Trip Notes

Myanmar Comprehensive Birding & Cultural Tour | 18 Days



This 18-day Myanmar Comprehensive Birding & Culture Tour will explore the major birding & culture sites of Myanmar. The whole point of the holiday is not only to search for Myanmar's endemic, near endemic birds, along with a number of other Southeast Asian & Himalayan species, but also to explore some of the most famous cultural sites of the country. We spend two days in Yangon with an opportunity to marvel at the incredible Shwedagon Pagoda and other historic buildings. Next morning we begin our introductory birding in the park of Hlawga on the outskirts of bustling Yangon in search of the localized Davison's Bulbul and other lowland forest birds. We fly north to Mandalay where we explore its main cultural highlights for two days. Leaving Mandalay, we travel southeast on a shot domestic flight that will carry us into the eastern mountains of Myanmar and arrive at the gateway airport of Heho, form where a short drive brings us to a former British hill station of Kalaw. We spend two days birding around Kalaw with the chance to see the highly localized near endemic Burmese Yuhina and along with other sought-after Asian mountain birds. We then head east towards Inle Lake and spend two days on the lake with opportunities of exploring its major cultural highlight and searching for some key birds of Inle Lake including Jerdon's Bushchat, Collared Myna and some water birds on the Lake. We depart Inle Lake on a short flight to the ancient city of Bagan with over 2000 ancient monuments dated from 9 th to 12th AD. Bagan is the richest archaeological site in Southeast Asia and spend two days with the chance of discovering the treasures of Bagan, along with the opportunity to locate Myanmar's endemic species and

other dry zone species. Departing Bagan, we take a long drive to the Natmataung national park in the Chin Hills. Biogeographically, the Chin Hills are the southernmost extension of the great Himalayan chain. We will stay for four nights at a fantastic mountain lodge set inside the national parks and spend three full days in the park, searching for endemics including highly sought-after endemic White-browed Nuthatch, a number of widespread Asian mountain birds and Himalayan species. After spending four nights in the park, we make our way back to Bagan with an overnight stay there before spending a final night back in Yangon. We conclude our fascinating cultural & birding tour with our guests being transferred back to Yangon International Airport for their International departure flight back home.

Trip Highlights

- You will see Myanmar's undamaged Birds with most of the endanger species of the country on popular tour sites as Hlawgar, Bagan, Kanpetlet & Mount Victoria, Inle Lake. So you can make birding and sightseeing on the same tour
- Bird watching and adventure trip to Kanpetlet and Mt. Victoria
- Try to spot endangered species of birds in Natmataung National Park – home of some of the world's rarest bird species
- Private Myanmar tour of Yangon, Hlawga Wildlife Park, Mandalay, Bagan, Kanpalet and Mount Victoria, Inle Lake
- 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

bage.



- Enjoy a boat trip and discover the Intha people life style and meet the incredible leg rowers of Myanmar using unique technique to capture fish on Inle Lake
- World's largest gilded pagoda of Shwedagon, Royal palace of ancient Burmese Kings, World's largest Book, World's largest ringing bell, World's longest wooden bridge, Leg-rowers of Inle Lake, over 2000 ancient temples of Bagan, Tattoofaced women & friendly people

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.

Those of us who are arriving by mid-afternoon will have the opportunity to visit the massive, gilded Shwedagon Pagoda, a stunning sight, and still a vital center of the Buddhists in Myanmar. Overnight stay in Yangon.

Accommodation: 8 Mile Hotel

Day 2: Vist Hlawga National Park

Getting out from our hotel in the early morning, we begin our birding tour with an orientation drive heading north toward the park of Hlawga on the outskirts of bustling Yangon and spend the day exploring the mixed lowland forest in the park, targeting the sought-after bird of Davison's Bulbul (an upcoming split from Stripe-throated Bulbul), along with other interesting lowland species including Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Racket-tailed Treepie, Thick-billed Green Pigeon, Black-naped Oriole, Olivebacked Sunbird, and Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker. In the late afternoon, drive back to Yangon and an overnight stay in Yangon.

