



The Spiritual Land | A Photographic Journey

YANGON | BAGAN | KALAW | INLE LAKE | PYIN-OO-LWIN | HSIPAW | MANDALAY | NGAPALI



Day 1 | Arrive Yangon

"The surfaces are shabby, but the shapes are extravagant and the decrepitude of the buildings in Rangoon is almost grand." —Paul Theroux

Arrive into the former capital Yangon. After disembarking, descend to the ground floor of the terminal to retrieve your luggage, then pass through customs and immigration (visa required before arrival*) and meeting escort for introductions. Afterwards, transfer to our colonial-era mansion hotel in the leafy embassy quarter of the city (about 50 minutes).



After time to freshen up, gather for introductions and orientation in the pleasant garden atmosphere of the Governor's Residence. In the afternoon, exploring of Yangon's central sights, including colonial-era Scott Market, Sule Pagoda, and the Indian Quarter which comes alive at dusk echoing street scenes reminiscent of Kolkata or Mumbai.



This evening, the General manager and staff of the Governor's will welcome us with cocktails before dinner on the veranda.

***MYANMAR VISA REQUIRED IN ADVANCE OF ARRIVAL (PROVIDED BY DIVE DISCOVERY)**

 **GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE** *Governor's Room*

 Cocktails with the Governor's G.M. followed by Dinner at the Governor's.



Kyo-so-ba-thi (welcome) to Yangon!

Hello, my name is Min Win based here in Yangon where I will be monitoring your trip. After eight years as an engineer in Texas, I returned to be with my family and experience the new changes in my country which I am delighted to share with travelers. My older sister Tin Tin or I will be in contact with you during your time here, but please don't hesitate to call me anytime on my mobile phone at (959) 515 8255.

—Min



☁ November through February, followed by June, are the most pleasant months of the year in the country, when low-land Myanmar has just begun warming up with dry weather typically into the 70s. At altitude, such as Inle Lake, expect chilly temperatures dipping into the low 60s and even 50s at night and mornings (long underwear recommended with light fleece and jeans for the chilly mornings on the water).

Yangon Climate												
Temp (°F)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Average high	90	94	97	99	92	86	85	85	87	89	90	89
Average low	64	67	70	76	77	76	75	75	76	76	66	72
Days w/rain	< 1	< 1	< 1	2	13	25	26	26	20	12	5	< 1
Precip (inches)	< 1	< 1	< 1	2	12	22	22	23	14	8	2	< 1

📖 **Book to pack:** *From the Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey*

A Burmese Odyssey by Pascal Khoo Thwe (autobiography). The incredible and unlikely tale of a Padaung hilltribe boy who went on to become a rebel and eventually make his way to England to attend college. "In 1988 Dr John Casey, a Cambridge don visiting Burma, was told of a waiter in Mandalay with a passion for the works of James Joyce. Intrigued by this unlikely story, he visited the restaurant, where he met Pascal Khoo Thwe. The encounter was to change both their lives.

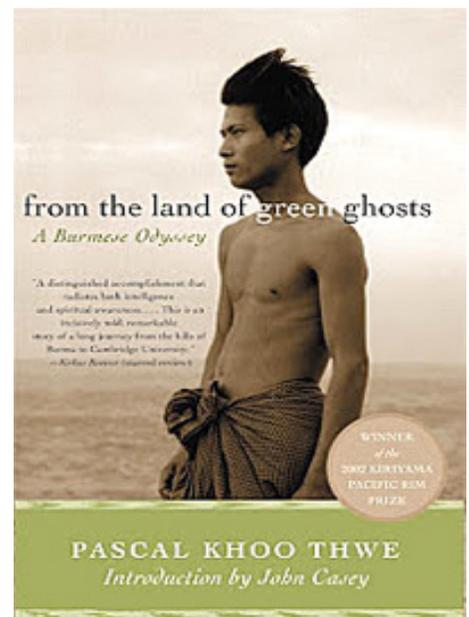
Pascal grew up as a member of the tiny, remote Kayan Padaung tribe, famous for their 'giraffe necked' women. The Padaung practiced a combination of ancient animist and Buddhist customs mixed with the Catholicism introduced by Italian missionaries. Theirs was a dream culture, a world in which ancestors were worshiped and ghosts were a constant presence. Pascal was the first member of his community ever to study English at university. But in Burma, English books were rare, and independent thought was discouraged. Photocopies of the few approved texts would be passed from student to student, while tuition consisted of lecturers reciting essays that the students learned by rote."

