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3 KID-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES IN BAGAN

This ancient Burmese capital known for its archaeology and quiet charm has plenty of tricks up its sleeve to keep the kids entertained. By MERRITT GURLEY.

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TODDLERS ARE NOT the coolest travel companions, usually. They don't like any mode of transportation that requires sitting still. They aren't into history, or culture or local customs. Getting a preschooler to enjoy a trip is basically an act of magic—but there is perhaps no better stage than Bagan. Here, three reasons the central Burmese town will cast its quiet spell over your whole family.



Burmese boy. [iStock.com/BeLena](#)

1. CONVENIENCE

After your flight, your travel-weary kids are but a 10-minute drive away from Old Bagan, where there are hotel options aplenty. On a recent trip, I stayed at **Tharabar Gate** (rooms from US\$170) with my one-year-old in tow. The room was spacious and kid-friendly. The best part? The room was only 30 meters from the restaurant, within our video-baby-monitor range, so after the little one fell asleep we sat at a table by the pool and enjoyed dinner and wine, while still being (semi-)responsible parents.

2. SECLUSION

Most of the stupas in Bagan were built by regular families, rather than royalty, so there are thousands peppered across this bucolic **UNESCO World Heritage site**. This means you can have whole kilometers of prime stupa-viewing landscape all to yourself. It is much more relaxed than weaving through hoards of people at some of the region's more touristied temples, and the sweep of calm green landscape is the cherry on the cultural sundae. On a walking tour with **Backyard Travel**, my toddler spent 15 minutes mesmerized by a wandering herd of goats while we strolled leisurely from stupa to stupa in the dusty evening sun. We got a lesson in history, he saw goats, everybody won.



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A wooden directional signpost. Courtesy: World Adventure Life. Photo: © 2014 Facebook - 4011616

3. VEHICULAR VARIETY

Thrill-seekers eight years old and up can take to the skies at sunrise with **balloons over Bagan** (from US\$320 per person) for a panoramic view of the historic town, under the blush of dawn. But climbing can make everyone feel like a kid again: just scale one of the taller temples (Ananda and Shwesandaw are popular options) at sunset to fully appreciate Bagan's unrivaled vista of stupas. There's the sporty option of renting bikes to cycle through the towns and temples. My son was too young for two-wheels, but an hour-long open-air horse-cart ride kept him entertained and, even better, the rhythmic patter of the horse's gait lulled him to sleep.



Ballooning over the stupas of Bagan. Courtesy of The Lantern of Love.