



Magnificent Myanmar

CLASSIC

13 Nights

Yangon > Pyin Oo Lwin > Mandalay > Bagan > Kalaw > Inle Lake > Yangon

INSIDE
Asia 

See the gilded Shwedagon Pagoda at sunset



Explore the much fabled city of Mandalay



Look over thousands of pagodas on the plains of Bagan



Meet the elephants at Green Hill Elephant Camp



Visit markets and local people in the stilted villages of Inle Lake

IAT CLASSIC TOURS

In-depth cultural tours at a moderate pace

Style Facts

- Skilled InsideAsia tour leader accompanying the group full time
- All transport between destinations included
- Comfortable three- and four-star accommodation, fully en suite throughout
- Airport meet-and-greet with transfers included
- Breakfast each day plus a number of lunches and evening meals
- Entrance fees included
- For solo travellers a single room throughout on payment of a fair supplement

Tour Overview

Spend 14 days journeying around some of the most beautiful and famous destinations in Myanmar; learn about the varied history, meet local people and marvel at breathtaking landscapes.

Having been isolated from the outside world until relatively recently, Myanmar is still largely undiscovered by tourists unlike many other Southeast Asian countries. With thousands of pagodas and traditional rituals that are still practiced today, it's a fascinating country to explore.

We'll begin the tour in the old colonial capital of Yangon, a paradox with the hustle and bustle of a commercial hub rising confidently against the glorious backdrop of the gilded, historic Shwedagon Pagoda.

Journey northwards to Pyin Oo Lwin, a hill station town the British government relocated to during the hot summer months, before travelling to the nearby city of Mandalay. Immortalised in the words of Kipling, Mandalay has captivated visitors for hundreds of years.

The former capital city of Myanmar and home of the last Burmese king, Thibaw, there are remnants of dynasties throughout the region making it an interesting place for history lovers. One of the most iconic places here is U Bein Bridge. Also rich in history, it was constructed in 1850 with teak from the royal palace in Inwa, and is believed to be the longest and oldest teak bridge in the world.

Our tour continues with a serene cruise on the Irrawaddy River to the ancient city of Bagan. Catch your breath from a raised temple as you look out over plains dotted with 2,000 pagodas and temples. Alternatively, get a bird's eye view from a hot air balloon as the sun rises over the stupas.

In Mandalay and Bagan, we will visit local workshops and meet artisan makers in wood carving, tapestry, lacquerware and gold-leaf - particularly popular in Myanmar, before having the option to head to the beautiful village of Salay, with its main streets lined with faded colonial building and 12th Century pagodas.

For the next leg, we'll board a plane heading east to the hills of Kalaw. Previously a British hill station with wooded areas, villages and lush green plantations, it now plays host to an ethical elephant sanctuary. Green Hill Elephant Camp is a retirement homes for elephants no longer working in the logging industry; an



important place in a country with the highest number of working elephants in the world.

Our next stop is one of the most remarkable places on the trip, Inle Lake. See a life lived on water with villages and markets atop stilts and fisherman gliding by on boats, standing precariously on one leg as they cast their nets. In this area, we'll stop at Sagar. With its stunning array of sunken stupas emerging from the water, it's surprisingly little-visited by tourists.

The tour draws to a close back in the city of Yangon. With opportunities for some last minute souvenir hunting and to visit the majestic Shwedagon Pagoda once again. This majestic stupa, adorned with gold leaf, is loveliest at sunset; a perfect way to end a journey through Myanmar.

Day by day

Day 1 Yangon (D)

Welcome to Myanmar! Upon arrival, you will be greeted by your local guide who will accompany

you as you transfer to the hotel. After dropping off your luggage and checking in you'll have the rest of the day free for you to enjoy at leisure. This evening you'll enjoy a scrumptious welcome dinner at a restaurant of your tour leader's choice.

Day 2 Yangon (B)

In the morning you'll transfer to Yangon's main railway station and board a lively circular train for a colourful ride through Yangon's neighbourhoods before alighting in the city centre and embarking on a walking tour of the downtown area.

In the late afternoon, you'll head to Shwedagon Pagoda the most revered Buddhist temple in Myanmar, just in time to catch it as the sun sets. Follow our tour leader as you explore this massive complex and learn why it's so revered among locals.

Day 3 Pyin Oo Lwin (B)

This morning, you'll make your way back to Yangon Airport for your flight to Mandalay.

From Mandalay, take a two-hour, scenic drive to the former British hill station of Maymyo. Today known as Pyin Oo Lwin, this hill station is located on a plateau 1,000 metres above sea level and is known for its cooler climate and lush foliage. Many reminders of the colonial era are still present in Pyin Oo Lwin, including brick and timber houses with British names. You'll take a ride in a traditional horse and carriage to visit some of these sights before ending at the Botanical Gardens where there will be time to enjoy a walk through the landscaped gardens.