Indochina Travel Comments: "A favorite book on Myanmar and a must read if visiting the Shan State. Vivid descriptions of rural life and customs in and around Inle Lake and the Shan State, capturing the struggle of local peoples during a tumultuous period of revolution and modernization. Trivia note: Pascal is from the famous Palaung tribe (long-necks)." —Patrick Morris

📖 More: [Myanmar Reading list](#)



Yangon Art Encounter





Much as Vietnam's now-flourishing art scene was a decade ago, Burmese artists are scattered across the city typically working out of their homes and there are only a handful of galleries yet they are begin to be noticed. [The River Valley](#), owned by New Zealander ex-pat Gill Pattison is a obvious place to begin, centrally located in the Strand Annex, Ms. Patterson can also speak about here six years in Yangon and her experiences with the local artist community. An important stop in the community is a visit with Aung Myint in his [Inya Gallery](#). Myint has exhibited since the 1960s and is considered a pioneer in experimental art, rejecting traditional romanticism and confronting social and critical issues through a range of distinctive styles and media. Aye Ko's [New Zero Art Space](#) features a wide range of Burmese artists and manages an artist-in-residence program, under which foreign artists visit and share ideas with Burmese art students. Non-traditional galleries and artist studios around the city to be visited by preference.

 [Read more on Burmese artists](#)



Day 2 | Yangon to Bagan

“Then, a golden mystery upheaved itself on the horizon, a beautiful winking wonder that blazed in the sun, of a shape that was neither Muslim dome nor Hindu temple-spire. It stood upon a green knoll, and below it were lines of warehouses, sheds, and mills. Under what new god, thought I, are we irrepressible English sitting now?” — Rudyard Kipling



Before sunrise, visiting Shwe Dagon Pagoda ("Great Dagon Pagoda" or "Golden Pagoda"), symbol of the country and most important religious monument, and at about 2,500 years old, one of the world's oldest. Here, we may circumnavigate the stupa as monks arrive to chant and pray, enjoy meeting with them this first full day in Myanmar as introduction to the country's deep spirituality that permeates its culture. After Shwedagon, visiting a nearby tea shop to sample delicious sweet milk tea and people watch.

After tea with your guide, begin formal exploration of the city, visiting notable religious monuments, including Sule Pagoda, the large golden stupa in the city center and focal point for the country's most recent political protests during the "saffron revolution;" Chaukhtatkyi Pagoda, with its famous colossal reclining Buddha; and the National Museum, rich with an abundance of artifacts and cultural exhibits of Myanmar, offering an interesting introduction to the country and its history; Botataung Pagoda a famous landmark of the capital on Yangon's waterfront which retains many ancient, sacred relics.

 At the moment, Yangon does not have many international-caliber restaurants. Top options include [Le Planteur](#), offering pleasant tropical garden dining, the [50th Street](#) bistro/pub, Indian at Ashoka or sophisticated Thai at Sabai Sabai.

If you are staying at the Governors, the setting for dinner overlooking the garden and pond is unmatched in the city. Myanmar's varied cuisine ([read our culinary background of the country](#)) comes alive in local markets, sampling tasty dishes, sipping sweet tea and coffee with the locals in a tea shop, and enjoying a traditional curry lunch. From the sweet (fried donuts) to the strange (fermented tea leaf salad), you'll get a chance to try it all.

 For a delightful introduction to Burmese cooking, [watch Luke Nguyen's video](#) on making mohinga, the country's national dish in Yangon, browsing markets, reviewing ingredients and preparation of this delicious seafood-broth

soup made in variations throughout the country (Luke, right).

