

Brian Cranfield - International Travel Photographer

After I left the Labs in 2001, between 2002 and 2015 I travelled to several parts of the world, to experience a country and to observe various aspects of its life, architecture and geography.

The poster gives comments about 8 of the countries visited. The accompanying binder contains 48 photos from 20 countries, plus a numerical list itemising where the photo was taken and the subject matter.

Key

WHS World Heritage Site

[nn] Photo nn in the ring binder

Vietnam

The people of Vietnam are highly industrious – everyone seems anxious to turn a dollar. Small (150cc) motorcycles are seen everywhere, carrying huge loads of rice, furniture, white goods, etc. Many *don ganh* (carrying yokes) are used, especially in the north [46]. Vietnam is home to over 50 ethnic minorities, including the Hmong [8].

I travelled the length of the country on public bus services, from Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) with its 3 million motorcycles (yes!), to Da Lat [20]; the lovely fishing port and **WHS** of Hoi An; the ancient capital at Hue; and on to Hanoi.

Long side trips to the **WHS** of Halong Bay [34] with its 2000+ limestone islands, to the limestone caves at Tam Coc and to the high, jungle covered mountains of Sa Pa the far northwest corner, completed the journey.



The mountains of Sa Pa

Peru

There is a wide range of climatic zones here, from perpetual snow in the high Andes to dense tropical rainforest; 60% of the land area is to the east of the Andes backbone.

My travels ranged from the far northeast, to experience the Amazon jungle in the Iquitos region, through to the wonderful colonial architecture of the capital, Lima, and



Lima

the ancient ruins of Pachacamac (remember the musical group?). Then south to see the **WHS** at the Nasca Lines [25, the spider formation is 46 metres long!], which I was able to observe from a high-wing plane.

Further east, I travelled to Cusco, the Inca capital, and on to market towns in the Andes foothills [17] and the Sacred Valley of the Inca [7].

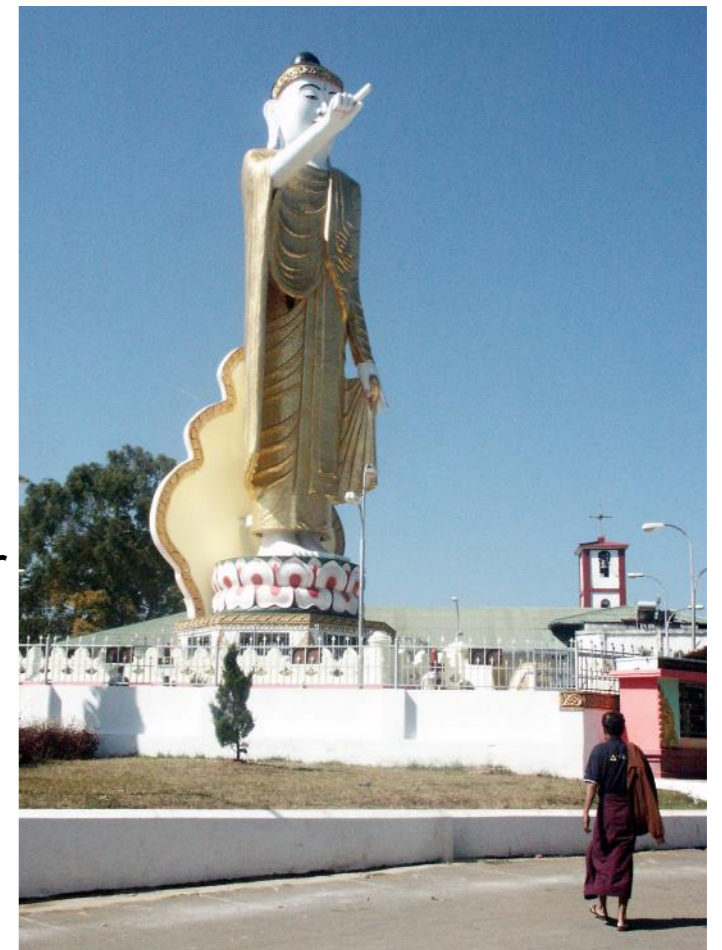
These journeys culminated in a visit to another **WHS**, the ruins of Machu Picchu [38], outstanding in their own right but made unforgettable by their setting among lofty, jungle clad peaks.

Myanmar

Although Myanmar is slowly opening its doors to foreigners, there are still many restrictions: (1) I was refused entry to some areas, due to sensitivities near the Chinese border and, I was told, to continued army attacks on ethnic groups; (2) check points are frequent on the major road I used – I believe the authorities are watching for large gatherings; (3) I had a “minder” on one long trip, making sure I did not photograph the wrong things! Nevertheless, my travels were fascinating.

I was in Shan State, in the east, starting in Tachileik [1], and travelling in a taxi loaded with 2 monks, gas cylinders, boxed TVs and rice sacks (thankfully no goats!) to Kyaing Tong [33].

Myanmar is well known for its *Wats* (Buddhist temples) and Wat Jong Kham [18] is an example; Buddha effigies are also common. The *longyi*, a cylindrical garment worn from waist to ankle, is widely used by men in Myanmar.



A Buddha effigy

Egypt

Here can be found a vast array of archaeological sites and constructions to explore, and hieroglyphs to study. I confined my most recent visit to the south: Luxor, Aswan and Abu Simbel.

