden carvings, candles holders made of coconut and capis shells, colorful parols, and other arts and crafts. On the second floor was the productions center. There were workers making baskets and ladies weaving blankets. Did you know that they could make one especially for you with your name? They were making one for the mayor and his wife of Las Pinas. This shop is wonderful money making for the livelihood of the neighborhoods after living here for 10 years; I’m glad and very happy that I had the opportunity to join MVP and this tour. I enjoyed the Bamboo Organ, College De La Salle college tour and the delicious lunch the best. I would highly recommend it to everyone. Thanks to Gerke and Linda for organizing an educational and fun tour.

Mabuhay,

Tess Maquera

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