 *Yangon Architour: The former British colonial capital has the highest number of colonial period buildings in Southeast Asia and downtown Yangon is still mainly made up of decaying colonial buildings. The former [High Court](#), the former [Secretariat buildings](#), the former [St. Paul's English High School](#) and the [Strand Hotel](#) are excellent examples of the bygone era. Despite their less-than-perfect conditions, the buildings remain highly sought after and most expensive in the city's property market. In 1996, the Yangon City Development Committee created a [Yangon City Heritage List](#) of old buildings and structures in the city that cannot be modified or torn down without approval and in 2012, the city of Yangon imposed a 50-year moratorium on demolition of buildings older than 50 years. The [Yangon Heritage Trust](#), an NGO started by author Thant Myint-U (*The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma*) aims to create heritage areas in Downtown, and attract investors to renovate buildings for commercial use.*



 *At sunset, the streets and alleys of the Indian Quarter near Sule Pagoda (within walking distance of the Sule Shangri-La Hotel), come alive with street stalls, vendors, and pop-up cafes in a scene straight out places like Kolkata.*

B A G A N



"The whole, as seen from the river, might pass for a scene in another planet, so fantastic and unearthly was the architecture." —Henri Yule, one of the first Westerners to see Bagan in 1855.

You will savor similar views flying into the plains, spying the hundreds of red brick stupas and temples dotting the landscape, before landing close by to the temples. After arrival, check-in to resort, enjoying lunch on the veranda overlooking adjacent temples. Afterwards, climbing up the Bagan Viewing Platform next to the resort to admire panoramic views over the area while your guide provides an introduction on the history of the area.

Depending on time of arrival, balance of afternoon exploring primary and secondary temples, by preference. As the day wanes visiting Bupaya, a Pyu-style stupa which is located on the banks of the Irrawaddy River and strolling through the small market nearby. Dinner spots in Bagan are limited and we suggest considering your resort as first choice.

 **AUREUM BAGAN** *Lotus Villa*



Day 3 | Bagan



At sunrise, enjoying a thrilling one-hour, untethered balloon ride, drifting low over one of the world's most astonishing archaeological sites, taking in the spectacular, breathtaking tableau as the morning sun light strikes the golden stupas and the hundreds of red brick temples on the plain beneath you.

After landing, begin formal sightseeing of the complex by car (we can also explore by local bicycle or horse cart this morning if you prefer), exploring several of Bagan's distinctive pagodas including Ananda, one of the finest, largest and best-preserved in Old Bagan with a display ornate murals of hundreds of scenes from past lives of the Buddha, and next to it, Ananda Ok Kyaung, one of the few surviving brick monastery buildings from the Early Bagan period.

Balance of day, visiting primary or secondary temples by preference, including the distinctive Dhammayangyi Pahto, a massive, later period temple with the finest brickwork in Bagan and typically empty in the late afternoons with a eerie wind blowing through the high, darkened corridors, and Wetkyi-in-Gubyaukgyi, a 13th-century "cave temple" with interesting fine frescoes, and Thatbyinnyu, Sulamani, and 11th-century Shwezigon Pagoda.





By preference, we can instead visit Sa Lay this afternoon, a significant religious outpost about one hour south of Bagan that developed during the Late Bagan period (12th and 13th centuries) where many working monasteries are located and unique and well-preserved buildings of rare wooden Bagan-style architecture. Here we'll spy the unique wooden carvings in Yokesone Kyaung, the hall of sports, while meeting with the young and friendly novice monks living in Salay. There is also a large market nearby along the river that we can stroll through.

As the day wanes, enjoying a scenic boat ride on the river upstream before return to dock and transfer to resort for dinner.



 History catalogs an astonishing long line of fifty-five kings ruling over the Myanmar kingdom during the span of twelve centuries. However, the monuments were erected mostly between the 11th and 13th centuries A.D., when Bagan was the seat of the Myanmar dynasty. This incredible period mimics that of the Khmers in Cambodia and begins with the reign of Anawrahta (1044-77 A.D.) who, in 1057, conquered the Thaton Kingdom which ruled present day Lower Burma between the 9th and 11th centuries, and brought back to his capital their Theravada scriptures, a large number of Buddhist monks, and artists and craftsmen of every description. From these Mon monks the Bagan people received their alphabet, religion, and scriptures and was from this momentous moment there began the extraordinary architectural and artistic activity which, in a little more than two centuries, covered the city and its environs with thousands of monuments of every shape and size. During this period an estimated 4,500 temples were built of which just over 2,000 still survive, spread over 40 square kilometers.