Luxor is on the Nile's east bank and the vast temple complex of Karnak, a **WHS**, is right in the town.

The Valley of the Kings, the Tomb of Sennedjem [16] and the Temple of Hatshepsut [28] are located across the river, on the West Bank.



Temple decoration at Karnak

From Luxor I sailed gently upstream by *dahabiya* (a 2-masted sailing boat) to Aswan, which is attractively situated at the first Nile cataract (when heading upstream) and was the southern frontier town of ancient Egypt.

From the stone quarries here, colossal obelisks were transported north – one obelisk, however, is (still!) unfinished and is cleverly called “The Unfinished Obelisk” [39]. Then further south by road to Abu Simbel, another *WHS*.

The two Abu Simbel temples [5] were carved in the rock in the 13th century BC by Ramesses II as monuments to himself and to his wife, Nefetari.

I returned to Luxor on public transport via the fascinating camel market at Daraw, the mummified crocodile display at Kom Ombo (the Egyptians had a crocodile headed deity called Sobek) and the Ptolemaic Edfu Temple.

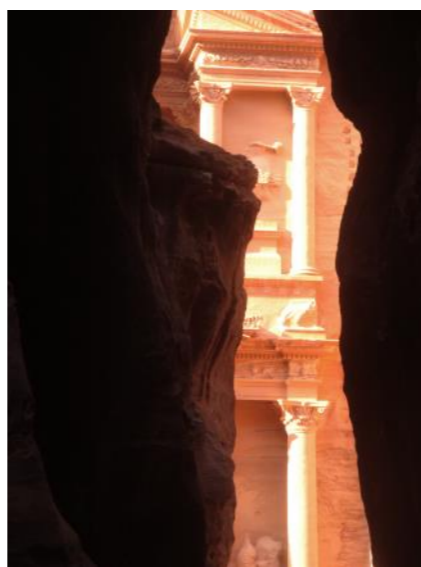
Jordan

With a population of 10 million, Jordan is an almost landlocked and mostly desert country, only the northwest sector having fertile land and major settlements.

My journey from south to north started at Aqaba on the Red Sea and firstly took in the *WHS* of Wadi Rum [19] with its expansive landscape, beloved by filmmakers for desert scenes (*rum* means desert in Arabic).

Moving northwest, I came to another *WHS*, the Nabataean site of Petra, enclosed by towering rocks and approached through a narrow gorge, the Siq.

Some of the major constructions here are cut into the living rock, such as Al Khazneh (“The Treasury”) and El Deir (“The Monastery”) [36].



Al Khazneh

North again, and after viewing several castles, taking the mandatory dip in the Dead Sea and exploring Amman, I headed to the far northern 3rd century BC Greco-Roman city of Jerash [27], some 20 miles from Syria.

Morocco

The architectural styles in Morocco are a blend of Berber and Islamic ideas, with influences from France, Portugal and Spain.

More than 50% of Morocco’s population speak a Berber language. The Berbers, or Amazighs, were living in North Africa by 10,000 BC, i.e. 11,600 years before the Arab conquest.

I based myself in Marrakech, admiring some of the Islamic architecture, such as the Koutoubia mosque which is a *WHS*, and had considerable fun getting intentionally lost in the labyrinthine souks [32].



Koutoubia mosque

Morocco has a long Atlantic coastline and I chose to visit Essaouira with its Genoese built citadel and picturesque fishing harbour [48].

South from Marrakech, the land rises towards the High Atlas Mountains – here, I learnt how to ride a (not always compliant!) donkey in the hills near a Berber village [21].

Cambodia

The population of Cambodia is homogeneous – only a few other ethnic groups live here. The education system was destroyed during the Pol Pot regime of 1975-79, when 25% of the entire population was killed.

Using public transport, I was able to visit Ban Lung, in the remote northeast corner; the capital, Phnom Penh, where I sampled fried spiders and grasshoppers [31] and visited the palace of the former royal family [40]

and an orphanage; the coastal resort of Sihanoukville; the world’s largest religious complex at Angkor Wat [14], a *WHS* since 1992; the floating village of Chong Khneas on Tonle Sap Lake [47]; and the western towns of Pailin (where the last members of the Khmer Rouge are reputed to be located) and Battambang.



Children at the orphanage

Laos

A huge contrast to Vietnam, Lao (the “s” is a French coinage) is a relaxed, laid back country where nobody shouts or raises their voice in anger.

With only 7 million people in a country the same size as the UK, large areas are covered in thick forest. Some of the northern villages have temporary river bridges that are disassembled before the rainy, high water season.

Per capita, Lao is the most heavily bombed country in history (1964-73) and unexploded bombs still cause around 300 casualties a year.

Laos is landlocked, so imports/exports must come through neighbouring countries and ferried across the Mekong [37].

My journey started in the delightful northern town of Luang Prabang, a *WHS* at the confluence of the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers. It has a market on the main street every night [12].

Further south is the Plain of Jars [24], containing 3000+ massive stone jars hewn from single blocks, of uncertain provenance and unknown purpose. Further south again to the capital, Vientiane [4], after which, following the Mekong downstream, I stayed awhile in the market towns of Savannakhet and Pakse, before visiting the 12th century Khmer-Hindu temple complex of Wat Phu.



A temporary river bridge