

Journey on the Banks of The Irrawaddy | 10 Days



Following the course of the Irrawaddy River, we journey along its banks and along its peaceful waters, exploring the cities, towns and villages found nearby. We travel from the vibrant capital of Yangon where we visit majestic pagodas and learn about its captivating history to the ancient cities of Beikthano and Bagan. We stop to learn about the trading of local materials and how farmers use the Irrawaddy for their livelihood. Travelling through spectacular landscapes, this captivating tour reveals the innate beauty of Myanmar's landscapes and its people.

Trip Highlights

- Horse cart tour of Dhammayangyi temple, largest in Bagan
- Explore Yangon's architectural heritage, hear about Yangon's colonial history and enjoy sunset and unforgettable experience an evening visit to Shwedagon Pagoda which is one of the world's most spectacular monuments
- Visit the culture city of Mandalay region such as Mahamuni, Mandalay Hill, Golden Palace Monastery, Kuthodaw pagoda, Amarapura, and enjoy sunset at U Bein Teak Bridge, the longest teak bridge in the world
- Enjoy the passing scenery along the world's famous Ayeyarwaddy River by relaxing on tradition easy chairs located on the sun deck.
- Marvel at spectacular Bagan and hundreds of temples sprinkled across the landscape and enjoy wonderful sunset around temples

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Yangon

Welcome to Myanmar! Upon arrival in Yangon a *travel-to-nature Asia* guide/representative will be at the airport to greet and take us to our hotel. Please look out for your name-card once you exit out of arrival area.

Yangon, formerly known as Rangoon, was founded by King Alaungpaya on the site of a small town called Dagon when he conquered lower Myanmar in 1755. He changed its name to Yangon, which means "End of Strife", but was anglicized as Rangoon by the British in 1885. Relatively quiet and charming, Yangon's impressive colonial architecture and spiritual heritage makes it one of Southeast Asia's most fascinating capitals.

In the afternoon, a city tour to Kyaukhtatgyi Pagoda's 70m long reclining Buddha. Begin your Parade of Lights at Shwedagon Pagoda where sun light reflects from the more than 60 tons of gold leaf, incense burns, oil lamps flicker and smiling locals greet you. Overnight in Yangon.

Optional Tour

Option 1: This afternoon enjoy a city tour by rickshaw around the colonial area which is filled various historical buildings. Stop for a drink at a local teashop, a great place to soak in the local culture and lifestyle, before travelling along the famous Strand Road to the riverside.

Option 2: Take an afternoon to soak up the splendour of the famous Strand Hotel. Relax in the hotel luxuriant surroundings before enjoying the charm and tradition of High Tea.

Option 3: We can arrange special permission for our clients to have a unique and unforgettable experience in Myanmar offering oil lamps upon Shwedagon's platform to the pagoda. This solemn and dignified occasion is tied in to the Buddhist belief in earning merit by performing good deeds. The ceremony begins with the local monks chanting "Sutra", a

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blessing that bestows a lifetime of good health and happiness. Following the ceremony, join the local people at Pavilion to enjoy Myanmar Tea and traditional snacks.

Distances and time:
Yangon Airport to Yangon city centre (20 km): 30 – 60 mins

Accommodation: Sule Shangri-La Hotel

Day 2: Yangon - Pyay (By train)

After breakfast at the hotel, we begin our sightseeing tour with a visit to the old colonial-style city centre and the gilded Sule Pagoda. Then, stroll along Mahabandoola Road, Pansodan Street and explore Yangon's Jetty, full of colourful street vendors and busy market life. Continue with a short walking tour through the city's downtown streets with its mix of faded colonial buildings, glittering temples, and local life. Stroll around colourful Chinatown and visit one of Yangon's Chinese temples before transferring to the railway station.

In the afternoon, transfer to Yangon Railways station for your trip to Pyay, crossing the scenic landscapes and villages along the railway side. (Approximately 6.5 hrs). We enjoy the opportunity to mingle with locals as our train pass through the lush countryside. On arrival in Pyay, transfer to hotel. Overnight in Pyay.

Accommodation: Sule Shangri-La Hotel

Meal: Breakfast



Day 3: In Pyay

After breakfast at the hotel, visit the Pyay jetty and the vibrant market and spend some time talking with locals about the goods being sold. Then, visit Shwe Sandaw Pagoda, a gigantic sitting Buddha Statue of Hsehtatkyi Pagoda.