This morning, after sunrise photography and breakfast, driving through the picturesque countryside south along the Irrawaddy towards to Mount Popa (Home of the Gods) located in a national park about forty miles from Bagan. En route, we will pause in Chauk, a port town on the river with an interesting market, and after stop to visit nearby Salay, a significant religious outpost that developed during the Late Bagan period (12th and 13th centuries) where many working monasteries are located and unique and well-preserved buildings of Bagan-style architecture. Here we'll spy the unique wooden carvings in Yokesone Kyaung, the hall of sports, while spying monks living in Salay, an ideal setting for photography.



After, we head to Mount Popa, a striking, long-ago extinct volcanic vent that is held sacred by Burmese as as the home to animist spirits known as nats. Pilgrims from all over the country make the journey to

Mount Popa, as well as monks from around the region.

After arrival at our resort, situated up the hill from Mount Popa, we'll savor the fantastic views over the plain while enjoying lunch on the verandah.

Mid-afternoon, we'll begin hiking down to Popa through the jungle and then up the over seven hundred of steps to reach the summit of extinct volcano, exploring the temple at it's summit while taking in the stunning views of the area.

We'll meet and converse with resident monks about the history of Popa and as well as take photographs with them. After exploring Popa, a return hike back up to our hotel for sunset views over the plain before dinner at the resort.

Note: wild monkeys are aggressive and may try trying snatch things in your hand away.

 **POPA RESORT** *Deluxe Mountain View*



Day 5 | Mount Popa to Kalaw

After taking in magnificent sunrise views over the plain, we'll depart the resort to visit the small town nearby exploring the colorful morning market, spending time photographing this place other travelers seldom visit.



Today's overland trip takes across an arid plain and into the beautiful mountain vistas of the Shan State.



During our journey, we'll pause at small villages, monasteries, and temples en route to our final destination, the former British hillstation of Kalaw located in a tranquil small valley. Nearing Kalaw, there is an elephant sanctuary we'll also visit, a delightful experience in a scenic jungle area.

 **AMARA MOUNTAIN RESORT** *Deluxe*



Day 6 | Kalaw

Kalaw makes for a pleasant stopover during our trip, spending time at the local market where a diversity of the thirty three hilltribes that inhabit the Shan State come in from remote villages to trade and buy goods. There is also the original British train station here, where we will witness an arrival of the local train from seemingly out of the past.



Today we'll also enjoy a leisurely trek of a couple of hours into the mountains to visit a Palaung hilltribe village, accessible only by foot. Here we'll witness life largely as it has existed for centuries before returning to Kalaw for lunch.



In the afternoon, we'll return into town to enjoy another sweet milk tea that we've all become addicted to while photographing the central market area in the dusk light. In the evening, dinner on the verandah with views over the surroundings mountains.



Day 7 | Kalaw to Inle Lake

This morning, if the 5-day market is in town, or nearby Heho, we will explore and photograph the Shan State's largest market before driving onto the Inle Lake through the scenic hills into the Inle basin (about one hour). After arriving on [Inle Lake](#), freshening up before enjoying lunch with views over the lake from the resort.



In the afternoon, enjoying a pleasant first cruise on the lake observing the fisherman and floating villages. A picturesque sunset on the deck of the resort complement this first day in Inle, also wonderful setting for dinner.



Day 8 & 9 | Inle Lake



Over the next two days, exploring in and around and relaxing on sublime [Inle Lake](#) — boating and hiking in the most stunning landscapes in all of Myanmar; rising at dawn to witness fisherman rowing in the eccentric one-legged style; floating through villages built over the water on stilts with their unique, "floating islands," and docking for trekking into small villages in the hills surrounding the lake.

Each day, after savoring sunrise views of the lake, cruising by boat through the narrow, shallow canals to visit villages, traditional cottage industries, and temples. Local workshops produce paper, textiles, and traditional crafts largely by hand. We can also arrange a leisurely bike ride to Indein, a village with hundreds of ruins scattered among the vegetation, is pleasant excursion along the quiet paths bordering the lake.