Day 4 Mandalay (B)

After a delicious breakfast at your hotel you'll make your way back to Mandalay to explore some of the city's main attractions. You'll include visits to Mahamuni Pagoda, home to one of the country's most revered Buddha images; Kuthodaw Pagoda, whose 729 marble stone slabs of Buddhist scriptures have earned it the title 'World's Biggest Book' and the Shwenandaw Monastery, a grand teak building known for its exquisite woodcarvings and the only remaining building from the 19th century Royal Palace.

In the evening, you will head to one of the city's many colourful night markets. Mandalay is a fantastic place to explore markets as its location along the Irrawaddy River makes it a hub for wares coming from Northern Myanmar. Explore the stalls as your tour leader introduces you to many exotic foods.

Day 5 Mandalay (B, L)

Today you will head out to explore the former capitals of Amarapura, Ava and Sagaing which surround Mandalay.

In Amarapura you'll visit a silk weaving workshop and walk along U-Bein Bridge a 200 year-old teak bridge where we'll see fabulous views of the surrounding farms and streams. In Ava, travel by horse and cart to explore the small villages scattered amidst the ancient capital's ruins, offering a unique glimpse into local life.

After a delicious lunch in Ava you'll cross a bridge over the Irrawaddy River to Sagaing. Covered with 600 white-painted pagodas and monasteries, Sagaing Hill is widely regarded as the religious centre of Myanmar, home to 3,000 monks and 100 meditation centres. Finally you'll also head to

Sagaing's local market, a typical Burmese market that few tourists visit. Discover a range of items for sale including locally-produced pottery, silver and other handicrafts.

Day 6 Bagan (B, L)

This morning you will be transferred to the jetty to board your day boat from Mandalay to Bagan. This 10-11 hour journey offers a fascinating insight into daily life along the Irrawaddy River. You'll also enjoy lunch on board.

Upon arrival in Bagan, you'll make your way to the hotel and after checking in you have rest of the evening at leisure.

Day 7 Bagan (B, L)

Optional Activity (weather permitting): Balloon Experience over Bagan for sunrise. Prices from £260 per person. Please pre-book this activity with your Travel Consultant at least 30 days in advance.

Today, begin with breakfast at a local tea shop just as the locals do! From here you'll head out to discover Bagan's picturesque temples. There will be plenty of opportunities to explore the many pagodas in the area by car and on foot before visiting some local lacquerware and wood workshops to see skilled craftsmen create beautiful items using techniques passed down through the generations.

In the evening your tour leader will take you up to a hilltop viewpoint in time to enjoy an unforgettable sunset over the plains.

Day 8 Bagan (B)

You have a full day at leisure today. You may wish to relax by the pool or buy some local souvenirs.

Optional Activity: Full Day trip to Salay & Mount Popa. This experience is offered at no additional cost. Please speak to your tour leader at least 24 hours in advance if you wish to include this activity.

Day 9 Kalaw (B, L)

After breakfast, a driver will arrive to take you to the airport for your flight to Heho. After the short flight it's a one hour drive through the stunning Shan Hills to Kalaw, a quaint British Hill Station.

Here, you have the option to join a leisurely trek, around 3-4 hours, which passes through the beautiful mountains around Kalaw. You will pass along farms, through pine forest and visit local villages.

Afterwards you'll spend the afternoon exploring downtown Kalaw.

Day 10 Inle lake (B, L)

This morning you'll head to Green Hill Valley Elephant Camp in Magwe Village. This family owned camp is dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism and provides refuge for retired working elephants. Learn about a reforestation project set up by the local villagers before heading to the nearby river to watch the elephants as they enjoy a refreshing dip in the river's cold waters and help the mahouts as they bathe these fascinating animals.

You'll then return to the main camp for lunch before driving to Nyaung Shwe, the gateway village to Inle Lake. Upon reaching the edges of Inle Lake, board a private motorised longboat and head out

to explore one of Myanmar's most spectacular sights. As you head to the hotel, you'll pass traditional stilted villages, home to the Inha people and impressive floating gardens and stupas. Be sure to keep an eye out for the unique leg-rowing fishermen!

Day 11 Inle lake (B)

After an early start exploring Inle Lake's morning markets you'll visit Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda, the lake's main sanctuary, which contains five sacred Buddha images covered in gold leaf.

Inle Lake is known for its range of handcraft workshops, and you'll make several stops to watch the production of these items. Visit the weaving village of Inpawkhone where, in addition to weaving silk and cotton, the locals also use the stems of lotus flowers to craft beautiful textiles. You'll also stop at a cheroot factory, where the typical Burmese cigars are made by hand.

