

WILD FRONTIERS



The Road to Mandalay (Recce Tour) Myanmar (Burma)

An enigmatic land of golden pagodas and mist-shrouded jungle, Burma was once described by Rudyard Kipling as a place 'quite unlike any...you know about'. Isolated for years by the outside world, it remains an enigma to many. But those that enter will discover a timeless land of colonial elegance and Buddhist tradition that has changed little over the intervening years. Across the plains of Bagan we can gaze across a seemingly endless sea of temples and pagodas, whilst amongst the bustling streets of Yangon and Mandalay the old world and the new clash in a vibrant explosion of colour and sound. We will walk in the footsteps of pilgrims and adventurers, as we travel from the city streets of old Yangon (Rangoon) to the stunning landscapes around Lake Inle, taking in Shan villages, sacred peaks and some of the most revered religious monuments in Southeast Asia along the way.

"I have travelled a lot with several different tour companies and would not hesitate recommending Wild Frontiers to those who want a very special adventure." *Jayne Hanlin*

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gaze across the temples and pagodas that litter the famed Plains of Bagan
- Explore the Buddhist and colonial heritage of Yangon and Mandalay
- Trek to the summit of Mount Popa, Myanmar's very own Mt Olympus
- Enjoy the scenic splendour and ethnic diversity of beautiful Lake Inle
- Sunset journeys along the Irrawaddy River

Duration: 14 Days

Average group size: 5 - 10

Start: Sun 04 Mar 12

Finish: Sat 17 Mar 12



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Why Wild Frontiers?

As a young, innovative company, Wild Frontiers is delighted to have been voted one of the 'Top 10 Tour Operators' by the readers of both Wanderlust and National Geographic Adventure. We are frequently asked what makes us different from other tour operators, and feel that the factors below answer this important question.

The Traveller's Ethos: WF is a company that has been set up by travellers for travellers, and our ethos is to help adventurous souls get to incredible and inaccessible places in safety and as much comfort as local conditions allow. We are firm believers that travelling is all about the experience and it's the details that make the trip - we specialise in drawing on our own extensive local knowledge and array of contacts to give our clients the very best experience possible.

Personal Service: Our London office is manned by experienced expedition leaders and every trip we run stems from their extensive knowledge - in short, we run the kind of trips that as passionate travellers, we like to do ourselves! When you ring our office, you can be guaranteed to chat to someone that knows the trips and the terrain, and is able to offer sound and practical advice.

Authentic Experiences: Our unique, original itineraries allow our clients to take journeys that venture beneath the surface of the region. Unlike the plethora of 'world specialists' out there who purport to know a hundred destinations, we concentrate on the locations we know and love. We don't run the same tour over and over, thus running the risk of creating a 'tourist circuit' and spoiling untouched regions. Instead, we rarely run any tour more than a couple of times a year and they are on routes we have discovered for ourselves, meaning we are able to give a truly authentic, off-the-beaten-track experience.

Be the First: Our style of travel is all about exploration, and nothing excites us more than opening up new routes to genuine travellers. We keep abreast of new destinations and are often the first to return to places that have vanished from the tourist map. We were the first back into Pakistan after 9/11, the first to return to Kashmir after a decade of tourist isolation, and the first to run a commercial travel trip to Afghanistan for almost 30 years. Since then we have helped bring Colombia, Yemen and Georgia back into the tourist fold, specialising in groundbreaking reconnaissance trips and imaginative expeditions.

Small Group Size: We believe it is imperative to keep the group sizes small. Most trips are limited to a maximum of approximately 12 travellers, thus giving you more access to fragile cultures, better opportunities to interact with local people, and the knowledge you are making less of an impact while there.

Cost of Tours: We believe in an honest, upfront pricing system so you know exactly what the tour will cost before you book. We avoid local payments, 'optional extras' or forcing our clients to split every meal bill. Our tours are provided on a predominantly full board basis, with mineral water, government permits, entrance fees and transport all included.

Added Value: We aim to give our clients the very best (not the least expensive) experience through whatever facilities are available to us. We always try to provide accommodation that is interesting, characterful and convenient, and transport - another important part of any tour - that is as varied and comfortable as possible.

Our clients: Your companions can make or break a trip, and it's lucky therefore that our clients are our greatest asset. Travelling to remote regions is not for everyone, and as such we tend to attract open-minded travellers looking for genuine experiences, and a desire to reach those hard to get to places.

Responsible Travel: Awarded 5 star status by AITO (Association of Independent Tour operators), responsible tourism has always been an integral part of our company ethos and our adventures are designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. For further details please refer to the RT section on this dossier.