We may also stop into to visit a daycare sponsored by a Japanese children's foundation, local high school, and monastery, all of the *Intha* tribe who inhabit the lake and are gracious hosts we will enjoy spending time with. Also exploring the Nan Pan "5-day market," and Indein, exploring its numerous 17th century pagodas, as well as the one-of-a-kind Burmese cat breeding village.

We always recommend sightseeing on around the lake, there is so much to see, but by preference, on one of your days we can travel to Kakku, a remote temple with a stop in the capital city, Taunggyi. On another morning, visit the permit-only Inle Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary at

sunrise, an area established in 1985 for the safety of migratory birds and their habitat. To date, 254 bird species have been recorded, including the rare Jerdon's Bushchat and Sarus Crane (the best time for viewing migratory birds is from Day to May). We can also arrange a longer, full-day cruise to the private second lake, where only a few dozen travelers a day are allowed to visit.

 [Read more about Inle Lake](#)

 *During your exploring, we recommend stopping in for lunch or dinner at the French-managed Inle View Resort (on the West shore), offering pleasant dining on their veranda.*

 *The large 5-day market is where one can find a real local atmosphere with a variety of produce from the lake but the real attraction at the market are the variety of hilltribes in the area who come to trade, including the Palaung, Pao, and striking Padaung ("long-necks") who collect their home-made products and come to trade and sell, traveling in boats to the market while others by land.*



Day 10 | Inle to Pyin-U-Lwin (Maymo)

Today, flying to the old capital city, Mandalay, where we'll pause briefly for lunch before ascending into the mountains on National Highway 3—the same route the British did in times past to escape the high heat of summers on the plain.



Tea Plantations near Pyin Oo Lwin

After an hour and half driving the forty odd miles from Mandalay, arrive into the cooler climate of our destination, the British hillstation Pyin Oo Lwin. The British called the village Pyin Oo Lwin Maymo (the city of May), moving their capital there every March through May and we'll view numerous abandoned and semi-restored colonial-era mansions and Baptist churches along the roads leading town, arriving at the rustic Governor's mansion situated in the massive 450-acre National Kandawgyi Botanical Gardens, which look as if they have been transported directly from England. Another legacy from the previous century is the large number of Indian and Nepalese families bought here as part of the Colonial Administration (the Burmese were reluctant to work for the British, having a doubtful Buddhist view of exchanging labor for money).



Like other places in Southeast Asia the favorable climate of Pyin Oo Lwin favors the growing of European flowers, fruits, and vegetables year-round and the town is a good place to pick up local strawberry jam. The beautiful flowers, high-mountain scenes, and colonial-era architecture make it one of the most picturesque towns in the country.

Following check-in at the Governors, boarding a horse-drawn cart for a ride through the old city center, which we can stroll around before returning to the Governor's to explore the botanical garden before dinner.

 **AUREUM RESORT AT THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE** *Presidential Suite*

Pyin Oo Lwin Landmarks

All Saint's Church was founded in 1912 as the church of the Governor, located close to the Governor's House. Inside are plaques of the regiments who served in Pyin Oo Lwin during World War II, and the sanctuary has a memorial to the 10th Gurkha Regiment along with two empty bomb shells that are being used as plant stands.

Colonial Houses — Along the Circular Road are a collection of colonial houses and administrative buildings, including the famous and now dilapidated Candacriag Hotel (now the Thiri Myaing Hotel), which used to be the guest house of the Bombay Burma Trading Company, and where George Orwell stayed.

Chan Tak Chinese Temple — A modern, classically styled, Chinese temple surrounded by statues, dragons, ponds and beautiful gardens. There is also a 7-layered Chinese style pagoda which gives great views over the town.

National Landmarks Garden — full of small scale models of national landmarks from each State in Myanmar. There

is also a mini theme park and a large garden.

National Kandawgyi Botanical Gardens — these gardens were first established in 1915 and modeled after Kew Gardens in the Surrey, U.K., with vast landscaped lawns, bright flowerbeds, rose, orchid and bamboo gardens, large lake, aviary, petrified wood, fossil, and butterfly museums. This is a perfect people-watching picnic place; that also has a stunning lake-view restaurant. Buggy rides are available around the garden.

Anisakan Falls — an amazing series of waterfalls found after a steep trek. Beautiful place to swim but bring your bathing suit plus extra clothes.