Accommodation: 8 Mile Hotel Meal: Breakfast

Day 3: Fly Yangon - Mandalay (1:25 hrs) | Cultural Sightseeing

Departing Yangon, we travel north on a domestic flight to Mandalay, the last Burmese capital of Kounbaung Dynasty. We spend the day in Mandalay exploring the main highlights of the city including Mahamuni pagoda, Golden Place monastery, Kyauktawgyi Pagoda and Kuthodaw pagoda. Enjoy sunset from Mandalay Hill providing an opportunity to see spectacular overlooking view of Mandalay city. After soaking up the sight, we return to our hotel for the overnight stay.

Accommodation: Bagan King Hotel Meal: Breakfast



Day 4: Sightseeing in Mandalay

In the morning, we take a relaxing boat excursion (1hour) up the Ayeyarwaddy River to the village of Mingun. Upon arrival we pay visits to the world's largest intact bronze bell, 3.7 meters high and also visit the huge unfinished Mingun pagoda and the beautiful Hsinbyume Paya. After sightseeing in Mingun we return to Mandalay.

In the afternoon, we make our way to the former capital of Inwa(AVA) to pay visits by horse cart to Maha Aungmye Bonzan monastery, build of brick and stucco and Bagayar monastery, famous for its impressive woodcarvings and its teak posts and then on to the leaning Watch Tower. After sightseeing in Innwa we continue to Amarapura to take a leisurely stroll along the 200-year-old U Bein Teak Bridge (the



world's longest teak bridge) and enjoy the sunset from there. Afterwards we drive back to Mandalay and stay overnight stay in Mandalay.

Accommodation: Bagan King Hotel Meal: Breakfast

Day 5-6: Fly Mandalay - Heho | Drive to Kalaw (38 km | 48 min) | Birding in Kalaw

Leaving Mandalay, we travel southeast on a short domestic flight that carries us into the eastern mountains of Myanmar and arrive at Heho, the only gateway airport to southern Shan State, from where a short drive brings us to the former colonial hill station of Kalaw. We spend two days birding in the best birding sites around Kalaw. These birding spots afford us the chance of seeing the highly localized near endemic Burmese Yuhina, along with other highly sought-after species such as Dark-backed Sibia, Bay Woodpecker, Black-backed Sibia, Yunnan Fulvetta, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Silver-eared Mesia, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Black Throated Sunbird, Spot-throated Babbler, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babblers, Whitebrowed Scimitar Babbler ,Spectacled Barwing, Spotbreasted Parrotbill, Green Shrike Babblers, Blackheaded Greenfinch and Silver-eared Laughingthrush etc. We spend two nights in Kalaw.

Accommodation: Royal Kalaw Hills Resort Meal: Breakfast



Day 7: A drive to Inle Lake (72 km | 1.30 hrs) | Cultural Sightseeing

Early in the morning we take a drive to the Inle Lake and spend the day exploring the cultural highlights on the lake with a visit to the pagoda of Phaung Daw Oo, one of the famous principal shrines in Myanmar, followed by a visit to black smith and silver smith workshops, small factories of weaving, cheroot, paper umbrella, and boat factory.

After lunch we continue our afternoon sightseeing with a visit around Nga Phe Chaung village and Jumping Cat Monastery. The sightseeing on the lake will give you opportunities to see one-legged boat rowers, their amazing fishing method and their floating gardens. After sightseeing we return to our hotel, we stay overnight stay in Inle.

Accommodation: 81 Hotel Inlay Meal: Breakfast

Day 8: Bird watching in Inle

We spend the day birding by boat on the lake of Inle, the second largest fresh water lake in the country. The ecosystem of the freshwater lake is home to over 200 bird species and about 79 migratory birds, targeting the highly localized Jerdon's Bushchat, Chinese Grass-babbler and near-endemic Collared Myna, along with a bounty of other wetland species. A unique feature of the lake is its famous leg-rowers who stand on a tiny boat and use one leg to row an oar, which you cannot find anywhere else in the world. You will also have the chance of seeing the leg-rowers during our birding by book on the lake and stay overnight stay in Inle.