This afternoon, take a short walk along the shore, passing farms growing corn, soya beans and sugar cane. Many village monasteries form part of the scene with the Shan Hills in the background.

Day 12 Inle Lake (B, L)

Today you will hop on board a long tail motorboat and make your way to Sagar. Here you'll get to discover the various sites on the water's edge including the iconic 'sunken' stupas of Sagar. After this you will continue to Thaya Gone Village, home to the Pa-Oh, Shan and Intha people. The village is famous for its high-quality, homemade rice wine. Watch the process of distillation and then sample some of the local brew. In Thaya Gone there is also the chance to climb to a hilltop for sweeping views of the lake and surrounding villages.

Nearby is Sae Khaung, a small pottery village. Take a walk through the village to see the underground kilns and traditional tools needed to create oil and water pots. One last stop will be made in Tar Kaung, a series of more than 200 stupas set on the western shores of the lake before heading back to the hotel.

Day 13 Yangon (B, D)

Enjoy a morning at leisure today before your flight back to Yangon. Upon arrival, head to the hotel to check in (if early check-in is available) and the rest of the day is free. You may wish to do some more sightseeing, buy a few souvenirs or simply relax by the pool.

As our tour comes to an end, we hope that you will join your tour leader and travel companions for an included farewell meal in the evening - a chance for one last night of good food and drink before heading home.

Day 14 Farewell (B)

Time to bid Myanmar farewell today. Your tour leader or a local guide will accompany you to Yangon's Mingaladon Airport in time for your onward flight.

Accommodation

Chatrium Hotel, Yangon

Located across the road from Kandawgyi Lake, the Thai-owned Chatrium Hotel is one of Yangon's finest international-standard properties. Set around a pleasant, palm-fringed swimming pool, the comfortable guest rooms are spacious and well-designed. A range of pleasant dining options are available, with a great buffet breakfast on offer each morning.

Aureum Resort, Pyin Oo Lwin

The Aureum Resort Hotel has modern small villas on site which offer bright and airy, spacious rooms with varying outlooks onto the well maintained grounds as well as outdoor seating space. All have ensuite bathrooms with both a bath and separate shower and air conditioning, wifi and tv is available - a real treat for this part of Myanmar! Relax in the peace and quiet in this great choice on the outskirts of the 'city of flowers' Pyin Oo Lwin. The small restaurant provides a good hot buffet breakfast and also has various cuisines on offer for dinner

Mandalay Hill Resort Mandalay

Set at the foot of the legendary Mandalay Hill and facing the majestic Royal Palace, the Mandalay Hill Resort Hotel is a stylish base from which to explore the city. The hotel has a large swimming pool, a spa and a number of restaurants and bars to choose from as well as an ATM machine in the reception for your convenience. Rooms are bright and airy and the higher floors offer wonderful views across the city. This hotel is popular for families and couples alike and makes a great choice for travellers looking for a comfortable stay here in Mandalay.

Amata Garden Resort, Bagan

Stylish and sophisticated, the Amata Garden Resort provides an excellent stay whilst exploring the iconic temples and pagodas of Bagan. Situated in New Bagan, 2.5km from the iconic Manuha Temple, the Amata Garden Resort is the newest of the Amata properties in Myanmar. Featuring 72 rooms and suites amongst landscaped gardens, all with their own private balcony or terrace.

Being in New Bagan, you are in walking distance of a multitude of restaurants, bars and shops and after a day exploring the ancient temples of Bagan, you can relax at their large outdoor pool, take a sunbather at their café and restaurant or enjoy a treatment at their in-house spa.

Pine Hill Resort, Kalaw

The Pine Hill Resort offers chalet style accommodation up on the hill above Kalaw. The resort has a slightly functional feel, but is perfectly adequate for those looking for a comfortable yet good value hotel here in Kalaw.

Pristine Lotus Spa Resort Inle, Inle Lake

Hidden amongst the trees on a hillside on the western shore of Inle Lake, the Pristine Lotus is a smart and well-designed resort, offering first-class service and accommodation. Hillside villas are spacious and comfortable, spread thoughtfully through the leafy and well-maintained grounds.

Facilities include an excellent value spa, outdoor naturally-heated Jacuzzi and a pleasant restaurant. Although the lake itself is not visible from the

resort, it is accessed by boat through one of the many creeks that pass through the floating farms.

Please note that accommodation is subject to change. Final details of the accommodation will be included in your Info-Pack which will be sent out approximately four weeks prior to the tour start date.