Peik Chin Myaung Cave — On the road to Lashio, this 20 ft wide, 1,600 ft long limestone stalactite cave, said to be between 230 to 310 million years old, is full of shrines and Buddha images.

Day Farm — A charming coffee shop set in the middle of a dairy and strawberry farm, surrounded by landscaped gardens; where you can sample some of the best milk in Myanmar or strawberry jam. There is a mini petting zoo where children can hold guinea pigs and ride horses.



Day 11 | Pyin-U-Lwin (Maymo) to Hsipaw (Thipaw)

This morning admiring the serene vistas as the sun rises over the gardens before heading back into town to visit the lively morning market. Afterward, return to the Governor's for a leisurely breakfast. There is also time to further walk around the botanical gardens again before we depart.

Today, continuing on National Highway 3 as it snakes its way deeper into the Shan plateau. At Gokteik gorge, we'll pause to view the famous, American-built 1901 steel rail bridge, the world's highest, towering over the huge gorge. Unlike the train, we'll navigate by the winding road which drops precipitously into the gorge and up the other side through the pine and teak forests.

En route to Hsipaw (128 miles, about 3 hours), pausing to visit villages and sites of interest, including the Paya Bawgyo pagoda a few miles before Hsipaw, a highly revered shrine from the 13th century.

After arrival in tiny Hsipaw, exploring the compact town before dinner—dining at a restaurant watching the sun go down over the Dothawaddy River from the terrace.

 **HSIPAW RESORT**



Day 12 | Hsipaw



There remain large areas that tourists still cannot travel to in Myanmar and Hsipaw is virtually an island surrounded by “no-go zones.” The alluring mountains and diverse hill tribes in this section of the Northern Shan State are permissible to visit. The peaceful town is now the rising trekking capital of Myanmar for less serious ventures and easier access than remote Putao in Kachin. The finer craft of rice and tea production is on display everywhere here and in the surrounding villages, amidst rice paddies, tea farms, along the rivers and forest, hikers will encounter the friendly local Palaung and Pedung tribes.

This morning, we begin our expedition in Hsipaw with a cruise along the picturesque Dhu Hta River, our upstream excursion one of the vivid landscapes and Shan life along the riverfront. After docking, begin a short trek passing through fruit plantation and gardens to visit the Lon Yon monastery in the Kon Thar village, meeting with novice monks, ethnic Shan and Palaung boys who are learning literature and ethics. Afterwards, return to our boat to continue to the confluence of the Namtu and Namma river that form Dhu Hta Waddy, and stopping at the Shan village of So Lon, where we will mingle with locals, admire the architecture Shan traditional houses, handicrafts, and visit the large 'Spirit House' of the village replete with statues of animal guardians.



In the afternoon, return for sightseeing in Hsipaw, visiting girls at the Buddhist Nunnery school, Shwe Maung, then heading north of town to visit the old palace situated on Koe Thein Koe Than hill at sunset. At one time the residence of prince Sao Kya Seng. We'll visit with the prince's nephew, who is fluent in English, while touring the property.

On the return to town, we may also visit a small monastery where a group of young novice monks live, or continue wandering around the town, spying the various cottage industries and home-based workshops

making things like cheroots (simple cigars, where tobacco has been rolled in leaves).

☯ Interestingly, the Padaung are actually a Mongolian tribe who have been assimilated into the larger Karen ethnic group. The Padaung only number several thousand, but attract a lot of interest for their practice of neck stretching. The custom is more than just a rare and certainly strange expression of beauty — the number and value of the rings confers status and respect on the wearer's family. The process begins when girls are around five or six, then continues with successive rings being added every two years. Padaung women can wear up to 45 pounds of the heavy brass rings around their necks.