Accommodation: 81 Hotel Inlay Meal: Breakfast

Day 9: Fly Heho - Bagan (45 Min) | Cultural Sightseeing

In this morning we transfer to the Heho airport, from where a short domestic flight takes you to ancient city of Bagan dotted with over 2000 ancient temples and pagodas dating back from 9th to 13th century. We spend the day exploring the highlights of Bagan including Shwezigon pagoda, Wetkyiin Gubyaukgyi





Temple with fine mural paintings of Jataka scenes, Kyansittha Umin.

After lunch we explore the old city of Bagan with visits to small home-based lacquer ware workshops to learn about the making processes of lacquarwares. Afterwards proceed to the beautiful Ananda Temple, the architectural masterpiece, Thatbyinnyu Temple, the tallest in Bagan and Gawdawpalin Temple, Htilominlo Temple, noted for its plaster carving and Tharaba Gate, Damanyangyi Temple, the biggest massive structure with the finest brickwork. We spend some time at a temple to watch a beautiful sunset from the temple. After our evening sightseeing, we return to our hotel and stay overnight at a hotel in Bagan.

Accommodation: Arthawka Hotel Meal: Breakfast

Day 10-11: Bird watching in Bagan

We enjoy our two full day birding among those countless red brick temple and pagodas, searching for its dry zone's specialties including the six Myanmar's endemic such as Burmese Bushlark, White-throated Babbler, Ayeyawady Bulbul, Burmese Collared-Dove, Jerdon's Minivet and Hooded Treepie. Other targets in this dry zone will include Rain Quail, Laggar Falcon, Spotted Owlet, wintering Eurasian Wryneck, Thickbilled Warbler, Purple Sunbird, Burmese Shrike, Brown Prinia, Vinous-breasted Starling and Plainbacked Sparrow.

On one of the afternoons, we'll take a short boat trip to a grassy island in the middle of Irrawaddy River to search for its specialties such as River Lapwing, Yellow-eyed and Striated Babblers, desirable Whitetailed Stonechat, and Yellow-breasted Bunting. If time permits while we are in Bagan, we'll have the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful sunset from an upper terrace of the temple, making it an unforgettable travel experience. We spend two nights at the hotel in Bagan.

Accommodation: Arthawka Hotel Meal: Breakfast

Day 12: Overland journey to Mt.Victoria

Leaving Bagan behind, we take a long drive heading west towards the national park of Natmataung in the Chin Hills, in which the seldom-visited Mt. Victoria is situated. The Chin Hills are mountain ranges that consist of a southern extension of the eastern Himalayas. We make our way through Nagabwet Forest Reserve and see the landscape gradually grow moister. We make some stops along the way to see the scarce and habitat-specific White-rumped Falcon, along with other lowland specialties.

On arriving in the small town of Kanpetlet in the late afternoon or evening, we stay at a mountain lodge (for four nights) set inside the national park, situated at about 1,400 m (4,200 ft) above sea level. (Note: It's situated about 136 miles from Bagan and it'll take about 5-6 hour drive or more depending on the time you spend birding along the way to Kanpetlet). We stay overnight at a hotel in Kanpetlet.

Accommodation: Sky Palace Villa Meal: Breakfast



Day 13-15: Birding in Mt.Victoria

We spend three full days birding in the Natmataugn National Park that is ornithologically considered to be the best birding region of the country for a variety of habitats ranging from mixed oak and rhododendron forest, montane bamboo, pine forest, thick secondary growth with tall grass and scrub, semi-cultivated fields and grasslands. We concentrate our efforts on searching for highly sought-after endemic Whitebrowed Nuthatch, Burmese Tit and along with other

Asian mountain birds & widespread Himalayan species including Striped, Assam, and Brown-capped Laughingthrushes, "Mount Victoria" Chinese Babax, Rusty-capped Fulvetta, Streak-throated Barwing, Gray-sided Thrush, Spot breasted Parrotbills, Collared Finchbill, Chin Hills Wren-Babbler, Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker, Darjeeling Woodpeckers, Great and Golden-throated Barbets, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Himalayan Cutia, Green-tailed, Mrs. Gould's, and Fire-tailed Sunbirds, Gray Sibia, White-browed Fulvetta, Bar-throated, Blue-winged, and Red-tailed Minlas, Black-headed, White browed, Green, and Black-eared Shrike-Babblers, Yellow-billed Blue Magpie. We will watch for some raptors like Crested Goshawk, Black and Rufous-bellied Eagles, Himalayan Buzzard, and much more. We spend three nights at the hotel in Kanpetlet.

