

Myanmar (Burma) – The Golden Land

Tour Code BU

This extraordinary journey discovers the rich cultural heritage of this diverse country and its peoples, beginning in the city of Yangon, formerly Rangoon, with its glorious array of architectural wonders including the famous Shwedagon Pagoda. Known today as *Suvanabhomi*, the Golden Land, Burma is a land of beauty and inspiration and the Burmese are a gentle and serene people with a deep-rooted belief in Buddhism and spirit worship, which is reflected in the thousands of beautiful pagodas in ancient Bagan and the monasteries of Mandalay, highlights of our trip. The tour finishes at the beautiful Inle Lake, famous for its floating villages and gardens and the leg-rowers of the Intha tribe



Sunrise over Bagan temples
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Day 1 Fly to Yangon

Fly from London to Yangon (formerly Rangoon) via Bangkok

Day 2 Arrive Yangon

Arrive Yangon and transfer to the Taw Win Garden hotel for two nights. After lunch we visit Kandawgyi Park, to see the glittering Karaweik barge, a replica of the royal barge. We continue to Shwedagon Pagoda the most revered Buddhist temple in Myanmar. The original structure was built 2500 years ago then renovated several times until taking its current shape in the 15th century. The 8-sided central stupa is 99 meters tall and gilded with gold leaf and is surrounded by 64 smaller stupas. Welcome dinner at a quality local restaurant (L,D)

Day 3 In Yangon

We start the day at Kyaukhtatgyi Pagoda. Not so much a pagoda as a pavilion (called *tazaung* in Burmese), Kyaukhtatgyi is home to an impressive 70-metre long reclining Buddha we visit the Kalaywa Monastery which is home to one thousand monks. In his lifetime a Burmese male is expected to spend some of his life serving as a Monk to learn the ways of Buddhism. We will be able to observe the late morning procession to collect alms and learn about the monks' way of life. After lunch we return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure before a late afternoon cocktail cruise along the Yangon River, passing fishermen, local ferry boats and riverside villages (B,L,D)

Day 4 Fly to Mandalay. Visit Pyin Oo Lwin

Early morning flight to Mandalay, famous for its old monasteries, the city is a showcase for Burmese art and architecture of the 19th century. Two hour journey to Pyin Oo Lwin, a former British hill station called Maymyo. We take a horse drawn cart to see the grand colonial heritage of the town and its nearby plantations. In the afternoon we visit the National Kandawgyi Botanical Gardens and the colonial hotel at Candacraig, George Orwell's residence whilst writing *Burmese Days*. Overnight at the Pyin Oo Lwin hotel. Dinner at a local restaurant (B,L,D)

Day 5 Train journey. Drive to Mandalay.

We take a scenic three hour train journey that crosses the famous Gokteik Viaduct which spans a 300-meter deep gorge in the Shan mountains. The views from the train are spectacular. We return to Mandalay with lunch at a local restaurant along the way. This afternoon we visit the famous Mahamuni Pagoda and Shwe Kyaung (Golden Palace) Monastery before heading to the top of Mandalay Hill for sunset views of the surrounding countryside, Irrawaddy River and city centre. Two nights at the Bagan King hotel. Dinner at a local restaurant (B,L,D)

Day 6 In Mandalay

We visit the local jade market before the short journey to Ava, once the capital, to visit the old wooden Bagaya Monastery and the remains of the Royal Palace and Fort by horse and carriage. After lunch we stop at Amarapura, a former capital whose name means 'City of Immortality', and U Bein Bridge for a walk along this 200 year-old teak bridge. The bridge was constructed of 984 teak posts that were once part of the deserted Inwa Palace and it is 1.2 kilometers in length making it the longest teak bridge in the world. Dinner at a local restaurant (B,L,D)

Day 7 Irrawaddy river cruise to Bagan

After a leisurely breakfast we depart our hotel at mid morning and board the RV Orient Pandaw; a luxury cruise boat