The Palaung hilltribe (not the Padaung long necks), common in the Inle area, derive their income from tea. It is said that about five hundred years ago the King of Shan state demanded tribute from the Palaung, who being animist, tribal and living a subsistence life could offer nothing. The king gave them tea and taught them how to cultivate it and today it is their cash crop. In recent history, the area was ideal for growing poppies for opium cultivation, but almost all growers have converted to other specialty crops unique to the high-altitude area, such as mandarin oranges, bananas, and tea (local Tea shops are typically the center of life and social activity in any town and a good place to sample the local product)



Day 13 | Hsipaw to Mandalay



Gokteik Viaduct bridge

Today, experiencing a one of the most unique railway experiences in the world, boarding the local train in Hsipaw to cross over the famous girder bridge, the world's highest when it was finished in 1901, that passes over the Gokteik Gorge Viaduct. Built in 1905, at its inception the 117-mile train line through the Shan mountains was a feat of British engineering. The prize of the abbreviated trip this morning to Pyin Oo Lwin is the American-built bridge, which the train crosses at a walking pace leaving a lot of time to enjoy the ride. The train also presents a vivid slice of local life.

After arrival in Nawnghkio after crossing the a viaduct, rejoin your driver for return to Pyin Oo Lwin, breaking there for lunch before continuing on to Mandalay.



The country's seat of power until the British invasion in 1885, Mandalay remains Myanmar's spiritual center. Mandalay is where the strongest expression of traditional arts and crafts are centered, rich with historical sites, cultural memorials, and significant Buddhist monuments that reflect the strong current of Buddhism here which we will begin to explore after arrival.

In the late afternoon, returning to refresh at hotel, and at dusk, adjourn for the short trip to the top of 690-foot Mandalay to admire sweeping views of the city, palace, distant plains and mountains.

In the evening, by preference, strolling the night market in central Mandalay before dinner or enjoying a performance of The Mustache Brothers (by availability), a comedy trio from Mandalay known for live performances that combine screwball comedy, classic Burmese dance, and sharply satirical criticism of the totalitarian Burmese military regime (one member was jailed for seven years by the former regime).



MANDALAY HILL RESORT *Deluxe Mountain View*

 *As elsewhere, Mandalay offers no real standouts nor fine dining at the moment, but does has vibrant tea shops and chapati cafes, with delicious, small thali-style plates of Indian dishes, with naan, sweet tea and lassi.*

 *Although Mandalay is well known for its literary fame from a colonial-era past, the city itself is largely newer construction. In the 1980s, the city was hit by two major fires that destroyed tens of thousands of buildings and much of the central area of the city are buildings erected since that time. Many of the recent inhabitants are also new, an estimated 300,000 ethnic Chinese have recently made the city their home.*

 *Sangha is a strict monastic Sangha of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns. The Sangha of monks and the Sangha of nuns were originally established by Gautama Buddha in the 5th century BCE in order to provide a means for those who wish to practice the Dhamma full time, in a direct and highly disciplined way, free from the restrictions and responsibilities of the household life. The Sangha also fulfills the function of preserving the Buddha's original teachings and of providing spiritual support for the Buddhist lay-community. The key feature of Buddhist monasticism is the adherence to the vinaya which contains an elaborate set of rules of conduct including complete chastity and eating*

only before noon. Between midday and the next day, a strict life of scripture study, chanting, meditation, and occasional cleaning forms most of the Sangha's duties. Transgression of rules carries penalties ranging from confession to permanent expulsion from the Sangha.

Recommended Reading

 *The Stone of Heaven* by Cathy Scott-Clark Adrian Levy

"Levy and Scott-Clark are excellent story tellers, and do they ever have a story to tell. Tracing the history of imperial green jade, or jadeite, they begin in the late 18th century with Chinese emperor Qianlong and 400 riveting pages later end in present day Myanmar. Along the way the reader is exposed to the unrestrained profligacy of the Chinese emperors and the equally unrestrained ignorance and arrogance of the British colonialists. There is scheming and plots within plots as players in the Chinese dynasties kill their own progeny to ensure a malleable emperor will succeed.

The plundering by the British of the old Imperial summer palace is shocking, and the primitive warfare of the Kachin in Burma is horrifying. Levy and Scott-Clark's descriptions put the reader right into the midst of the action: the writing is so effective that you can feel the clinging humidity of the Burmese jungle as 19th century British explorers plod along in search for the mines from whence the jadeite is extracted."