Accommodation: Sky Palace Villa Meal: Breakfast

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 Yellownape, 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 17: Fly Bagan - Yangon (1 hr)

A private transfer will take you to the Nyaung Oo airport, where we will board our domestic flight back to Yangon. Enjoy your free time at your hotel in Yangon or do your own discovery. (Those who arrive by late-afternoon on their first arrival day in Yangon will have the opportunity to visit Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon today (on Day-17). We stay overnight at the hotel in Yangon.

Accommodation: 8 Mile Hotel Meal: Breakfast



Day 18: Depart Yangon

Enjoy your free time at your hotel before your transfer to Yangon International 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 as mentioned or similar
- Daily breakfast throughout the trip, 1Picnic lunch on day3 & 1 welcome Dinner
- All sightseeing and long-distance transportation in a private air-conditioned vehicle (cars/SUVs or mini/micro-van etc. depending on group size). This includes toll taxes, parking, allowance for the driver, outstation overnight charges for the driver
- Boat ticket Sihanouk Ville Koh Rong Island Sihanouk Ville
- Visit the Temples by Tuk Tuk
- Visit by Bambou train in Battambang
- Sunset boat cruise in Kampot
- Visit by private local boat on Tonle Sap Lake / Kampong Pluk stilts Houses
- Transfer from Kampot Koh Rong Island Phnom Penh by private car without guide



- A professional English speaking guide
- Tour with entrance fees as specified
- Mineral water during excursion 3 bottles/Person/Day
- Government tax and service charge

Excludes

- 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

8 Mile Hotel, Yangon

You will experience first class service with wellappointed guest rooms with a team of dedicated staff. Located in the business area, we are within easy reach of a wide variety of restaurants, department stores, shopping malls and money exchangers. Designed to facilitate both tourists and business guests alike, we offer charm and comfort in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere.

Bagan King Hotel, Mandalay

Bagan King is a boutique hotel of unique decor located in the heart of Mandalay, attended by a friendly and dedicated staff. Bagan King is a unique traditional style six-storey building. Traditional dark wood furnishings also dominate the guest room interiors, with décor inspired by local Mandalay handicrafts: wood carvings, bronze casting and rich tapestry.

Royal Kalaw Hills Resort, Kalaw

Fourteen boutique rooms of our hotel offers with grace and elegant a place to enjoy the mountain view from every room. All rooms have open fire compartment and mixed with antique and modern furniture. All day dining is available with Myanmar, Shan, Chinese and European cuisines.



81 Hotel Inlay, Inle

81 Hotel Inlay is in a great location, many nearby attractions, including Nyaung Shwe Market, Nyaung Shwe Jetty, Lavender - SPA & Beauty center, Bamboo Delight Cooking School, Aung Puppet Show. The 22 tastefully furnished rooms offer peace and tranquility. We offer a sophisticated blend of contemporary Burmese style, contemporary comfort and privileged services.

Arthawka Hotel, Bagan

Being one of the best quality hotels in New Bagan, featuring great service, well-appointed rooms, an outdoor pool, and a cozy restaurant, Arthawka Hotel Bagan is the top choice for a perfect stay to discovery the beauty of Bagan. Arthawka Hotel Bagan is

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strategically located in the city centre of New Bagan with 59 generous size rooms.

Sky Palace Villa, Mt Victoria

Sky Palace Villa offers the panoramic view of Chin Mountains, and it is the preferred year round getaway for guests visiting Mt. Victoria. Sky Palace Villa has 26 accommodation units to choose from. Whether you are looking for comfort and value in the newly constructed traditional-style villa as well, we provides a variety of lodging to suit your needs.



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 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 justpassed 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 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 dominations 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.

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.