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built in 2008, beautifully furnished and still intimate with a full capacity of only 60 passengers. The RV Orient has the ability to dock anywhere along the journey enabling guests to explore villages well off the beaten track. After setting sail from Mandalay we cruise all day. In the afternoon we stop at the old colonial village of Sameikkon. All meals and overnight aboard *RV Orient* (B,L,D)

Day 8 Arrive Bagan. Visit Temples

Early in the morning we proceed down river to Bagan. After breakfast we arrive at Bagan, and disembark to spend our time among the serene landscape of ancient pagodas and temples that date from the 11th century, during the time Bagan was the capital of the First Burmese Empire. There are over 2,000 in the region and we visit the most culturally significant and best preserved among them including the shimmering Shwezigon temple, the frescoed Gubyaukgyi temple, Htilominlo and Tayoke Paya pagodas. We will also visit a colourful farmers market in a nearby town and learn about the art of laquerware crafting. Two nights at the Shwee Yee Pwint hotel in Bagan (B,L,D)

Day 9 In Bagan

We continue our tour of the majestic site this morning with visits to the Lawkawand Pagoda, Payathonazu Temple and Apyeyardara. Later we visit one of the Bagan village homes to meet a local family and gain an insight into their way of life here. This afternoon we return to the site of the temples and are taken by horse drawn cart to explore the area from a different perspective and to truly appreciate the beauty of Bagan from a pagoda rooftop to see the panoramic view of the temples at sunset. Evening puppet show with dinner (B,L,D)

Day 10 Visit Inle Lake

This morning we fly to Heho, to spend time along the shores of the Inle Lake, famous for its Inthas (native lake-dwellers) with a unique way of rowing with their legs. En route we see the wooden Shwe Yan Pyay Monastery which features beautiful carvings and a collection of Buddha images. After lunch we visit the Red Mountain Winery for a tasting of locally produced reds and whites before we board a private motorboat to head out onto Inle Lake, one of Myanmar's most spectacular sights. We pass villages built on stilts over the lake, inhabited by the local Intha people and see their floating gardens built up from strips of water hyacinth and mud and anchored to the bottom with bamboo poles. Two nights at the Pristine Lotus Floating Resort with dinner. (B,L,D)

Day 11 Visit Insein Temples, Inle Lake area

We visit a colourful market with a variety of ethnic minorities dressed in their traditional costumes buying and selling produce before continuing to the beautiful temples of Insein, wonderfully situated overlooking the tranquility of Inle Lake. These temples are unusually similar to Khmer in style and date back to 17th century Shan period. After lunch we explore the local crafts of Inle Lake with a stop at the weaving village of Inpawkhone and a cheroot factory, where the typical Burmese cigars are made by hand before a walk through one of Inle's lakeside villages (B,L,D)

Day 12 Return to Yangon

After an early morning flight to Yangon we take walking tour downtown to see the architectural heritage of Yangon including religious landmarks and colonial-era buildings. We end at Bogyoke Market, formerly known as Scott's Market, Yangon's best market for handicrafts and other goods. After lunch. Our farewell dinner tonight is at Le Planteur Restaurant, the finest French Indochinese restaurant in Burma, and former historical ministerial residence built in 1932 (B,L,D)

Day 13 In Rangoon. Fly London

Morning at leisure before we transfer to the international airport for our flight to Bangkok (B)

Cost £2495.00 per person in a twin room (excluding international flight) Single supplement cost £595.00



Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by *Patrick Syder FRGS*
- ▶ Burmese guide for the duration of the tour
- ▶ Three domestic flights with a local carrier
- ▶ One night Irrawaddy luxury cruise aboard *RV Orient*
- ▶ All transportation by bus, boat, trishaw and horse cart
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Comfortable three star privately owned accommodation
- ▶ Full board meals in hotel or local privately owned restaurants
- ▶ Airport transfers
- ▶ Bottled water daily
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

PLEASE NOTE – personal travel insurance, applicable visa fees, alcoholic drinks, guide and driver gratuities, international flights are not included in the land tour cost (international flights start from £850.00 through Flight Centre UK) (Included meals denoted by B Breakfast, L Lunch and D Dinner)