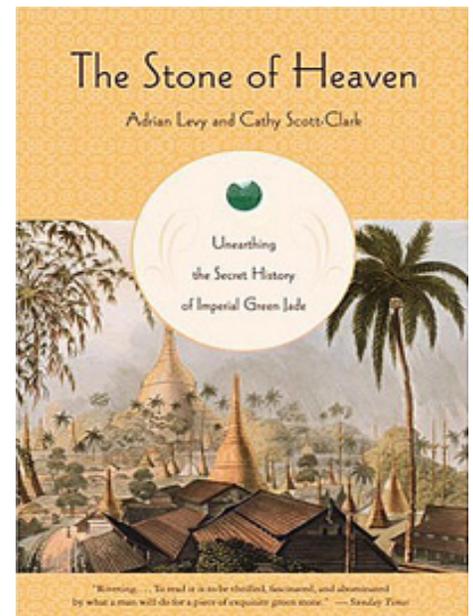
Indochina Travel Comments: "A semi-fictional story about Chinese emperors and the jade mines in Myanmar. Action adventure, but in-depth historical content and descriptions of the country. Muddled and contrived in sections, nonetheless a rare chronicle of China and Myanmar's history in such detail." —Tree Tam

 More: [Myanmar Reading list](#)



Day 14 | Mandalay to Yangon

After breakfast, enjoying a pleasant cruise on the famed Ayerwaddy River, cruising to visit Sagaing, an important religious center (Buddha is said to have visited the hills of Sagaing), with dozens of historical stupas, Buddhist nunneries and monasteries, as well as an important monastic hospital and Sitagu Buddhist Academy, the university of a strict Sangha Buddhist order.





Mingun Monastery

Most notable here is the Kaunghmudaw Pagoda, a large whitewashed building whose name means 'work of great merit', and Tupayon Pagoda, known for its unique architectural style. In Sagaing also resides Mingun and its famous bell, the largest ringing bell in the world. We'll also spy Innwa Bridge, a British-engineered, 16-span bridge that dates to 1934 (it was the only bridge crossing the Ayerwaddy River until 1998). Afterwards, return to Mandalay.

Time permitting, visiting the nearby Buddhist University, *Pariyatti Sasana*, where it is a delight to meet with young graduate monks, many fluent in English and curious to meet and converse foreigners now arriving into the country.

Midday, return to Mandalay airport (50 minutes) for flight to Bangkok, Thailand meeting with airport escort after arrival for assistance connecting with international flight home.

[END OF SERVICES]

B,L,D = Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **E** = E-Ticket **OP** = Operated by partner carrier



Optional Trip Extensions

Ngapali Beach



Post-trip, spend time relaxing on the fine white sands of Ngapali Beach, one of Southeast Asia's most desolate—a Koh Samui of thirty years ago!

Ngapali's coast remains completely undeveloped and remains a fishing area rather than a tourist destination. An ancient settlement, rice and tobacco farms are dominant in the inland areas. Nearby are traditional fishing villages. One of Myanmar's finest sand beaches offers the perfect setting for a blissful escape, but has not been developed with any of the activities or infrastructure of nearby Thailand. Simple activities in Ngapali include snorkeling the pristine seas, off-shore fishing, exploring local fishing villages (by bicycle, as an option), hiking in the nearby hills, or venturing out by canoe or boat to White Sand Island, a Robinson Crusoe setting just off the coast. There is also a local market and pagodas, and there is a nine-hole golf course. The nearby town of Thandwe (4 miles away, where the airport is located), is a major seaport and also offers a glimpse of local life.

Mergui Archipelago Sailing & Diving

One of the world's last undiscovered and untouched coastal regions, with over eight hundred remote islands scattered among the southern part of Myanmar bordering Thailand. Here are pristine water with an abundance of marine life. Contact us for specific trip options.

Temples of Angkor



Only a short hop from Bangkok brings you to what is currently one of Asia's most vibrant small towns, Siem Reap, a wonderful base for exploring the nearby magnificent temples of Angkor. Angkor consists of over seventy discovered ruins spread over two hundred square kilometers. Angkor Wat itself is a kilometer-wide and the greatest Buddhist monument ever constructed, with astounding structures of equal impact in surrounding areas. This density of ruins is unparalleled anywhere else in the world, and has been aptly called the "Nile Valley of Asia." Enjoy private access to the temples before the crowds arrive, perfect for sunrise photography.

Hen gap lai (see you again)! Thank you for traveling with us!



Dive Discovery

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