This afternoon, visit the ancient city of Thayeikhittaya or Sriketra, just 8km from the city center. The remains of the city covers about 19 square km, an area that was entirely walled in ancient times. Now the ruins are hidden behind thickets of thorny bushes. Sriketra was the largest and most elaborate city built by the ancient Pyu.

End your day with a walk along Strand Road and visit to the night market. Overnight in Pyay.

Accommodation: Mingalar Garden Hotel

Meal: Breakfast

Day 4: Drive Pyay - Magway (Magwe) (195 km | 4 hrs)

After breakfast at the hotel, we drive to Magway, en route, pass the fields and small towns of Aung Lan, Taung Dwin Gyi. Visit to the ancient city of Beikthano, over 2000 years old, located in the Taung Dwin Gyi Township. From here continue on to the Magway Division.

Magway is well known for its production of both groundnut and sesame oils, earning itself the nickname, 'Oil pot of Myanmar'. Also known for producing exotic fruits, especially the unusual, yet delicious Phangar fruit (Chebulic myrobalan).

From here we pay a visit to the famous Mya Tha Lun Pagoda on the banks of the Irrawaddy Rvier. On arrival, check in your hotel and overnight in Magway.

Accommodation: My River View Hotel

Meal: Breakfast

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Day 5: Day trip to Pwintbyu | Minbu

After breakfast at the hotel, commence the 20 km drive to the north bank of the Irrawaddy River to reach Kyaung Taw Yar Pagoda, at the Pwintbyu Township. Believed to be the site of an ancient monastery built of sandal wood in which the Lord Buddha spent some time after having achieved enlightenment. "Kyaung" means monastery; "Taw" is used when relating to religious hierarchy or royalty, and "Yar" means the site on which the Kyaung Taw stood.

Continue to visit Nagar Pwet Taung (Dragon Lake), an unusual pool of bubbling mud with a nearby temple and Pagoda in the Minbu Township. The perfect spot to admire the panoramic views of the mighty Irrawaddy river and cool down with the breeze. Overnight in Magway.

Accommodation: My River View Hotel

Meal: Breakfast



Day 6: Drive Magway - Bagan (153 km | 3 hrs)

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before starting the scenic and interesting drive to Bagan. The route passes many changes of landscape as you cross one of the most arid regions of Myanmar. View toddy palm fields before stopping at a production center to observe the process of toddy juice production. This crop plays an important role in Myanmar rural life. Not only providing juice and sugars, but also creating shade from the heat and being used as material for utensils, buildings and even some medicines.

Upon arrival in Bagan, check in your Hotel.

This evening, board a local boat for a slow cruise down the Irrawaddy River. As you cruise the waters, observe the lifestyle of the fishermen and riverside villagers as well as enjoying a unique perspective of Bagan's temples. Overnight in Bagan.

Accommodation: Myanmar Treasure Resort

Meal: Breakfast



Day 7: In Bagan

Breakfast at a local tea shop, where we will have the chance to try the traditional Burmese style tea. Today we explore the wonders of Bagan with a full-day tour. From the 11th to 13th centuries, when Bagan was the capital of Myanmar, the rulers constructed thousands of huge stupas and temples many of which are still standing today on the banks of the Irrawaddy River.

Our journey begins with a visit to the golden stupa of Shwezigon Pagoda for an introduction in to Bagan's rich history. Then, visit to nearby Wetkyi-In Gubyaukgyi, a cave temple with exquisite jataka mural paintings and the elegant Htilominlo Temple noted for its fine plaster carvings and glazed sandstone decorations.

This afternoon begin with a visit to Ananda temple, an architectural masterpiece and one of Bagan's most beautiful temples. Built in the early Mon-style, Ananda contains two unique Buddha images whose expressions seem to change depending on the distance from which the statue is viewed. Neighbouring Ananda Okkyaung is one of the few

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surviving brick monasteries from the early Bagan period and is filled with intricate paintings.

From here, travel by horse cart for a tour passing Thatbyinnyu, the highest temple in Bagan, massive Dhammayangi Temple, noted for its remarkable brickwork, and Sulamani Temple. Time permitting; enjoy an unforgettable sunset over the plains from the upper terrace of one of the temples. Overnight in Bagan.