Day 1: Tour starts in Yangon: The tour will begin at lunchtime today at our hotel in the centre of Yangon. This afternoon we aim to pay a visit to the Shwedagon Pagoda, whose famous golden stupa dominates the city's skyline. The most sacred Buddhist pagoda in Myanmar, Shwedagon is believed to be over 2,500 years old and its central stupa is surrounded by a wealth of intricately decorated buildings and statues. Believed to hold the relics of past Buddhas, the pagoda is a popular shrine for local pilgrims, making it a fascinating spot at which to enjoy the setting of the late afternoon sun. This evening we'll enjoy dinner at the Royal Karaweik Restaurant, an unusual floating landmark that occupies the waters of Kandawgyi Lake.
Hotel (L, D)

Day 2: In Yangon: After breakfast we'll head for Nanthida Jetty, close to the colonial elegance of the Strand Hotel, one of the most famous hotels in Myanmar during the days of British rule. From here we begin our walking tour of the city, following the course of the Yangon River and heading first to the bustling harbour area, from where the ferries leave for the Delta region and the upcountry towns that lie along the Irrawaddy (Ayeyarwady) River. Yangon is blessed with the highest concentration of colonial architecture in Southeast Asia and as we stroll down Pansodan Street,

we'll pass the former High Court and General Telegraph Office en route to the Independence Monument and St Mary's Cathedral, the largest in the country. We'll then take a rickshaw to the Botataung Pagoda, before having lunch at a local restaurant. This afternoon we'll continue down the Strand Road, taking an opportunity to soak up the hustle and bustle of downtown Yangon and its shabby Victorian architecture, before ending our day amidst the vibrancy of Scott Market.
Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 3: Yangon - Bagan: After breakfast this morning we head for the airport and take a short flight to Bagan. Covering some 41 square kilometres, the ruins at Bagan are one of Asia's most spectacular sacred sites, considered on a par with the magnificent Angkor temples of Cambodia. Once the capital of the First Burmese Empire, Bagan's golden period spanned the years between the 11th and 13th centuries, when its vast plains lay scattered with over 13 thousand temples, pagodas and religious structures. Time, earthquakes, Mongol armies and the inundation of the River Irrawaddy have ravaged much of the original city, but there are still over 2200 structures remaining, presenting visitors with one of the most unforgettable views anywhere in Southeast Asia. On arrival we will begin our tour of the city, visiting the famed golden stupa of Shwezigon Pagoda and the 12th century frescos that adorn the cave temple of King Kyansittha. We also plan to visit the temples of Htilominio and Ananda, the latter of which is considered a masterpiece of Mon design. Our afternoon then sees us enjoying a horse cart ride through the Tharaba Gateway and on to the Shwegugyi Temple, located in front of the old Royal Palace. After visiting the 12th century Thatbyinnyu Temple (at 61 metres, the tallest in the city) we will end the day watching a golden sunset from the open terraces of the Bagan temples.
Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 4: Bagan - Mount Popa trek - Bagan: Today we enjoy a hike to the summit of Myanmar's Mount Olympus, believed to be the abode of the country's most powerful Nats (spirits). Mount Popa is a 1500 metre volcanic peak that lies some 50km south-east of Bagan amongst a

landscape of wooded hills and natural springs. The trek, taking between 4 and 5 hours, will take in some of the region's most impressive scenery, including the sheer-sided volcanic plug of Taung Kalat, a 737 metre pinnacle that is home to a spectacular cliff-top Buddhist monastery. The views sweep out across the arid plains towards the conical peak of Taung Ma-gyi and the ancient city of Bagan, making our picnic lunch all the more enjoyable amongst the cooling mountain breezes and the flowering alpine flora. Keep your eyes open for macaque monkeys as well. Later this afternoon we will make the return journey to Bagan, stopping along the way to take a look at the production of some traditional palm sugar, known as "jaggery".

