

Burma tour, (Myanmar) – ‘Famous Sites and Hidden Secrets’

All year round; 21D/20N ex London or 19D/18N Yangon to Yangon

A 3 week tour of both the famous, *and* the off the beaten track, destinations of this fascinating, beautiful and still very traditional country. From the crumbling Victoriana and glittering pagodas of Rangoon to the dramatic Golden Rock and spectacular sites and dramatic scenery of little visited Mon and Karen States in the South; we'll travel via historic Mandalay and the awe-inspiring temples of Bagan to the hill-tribes and mountains of Shan State and Lake Inle. Hill-tribe villages, floating gardens, bustling markets, remote temples, ruined cities; travel up the Salween and down the Irrawaddy, by local train, public boat and even horse and cart and of course on the way discover the unique Burmese cuisine and meet plenty of the very friendly locals.

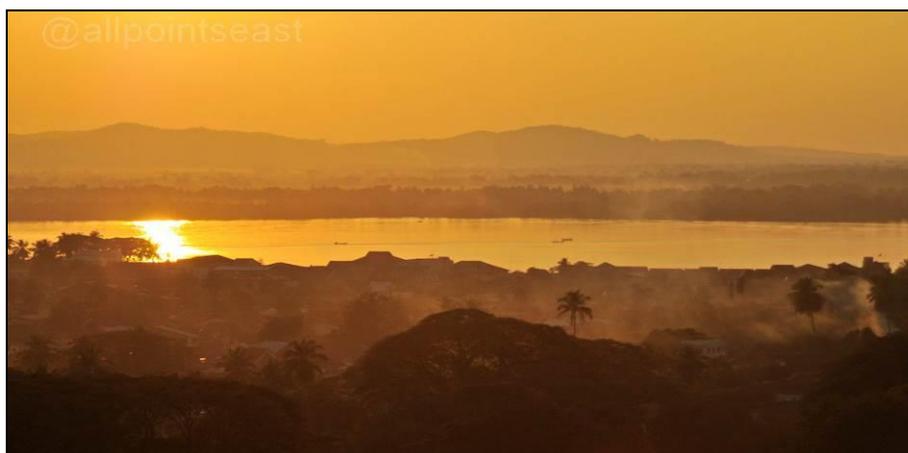


Day 1 Departure from the UK.

Day 2 Arrival in Yangon (Rangoon), and check-in to a comfortable, downtown hotel close to the famous Scott Market. In the afternoon we'll take a stroll through the picturesque Kandawgyi Lake Gardens before a sunset visit to the incredible [Shwedagon Temple](#) – Burma's most sacred and certainly one of its most awe inspiring sites.

Day 3 Morning departure by local train for the ancient Mon capital of Pegu, now Bago. From here we'll continue to Kyaiktiyo and the foot of the mountains, the departure point for our Golden Rock visit. Yes, the gold leaf covered boulder balanced precariously on a mountain top is spectacular for 5 minutes or so, but it's the whole experience that's so wonderful. Ride half way up the mountain on an open topped truck crammed with locals, climb with the pilgrims the rest of the way. Truly awesome views and overnight in a ridge-top hotel almost as absurdly situated as the rock itself. You'll probably curse, scream, sweat, laugh, meet plenty of people and you certainly won't forget it!

Day 4 Down the mountain and off south to [Moulmein](#), now Mawlamyine, contemporary capital of Mon State. Formerly home for several years to George Orwell and immortalized by Kipling, and we reckon one of the country's friendliest and most scenic towns. We'll visit the lively fruit and vegetable market before heading up for sunset at one of the hill-top pagodas overlooking the town and estuary.



Day 5 We'll begin with a visit to the town's lively morning market before heading south to visit some of the region's attractions: Kyauktalon Taung Pagoda perched Mount Popa style atop a sheer limestone outcrop; the incredible sight of the world's largest reclining Buddha - Win Sein Taw Ya; a stop at Thanbyuzaya which was the terminus of the infamous WW2 'Death Railway' from Kanchanaburi, where you can still see the old Japanese train plus the cemetery for the Allied POWs who lost their lives building the railway, and last but not least, the iconic Kyaikkami Monastery situated on a rock outcrop jutting into the sea. The temple's located in the old colonial period town of Amherst where we can stroll along the beach before our return drive to Moulmein.

Day 6 Off by local boat for a day trip to nearby [Bilu Kyun](#) (Ogre Island!), where we'll visit the very traditional Mon villages and discover some of the local handicrafts. They don't see many tourists yet, but the villagers will be happy to show you how they make cane walking sticks, typical Burmese style bamboo hats, slate blackboards and even back-garden rubber band making! (Sounds odd but it is absolutely fascinating). Afternoon return to Moulmein for perhaps some sundowners at a waterfront café?



Day 7 Early morning departure, again by boat, for a journey up the scenic Salween River to Hpa-An Town – capital of Karen State. We'll stop at a riverside fishing village on the way, with time in the afternoon to explore the bustling and friendly town itself before a sunset visit to a riverside pagoda.