Optional activity: Balloon Experience Over Bagan - Start your morning with an incredible hot-air balloon flight over Bagan's temple-studded plains. Start your morning snack on pastries and croissants, and sipping coffee and tea as the balloon is inflated. Climb aboard before gently rising above thousands of gilded stupas and earthen temples all back-dropped by the impressive Irrawaddy River. A truly unforgettable and unique experience. (Note: available only from late-October to late-March; all flights weather permitting)

Optional Tour - Responsible Tourism in Bagan: Take part in a Responsible Tourism activity of planting a tree in one Bagan's local villages. This actively contributes to the conservation of the area as upper Myanmar is an arid zone, and by planting trees in the area, it goes towards preserving the environment and deterring climate change. Choose from a Neem, Tamarind, Lebbek or Siris tree.
Donation for planting 1 tree: USD 10

Accommodation: Myanmar Treasure Resort
Meal: Breakfast



Day 8: Sightseeing in Bagan | Fly to Mandalay

After breakfast, transfer to Ngat Pyit Taung Monastery and explore the temple's caves, learning about local traditions and spiritual beliefs of the Burmese.

This afternoon, continue to the rural village of Minnanthu, one of Bagan's least visited areas. Here you will explore temples such as Payathonzu, with its unusual architecture and Tantric Buddhism influence, Lemyenhta and Nandamannya.

Late this afternoon, transfer to the Nyaung Oo airport for the flight to Mandalay. Upon arrival, transfer to the hotel. Overnight in Mandalay.

Accommodation: Ayarwaddy River View Hotel
Meal: Breakfast

Day 9: Explore Mingun

After breakfast, transfer to the Mandalay jetty and board a private local boat for a 1 hr cruise on the Irrawaddy River to Mingun. Visit the main sites of Mingun beginning with the famous Mingun Pahtodawqyi. This huge brick structure was left unfinished after an astrologer predicted the King's would die should the temple be completed. In the 1800s, an earthquake left several large cracks in the structure. Continue your visit at the beautiful white Hsinbyume Pagoda whose distinctive style is meant to resemble the mythical Mount Meru. Then, see the Mingun Bell which weighs 90 tons and is considered the world's largest uncracked ringing bell.

Return to Mandalay by boat, enjoying lunch on board as you make your way back to the city.

Next visit Mahamuni Pagoda which is the home to one of the country's most revered Buddha images which, over the years, has been covered with gold leaf giving it an almost 'lumpy' texture. Mandalay is well known for its skilled craftsmen and as you tour traditional workshops, you will learn more about the city's cottage industries. Observe the production of wood carvings, kalaga tapestries, and gold-leaf where the techniques remained unchanged from those used centuries ago to craft items for the Royal Court.

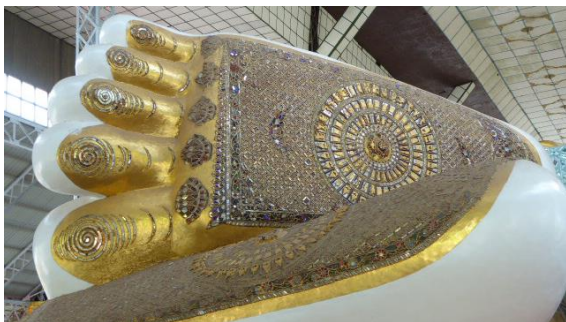
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Optional Activity: Balloon Experience Over Mandalay. As your hot-air balloon rises against the backdrop of Mandalay Hill, the first site to greet you is 729 white pagodas housing the world's largest book. Drifting above the vibrant city you'll witness barefoot monks collecting alms, bustling morning markets, boats coming alive on the Irrawaddy River and U Bein Bridge in Amarapura. (**Note:** available only from late-October to late-March; all flights weather permitting)

OPTION: Make your own marionette! Join the local craftsmen at their workshop and create your own, unique puppet. A hands-on way to learn about the local culture and create a memorable, personalized souvenir! 20 USD per person

Continue your tour of Mandalay with a visit to Kuthodaw Pagoda, whose 729 marble stone slabs of Buddhist scriptures have earned it the title 'World's Biggest Book'. Continue to Shwenandaw Monastery, the only remaining building from the 19th century Royal Palace. This grand teak building is known for its exquisite woodcarving. If you wish, head to the top of Mandalay Hill to watch the sunset. Overnight stay in Mandalay.

