Bikers to heaven

Lifestyle, Paolo Abellanosa

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Paolo Abellanosa shares with Salimbay his recent experience and insights on the traditional Ifugao wooden bikes found in the Northern Philippines.

Three years have passed since my last visit to the Eight Wonder of the World, the stairs to heaven. Nothing seems to have changed, and I find myself still being greeted by a wooden friend, whose job I’m confused with as to whether a deity protecting the vast heritage or a lover of flickers who adores being the foreground of Facebook display photos while charging voluntary talent fees.
To my delight, not-so-unfamiliar new wooden friends swooped past my time in Viewpoint. The Banaue Wooden Scooter Racers rose to fame when their “It’s More Fun in the Philippines” meme crowded social media.
Last Thursday, I saw the whole membership take their wooden contraptions to the road. They carved varying designs on logs—dragons, Christ, pig, horse, race car, and one that particularly amazed me is an airplane.

According to the designer, it took him two months to chip at the wood, and he’ll probably sell his bike for PHP10,000 if someone asks for a price. The last bike he made was worth PHP20,000.
The bike is purely made out of hard wood, oftentimes an antique, complete with wooden breaks. The bikers explained that long ago, they used these contraptions to carry wood from the mountains.
Tourism seems to be gradually shifting the function of bikes from being a logistic need to a sort of choreographed F1 show. While so, tourism plays the important role of continuing the relevance of these wooden bikes for the Ifugao people, and in the part of the observers, having us realize the magnitude and depth of the different cultures outside of our urban backyards. – Paolo Abellanosa