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 5: Bagan: A morning visit to the Nyaung U Market after breakfast affords a chance for some great photo opportunities, as well as the prospect of bartering for some local wares before we continue on to Mingalazedi Pagoda. Built during the reign of King Narathihapate in 1284, this is one of the last of the large pagodas to be constructed in the 13th century and represents for many the pinnacle of Bamar pagoda architecture. From here we continue on to explore the lovely stucco-work of the Gubyaukgyi Temple in Myinkaba village, before paying a visit to the Mon-style Hindu temple of Nanpaya. Said to have been built by the captive Mon king, Manuha, the temple contains some particularly fine carvings of Brahma. The last of our morning's visits then sees us taking in the four Buddha images in the Manuha Pagoda, before moving on to the Myazedi stupa, Myanmar's very own 'Rosetta Stone'. A four-sided pillar, the stupa's inscription, written in four different languages (Pyu, Mon, Old Burmese and Pali), has allowed archaeologists to decipher the written Pyu language. Following lunch we will make our way to Minanthu village, famed for its mural painting, before stopping off to visit a lacquer-ware factory en route back to Bagan. Our day ends on the banks of the Irrawaddy River where we take a sunset boat ride to enjoy an altogether different view of the river and the temples in the late afternoon glow of the setting sun.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 6: Bagan - Mandalay - Maymyo: A short flight to Mandalay this morning, followed by a 2-hour scenic drive, brings us to the picturesque hill town of Maymyo (now known as Pyin Oo Lwin). An old colonial hill station that served as the summer capital for the British administration, Maymyo lies at the head of a shallow valley some 1070 metres above sea level. Presenting us with a little slice of bygone colonial elegance, the town is filled with some particularly fine buildings, along with its own unique form of transport in the form of colourfully painted horse-drawn wagons. Stopping first to visit a panoramic viewpoint and the Mahar Ant Htoo Kanthar Buddha Statue en route, we will then have an opportunity this afternoon to visit the wonderfully sumptuous National Kandawgyi Gardens. First established in 1915, the gardens were originally modelled on Kew Gardens in England, with the 65 acre lake being dug by Turkish POWs. Today the gardens cover nearly 177 hectares and are home to a staggering diversity of flora and fauna, including 300 species of indigenous orchids, 514 species of indigenous trees, 25 different roses and a collection of endangered species that include Eld's deer, Burmese star tortoise and takin. After our visit we will take a tour of colonial Maymyo in one of the town's historic and highly distinctive horse carriages.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 7: Around Maymyo: Innwine Waterfall & Shan Villages trek: After breakfast this morning we will take a nostalgic train ride, 1 hour up the track, to the bustling market village of Buntbwe, from where we will begin our trek up to the Innwine Waterfall. The hour-long trek takes us up to a 30-metre waterfall along a trail that leads through a rich landscape of natural vegetation and remote Shan villages. After a chance to enjoy the falls and partake in a picnic lunch, we retrace our steps back to our vehicle and drive on to a local coffee plantation, where we will have a chance to witness the coffee growing process first hand before returning to our hotel in Maymyo. Tonight we will have dinner in a restaurant in town.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 8: Maymyo - Mingun - Mandalay: Today we return to Mandalay, the last royal capital of Myanmar. Set on the eastern banks of the Irrawaddy River, the city is considered the cultural heart of the country and an important centre for Buddhist learning and Burmese culture. On arrival we will pay a visit to the gilded majesty of the Kuthodaw Pagoda at the foot of Mandalay Hill. It is here that we will find the 'world's largest book', made up of a series of marble slabs, each inscribed on both sides with pages of text from the Tipitaki; the standard collection of scriptures of the Theravada Buddhist faith. What makes this book so unique is that each slab is housed in one of 729 stone stupas located in the grounds of the pagoda. From here we move on to the intricate teak carvings of the Shwenandaw Monastery, the last major structure still remaining of the original wooden Royal Palace, before paying a visit to the Maha Myatmuni Pagoda, home to Mandalay's holiest Buddha statue. The afternoon then sees us taking a gentle boat ride up to Mingun, following the course of the river to visit the monumental ruins of the Mingun Pahtodawgyi. Started by King Bodawpaya in 1790, the 150 metre structure was never completed, due in no small part to the king's astrologer informing his employer of his imminent death upon completion of the stupa. We'll also visit the Mingun Bell, a 90 ton monster that is one of the largest of its kind in the world, as well as the beautiful Hsimphyumae Pagoda, built by Bodawpaya's grandson in 1816, before taking a sunset cruise back to Mandalay.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 9: Mandalay - Amarapura - Ava - Sagaing - Mandalay: This morning we'll visit the famous monastery of Mahagandayone, home to over a thousand Buddhist monks and renowned as one of the largest Buddhist teaching centres in the city. We will also visit the 140-year-old teak-stilted U Bein Bridge, which spans Lake Thaungthaman, before boarding a local ferry to sail down to Ava. The country's former capital, which for nearly 500 years lay at the heart of Burmese power and culture, Ava was founded by King Thamdominbya in 1364 on an artificial island at the confluence of the Irrawaddy and Myitnge Rivers. On arrival we will visit the Buddhist Maha