What's included

- ✓ 13 nights' hotel accommodation
- ✓ All transport between destinations (including airport transfers on arrival and departure)
- ✓ Meet-and-greet upon arrival at Mandalay International Airport
- ✓ Breakfast every day, six lunches and two evening meals
- ✓ All excursions and experiences (except those described as optional) as outlined in the day-by-day itinerary
- ✓ Full-time services of your tour leader
- ✓ InsideAsia Tours complimentary Info-Pack
- ✓ Tips for local guides/drivers, porters and inclusions
- ✓ An expert local guide in most destinations

NOT Included

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Entrance fees or additional transport costs not outlined in the day-by-day itinerary
- ✗ All drinks and any meals not outlined above
- ✗ Any other tips at your discretion

Practical notes

Bathroom arrangements

At all night stops on the Magnificent Myanmar tour your room will have full en suite facilities (attached bath, shower and toilet).

Policy on single rooms

A mandatory single supplement is applicable for all single travellers and will guarantee a single room for all nights of the tour.

Laundry

Laundry services are available at all hotels but they are expensive. A much more reasonably priced alternative is to use a local laundry. Your guide or tour leader will be able to help you arrange this.

Transport on tour

Please note that we use a range of transportation methods on tour – planes, boats and private coaches. There will be occasions where you may have to carry your bags for short distances, so please ensure you pack with this in mind.

International Flights

This tour starts in Yangon and finishes in Yangon.

Check-in

Upon arrival you will probably be tired after a long international flight. Please note that standard check in time at the Yangon hotel is 2pm. If your room is ready before this you will usually be allowed in, but if you want to be sure to access your room please book an extra night for any-time check-in.

Otherwise reception will be happy to take care of your luggage whilst you start your exploration of the local area.

Meals

There are a number of meals included on all our tours. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements and we will ensure that all included meals meet your specific needs.

Fitness

Even when not using public transport, sightseeing often involves walking between sights, climbing up steps in temples and being 'on the go' for much of the day. To enjoy any of our Small Group Tours you should be of moderate fitness, able to walk and climb stairs without difficulty and able to maintain a pace that is comfortable for the majority of the group.

Visas

It is your responsibility to ensure that you and all members of your party have the correct passports and visas to enter Myanmar. Visas can be arranged in advance via the relevant local Myanmar Embassy or Consulate. We will provide appropriate detailed guidance, including up-to-date prices, application forms and letters of authorisation where necessary, on an individual basis.

Your tour leader

All our tours are led on the ground by an experienced, English speaking tour leader who is there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The tour leader travels with the group, stays at the same hotels and takes the same trains or boats so please feel free to ask for help or advice at any time. The tour leader is available pretty much all day, every day – and will even accompany (willing) tour members to the bar...

Local guides

In addition to the tour leader, the group will be accompanied in most destinations by professional English-speaking local guides. The guide is there to provide historical and cultural background to our visits and of course to answer questions about contemporary Burmese life.

Flexibility

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible, so there is no set-in-stone itinerary for each day. Each morning the tour leader will outline what s/he is going to do that day, and if you would like to break away from the group and do something different, s/he will be available to give you advice, and help you plan your day.

Crime and personal safety

Myanmar is not a dangerous part of the world, but the usual precautions regarding valuables should be taken, especially in the bigger cities where pick-pocketing and bag/camera snatching is not uncommon. Keep large amounts of money out of sight and consider using a money belt; in your hotel room keep your valuables locked in the room safe and when out and about keep an eye on your bag and other personal effects.

Connectivity

Power and plugs

Myanmar uses 220v with two round-pin or flat-pin plugs. Plug adaptors are sometimes available at hotels, but we recommend bringing them with you - they are readily available in electronics stores at international airports worldwide.

Internet access

Many hotels in Myanmar claim to offer complimentary Wi-Fi internet access but in reality the service can be limited, particularly outside of Yangon. In some hotels a weak signal may be available in the lobby, but to avoid disappointment we strongly suggest not expecting to have regular access to the internet whilst in Myanmar. The one exception to this tends to be the high-end international-standard hotels in Yangon, where a tolerable service is usually available. New investment is arriving in Myanmar, however, and we expect this situation to change rapidly over the coming months and years, so enjoy the novelty of being inaccessible while it lasts!

Mobile phones

International roaming is available in Myanmar using MPT, Ooredoo and Telenor as service providers. With roaming enabled most UK SIM cards will work and 3G coverage is fairly reliable in urban areas, however be warned that roaming costs charged for Myanmar can be extremely expensive so please do check with your mobile service provider before travelling. It is often more cost effective and reliable to purchase a local SIM, there is an MPT counter at Yangon airport and your guide can assist you in other locations. A local a SIM card will cost approximately 1500 Kyat – about £1, and this can then be topped up as and when needed.