Accommodation: Ayarwaddy River View Hotel
Meal: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 16: Birding on the way back to Bagan

Getting out from Kanpetlet, we descend from the Chin Hills and make our way back to hot and dry Bagan. We'll leave early to spend our limited time birding in the dry dipterocarp and mid and low-altitude deciduous forest that is found along the way in search of Gray-headed, Blossom-headed, Alexandrine, Great

Slaty Woodpecker, Himalayan and Greater Flamebacks, Greater Yellownappe, Collared Falconet, Pin-tailed Green Pigeon, Red-headed Trogon, Large Woodshrike, Large Cuckooshrike, Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, and Blue-throated Flycatcher. We arrive back and stay overnight at your hotel in Bagan.

Accommodation: Arthawka Hotel
Meal: Breakfast

Day 18: Depart Mandalay

Transfer to airport for your homeward-bound flight.

Meal: Breakfast

Includes

- Airport (pick up/drop off) transfers by private A/C vehicle
- Twin-Sharing accommodation in all Hotel/Resort with daily breakfast as mentioned
- All sightseeing and long-distance transportation in private air-condition vehicle (cars/SUVs or mini/micro-van etc. depending on group size). This includes toll taxes, parking, allowance for driver, outstation overnight charges for the driver
- Entrance fee for the visit mentioned in the program
- Domestic flight ticket: Bagan - Mandalay
- English-speaking guides
- Horse-cart fee in Bagan
- Train Ticket: Yangon – Pyay, Upper Class (Reclining Chair)
- Beer/Soft Drink and snacks on the train on day 2
- Water and refreshing towels while touring
- All applicable government taxes

Excludes

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- International flight tickets
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance & vaccinations
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal clothing and equipment
- Tips for trip leader/guide, driver, hotel staff, and porters
- Items of personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, laundry, telephone calls and other unforeseen expenses
- Items/services not listed in the "included"
- Compulsory gala dinner on Christmas or New Year (if applicable)
- Extra expenses/payment for 'Optional' activities/programs if participated

Accommodation

Sule Shangri-La, Yangon

Continuously rated a favourite among guests for hosting excellence and thoughtful service, the Sule Shangri-La Yangon, consistently delivers above and beyond to the discerning customer seeking a blend of luxury with the warmth of home. Strategically located in the heart of downtown, in walking distance to shops and tourist sights.

Mingalar Garden Resort, Pyay

Mingalar Garden Resort was built in 1996 and situated in the 55-acre green lush Kyarpyan compound Pyay (Promé) which is only 180 miles from Yangon. Feeling of peace and tranquility is unmistakable in our enchanting bungalows that are constructed around the "Natural Spring Lake" and pleasant shady tropical trees. Rooms of our resort are fully furnished with modern facilities.

My River View Hotel, Magway

My River View Hotel is a classic 5-storey hotel which has the best location in Magway. We offer two type of rooms - Minbu Pagoda View and River View. Our River View rooms are one of the best in Magway. We are located about 5 min away from Myathalwin Pagoda, the beauty of Magway.

Myanmar Treasure Resort, Bagan

Surrounded by swaying palms and landscaped gardens, the hotel complex is a graceful blend of traditional and contemporary elegance. Its traditionally crafted bamboo-tiled lobby has its walls and columns lavishly adorned with lacquer artwork. Imposing teak columns and beams provide a majestic style restaurant, overlooking the terrace bar and swimming pool.



Ayarwaddy River View Hotel, Mandalay

Opened in 2011, Ayarwaddy River View Hotel is just 15 minutes to Mandalay center, flower market, 60 minutes from the airport. Ideally located in the prime touristic area of Northern Mandalay, the hotel is in an easy access to the city's myriad attractions and landmarks, such as Mayan Chan Jetty, Thiri Mandala Bus Station (for Monywa, Shwebo), Chanthaya Paya.

Group/Individual

On this trip you will be traveling privately with your family & friends. Our representative/tour partner will look after your transfers to and from the airport and will be around to answer other questions you may have about your trip.

Accommodation – Hotel, Resort

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a fine heritage hotel in another or a family-run guesthouse or lodges in a smaller town. Accommodation in

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remote areas tend to be basic and may not have western amenities.

Single Accommodation

Single (room) supplements are provided on request (single supplement charge applies) and are subject to availability.

Food & Transport

Breakfasts are included throughout the trip.

Generally, eating out in Myanmar is inexpensive. Where food is not included, you should allow about approximately US\$8-10) per lunch or dinner. However, if you choose to dine in fine/expensive restaurants please allocate more than our suggested amount.

