

THE TRAVEL GUIDE

By **MAAN D' ASIS PAMARAN**



PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE WEEK

MELO VILLAREAL



Ugao Mother and Child

If you have ever searched for information about your local dream destination—especially those little out-of-the-way places—chances are you have hit upon the Out of Town blog (<https://outoftownblog.com/>). This handy guide on where to go and what to do is the product of Melo Villareal's wanderlust and gung-ho sense of adventure.

To date, his journeys have taken him to more than 500 islands in the Philippines—from the Batanes group of islands to Palawan and the remote jungles of Babuyan to indigenous rituals of Bukidnon. For all his extreme travel experiences in his mission to discover and share the wonders of the Philippines, he started out in a safer place. Melo began his career in accountancy in 1999 after receiving his diploma in accountancy and law. He worked for multinational companies as an accountant for three years before leaving the corporate world at the age of 23.

In search of a more fulfilling occupation, he packed his bags to become a freelance travel photographer for several local and international travel publications.

"Being an accountant by profession, I really didn't have an idea how to start writing an article. I just based my story on the photos I have on my camera and that helped me complete my first published article," he grins.

The intrepid blogger recalls, "When I got my very first camera, I started traveling in my spare time, uploading my photos online to get feedback and also to learn various photography disciplines even before I started to get interested in travel writing."

Now, his blogging work keeps him away from home for days at a time, and he is having the time of his life. He has become so well-versed in his online occupation that popular Nas Daily vlogger Nusseir Yassin actually sought him out when he went to the Philippines to guide him on his trip.

He views photography as more than just a form of art. "It is also a perfect medium to share a story. Photography shares a clear message in the absence of a particular language. As a lensman, I am mindful about the local culture before pressing that shutter button, it is always better if you ask permission first."

He now specializes in travel photography with work that is dedicated to celebrating the living



Baguio Public Market



Temple (Bagan, Myanmar)



Burmese Kid selling postcard (Bagan)



Thunderbird Poro (La Union)



Paoay Church (Ilocos)



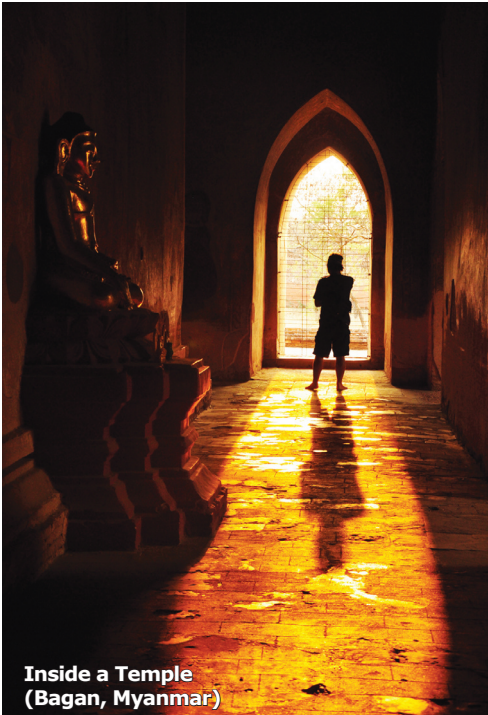
ATV Tour of Mayon Volcano



Rice Harvest (Batad)



Cactus Cabbage (Atok, Benguet)



Inside a Temple (Bagan, Myanmar)

remnants of the vanishing past. He is concerned with preserving local culture, capturing rituals, festivals, indigenous cultures, local heritage sites, and breathtaking landscapes

that are frequently taken for granted. This has an effect on how he views his work. "An effective photograph is one that tells a story. Each photo should perfectly represent

the emotions, experiences, and impressions of a place."

He gives his tips on being a respectful and responsible documentarian: "Aim for a shot that per-

fectly describes the place and aim for a shot that will inspire people. Showcase the uniqueness of the place. Be patient, wait for the perfect time."