Day 8 Hpa-An is surrounded by dramatic limestone karst scenery, including the sacred Zwegabin Mountain – symbol of Karen State – and we'll spend the day exploring the area's caves, tunnels, temples and mountains by road, boat and on foot, as well as visiting some of the area's traditional Karen villages.

Day 9 Return drive through rubber plantations and past more limestone crags to Rangoon with a stop on the way to visit the prestigious Zhotoke Pagoda, and the ancient carvings of the ruins of the early Mon city of Savarnaphum. Late lunch and afternoon at leisure in Rangoon.

Day 10 Morning flight to Mandalay and time to relax or explore the area before an afternoon trip to the nearby ancient city and former 14th to 19th century capital of Ava (Inwa). Discover the ruined city, temples and villages by horse and cart before a sunset visit to the iconic U Bein Bridge – reputed to be the longest wooden bridge in the world.



Day 11 Day tour and scenic drive to the old British hill-station of Pyin U Lwin located on the edge of the Shan Plateau. The small town's 1,200m altitude meant it was a popular and cool retreat for the former British colonists and many historic buildings remain as well as its famous botanical gardens. We'll time our return journey for sunset, (and sundowners!), on the Mandalay riverside, with spectacular views over the Irrawaddy River.

Day 12 Early morning departure by boat down the Irrawaddy to Bagan; bucolic river scenes, mountain views and a great way to arrive in the historic ancient city. Late afternoon orientation visit and sunset at the site of the ruined 11th to 13th century capital – still containing over 2,000 chedis, stupas, pagodas scattered across a riverside plain and certainly one of the most incredible sites of Southeast Asia.

Day 13 Visit Bagan at your leisure. Armed with a map, hat and torch to discover temples' hidden stairways, roam the country lanes by bicycle, hire a pony and trap, visit the best known temples or find some hidden chedis of your own. Your guide will be on-hand to advise and recommend but we'd like to let you visit this phenomenal site at your own leisure and pace.



Day 14 Early morning departure for dawn at one of the temple sites before a flight to Heho airport on the distant Shan Plateau. Travel through the picturesque countryside of the [Shan Plateau](#) to the town of Pindaya to visit the spectacular [Shwe Umin cave temples](#). Lunch by the lake and a chance to check out the traditional umbrella making which Pindaya is also famous for. In the afternoon we'll continue to the charming little town and old hill-station of Kalaw.

Day 15 Morning hike through the surrounding hills to visit one of the local Palaung hill-tribe villages; a scenic walk, mountain views, visit to the village and chance to meet some of its friendly inhabitants. Afternoon return to Kalaw and some time to wander around the small town, and perhaps explore the market, or sit in a local tea shop and watch the world go by?

Day 16 Day trip through the picturesque countryside of the Shan Plateau taking in, firstly, one of the local farmers' markets before heading to the town of Pindaya to visit the spectacular Shwe Umin cave temples. Lunch by the lake and a chance to check out the traditional umbrella making which Pindaya is famous for. In the afternoon we'll continue our scenic route to Nyuangshwe – gateway town to the famous Inle Lake.

Day 17 Day boat trip around the picturesque lake including visits to a lakeside village market, a traditional hand rolling cheroot factory, a fascinating lotus weaving project and the unusual floating gardens.



Day 18 Morning departure across the lake and up river to the small lakeside village of Indein from where we'll hike through the picturesque landscape to visit the site of a ruined Shan city – known as the Shan Bagan – where myriad ruined stupas dot the lush vegetation. Return to Nyaungshwe for lunch and an afternoon at leisure.

Day 19 Free morning at Lake Inle to do your own thing: cycle to the extraordinary Red Mountain Winery, check out the local market, visit a local village by canoe or just relax in a tea shop before an afternoon return flight to Yangon?

Day 20 Free time to perhaps do some last-minute shopping or souvenir hunting at the famous Scott Market and a late afternoon departure.

Day 21 Morning arrival in UK.



Note: This tour is offered with or without a return flight from London. Persons not wishing to take up the flight option should join the tour in Yangon on day 2 of the itinerary and depart in Yangon on day 20.

Highlights: Golden Rock, Moulmein, Kyaikkami Pagoda, Bilu Island, boat trip up the Salween, Hpa-An, caves, temples and spectacular karst scenery, Yangon, Shwedagon, Mandalay, Ava ancient city, U Bein Bridge, Irrawaddy boat trip, Ruins of Bagan, Kalaw, Pindaya cave temple, Lake Inle, local markets, local train ride, Shan Plateau, traditional hill-tribes, local food

Fitness: moderate – c 1 hour uphill hiking at the Golden Rock on day 3 and 3 to 4 hours hiking on day 15 though all activities can be tailored to suit any fitness levels

Accommodation: hotel, guesthouse

Transport: train, boat, minibus, domestic flight

Meals: full board except for lunch on days 2, 13, 19 & 20 and dinner on days 3, 6, 13, 15 & 19

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