For airport, sightseeing transfers, and for long drives we use a private air-con car, jeep, van depending upon group size.

Weather

Weather in Myanmar is predominantly tropical and has three distinct seasons: cool, hot and rainy. November to February are the cooler months that have the easiest and most comfortable weather to travel across all of Burma. Clear skies and lower temperatures are fairly steady throughout the whole country, which is usually lush green from the just-passed monsoon. If travelling during March to May, be prepared for the heat, no matter where you are, and expect to be more comfortable in upper-central, north and west Burma more so than other areas. During the rainy season of June through October, avoid travelling through the south, as the islands tend to shut down their transportation, and join the people heading anywhere north of Yangon.

Baggage Allowance

The standard baggage weight limit on international flights (generally from Europe) is one checked baggage of 25kg (55lb) and hand baggage 7kg (15lbs). However, if your journey involves domestic

connecting flights weight limit can be limited/restricted. We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage. Luggage allowances for both hand and checked luggage are subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure or purchasing your flight tickets.

ESSENTIAL/PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passport & Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for EU passport holders, and other nationalities should check with the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Visas are required to enter Myanmar if you are German and for most other nationalities. Visa information/regulation might change; therefore, for the latest information on applying for a visa please follow these links for more information.

An electronic visa (e-Visa) is also available and you can find further information on this link: <https://evisa.moip.gov.mm/>. Please note, e-Visas are not accepted at all border checkpoints when travelling overland.

Please note: Visa regulations can change without notice, therefore please check the current regulations or contact us.

Vaccination & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and

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knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad and enjoy holidays to the fullest.

There are no required vaccinations. However, recommended vaccinations include hepatitis A, tetanus, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis B, Japanese encephalitis, rabies and tuberculosis. You will also need a yellow fever vaccination certificate if you're arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever transmission or transiting for more than 12 hours through a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Please confirm your vaccine recommendations and requirements with your doctor or travel clinic.

Dengue fever, a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes, is a known risk in places visited. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available, so take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

Local Time

GMT/UTC + 6:30.

Electricity

230 volts AC, 50 Hz. There are three plug types in Myanmar - A, C, D, G & I. Plug type A is the plug which has two flat parallel pins, type C plug has two round pins, plug D has three round pins in a triangular pattern, plug type G is with three rectangular pins, in a triangular pattern and type I has three flat pins in triangular pattern. There are recharging facilities at most of the hotels, but electricity supply may not be 100% reliable.

ATM | Credit Cards

ATMs are available in Yangon and in some other major towns. While using ATM please be mindful of your surroundings.

Not all ATMs and banks accept foreign debit and credit cards. Check with your bank before you leave. Credit cards are not widely accepted, but some hotels and businesses in larger cities will accept them.

To get the best exchange rates for Kyat, bigger denominations Euro/US\$ that are in pristine conditions (no fold, no mark, no tear, no stain) are required.

Extra Expenses & Spending Money

You will need to bring some extra money to cover drinks, laundry, souvenirs and any other personal expense, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Though it totally depends on individual but generally an approximate (rough estimate) amount of Euro 150 (US\$165) per person, per week should be sufficient (more if you enjoy a few beers); however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount. Or if you are the one frugal with money probably allocating less would also be suffice.

Optional Tours may be offered in some city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each optional tour/activity will be arranged locally by our local partner/guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

Tipping

Myanmar is one of the few Southeast Asian counties where tips are traditionally not expected, but it's always appreciated. If you are happy with the service, you are welcome to tip. This will include tips for drivers, porters and other hotel staff, local sightseeing guides/escort.

Itinerary Change

In case of some unusual events/incidents the order of programs (sightseeing, excursions etc.) might have to change in order to accommodate the local situations. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements while maintaining the overall integrity of your trip.

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The domestic airlines (if your program includes) may change their schedule frequently and, in such cases, our local partner/guide will inform you about the changes.

Travel Insurance

We highly recommend to choose/get an insurance plan/policy that covers your requirements/needs. And please make sure to keep/carry a hard-copy of your travel insurance documents on your person while on tour. It's prudent to check thoroughly the inclusions and procedure to file claims prior to purchasing insurance coverage. *travel-to-nature Asia* will not be responsible for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to purchase appropriate travel insurance from the date of booking.

Important Information

On all guided trips although our guides (leaders) are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorize them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.