Aungmyae Bonzan Monastery, built in 1818 by the wife of King Bodawpaya, before taking a relaxing horse cart ride around the sights of the old city. After lunch we cross the bridge to pay a visit to Sagaing, one of the most important religious and monastic centres in the country. The hillsides that lead up from the river are crowded with numerous monasteries and pagodas and we will visit a few, taking in the U Min Thoneze Pagoda (Thirty Caves), the central pagoda of Soon U Pon Nya Shin and Kaungmudaw, before heading back to Mandalay. Time permitting we should be able to take a look around the flower market.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 10: Mandalay - Heho - Pindaya - Kalaw: Transferring to the airport after breakfast, we take a morning flight to Heho, from where we continue by road across the Shan Plateau to Pindaya. Our journey takes us up into the hills and past a network of paddy fields as we make our way into the heartland of the Taung-yo people. Our destination is the magnificent complex of limestone caves that occupy the ridge overlooking Pindaya Lake. The Pindaya Caves are home to thousands of Buddhist images, made from alabaster, teak, marble, lacquer and even cement, which have been placed here over the centuries to create a labyrinth through the hills. We will have a chance to explore something of this fascinating setting, even taking the time to visit some local houses to watch traditional Shan paper making, before we then continue on to the old hill station of Kalaw some 40km away.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 11: Kalaw - Pain Ne Bin - Kalaw - Lake Inle: Located over 1300 metres above sea level, amongst the rolling hills of the Shan Plateau, Kalaw lies at the centre of some of the best trekking country in Myanmar. Surrounded by Palaung, Danu and Pao villages, it is the ideal starting point for today's hike to the Palaung village of Pein Ne Bin. We begin after breakfast, trekking down to Hlwan Zedi first, from where we follow the trail through dense pine forest and past orange farms to a path that leads up to our first rest camp. After a chance to take a break we then continue on to the village at Pein Ne Bin, where we can experience a little of the life of the Silver

Palaung: watching some traditional hand weaving and enjoying the panoramic views from the villages hilltop pagoda. This afternoon we will then trek back down to the main road to meet up with our transport and continue by road on to the village of Nyaung Shwe, our gateway onto the tranquil waters of Lake Inle. Boarding a private boat we make the last stage of our journey by water, heading for our hotel on the shores of the famous lake.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 12: Lake Inle: The second largest lake in the country and one of its highest, Lake Inle covers some 116 square kilometres of the picturesque Shan Hills. Home to a number of ethnic minorities, including Intha, Shan, Taungyo and Danu, the lake provides us with a wonderfully scenic backdrop to today's activities. Beginning after breakfast, we board a boat to enjoy the calm waters and floating gardens of the lake. A photographer's dream, the gardens are formed from a combination of silt and weed, which over time forms a thick layer of rich humus upon which gardens of fruit and vegetables can be grown and tended. The Inthas tend these gardens from long, banana-shaped boats, the same boats that they use to fish the waters of the lake for Inle carp. The locals have a somewhat distinctive way of rowing these sturdy craft, standing at the stern of the boat and wrapping a leg around the oar. It is a posture that affords them an unrestricted view across the floating reeds and leaves them two free hands with which to handle their nets. The morning also sees us visiting the Nga Phe Kyaung Monastery and the Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda, site of the holiest shrine in southern Shan. After lunch we then proceed to In Paw Khone to observe some traditional silk weaving, visit a local blacksmith and, if time permits, take a stroll to a lakeside village to learn a little more about the Intha and their ways.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 13: Lake Inle - Indein - Heho - Yangon: After breakfast we will visit a floating market offering another aspect of the colour and spectacle of life on the lake. We will then continue up a beautiful canal to the small village of Indein, located on the lake's western

shore. Passing by the monastery of Phe Chaung, our boat turns into a narrow creek, taking us past a patchwork of rural farmland and ancient ruined pagodas. After a chance to take a short walk around Pa-Oh village, we return to the main tributary and the expansive waters of Lake Inle. After lunch we will then transfer to the airport at Heho for our flight to Yangon and a final evening back in the old capital.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 14: Tour ends in Yangon: A final morning in Yangon allows us an opportunity to take a commute out into the rural areas around the city by train. Transferring to the Yangon Central Railway Station after breakfast, we take a circle train from downtown and out into the suburbs, a great way of meeting local people and observing a little something of their daily lives. An hour's journey out of the city brings us to Insein, where we disembark and take a stroll through the local market before returning to the city. The tour will end back at our hotel at lunchtime.

(B)

Wild Extensions:

Arrive early to adjust to a new time zone or just to get a feel for the country before your tour starts. Explore the country after your tour on a bespoke Wild Extension or just allow a few days to relax afterwards. Maybe choose all of the above and get cheaper flights mid-week?

A sample of what you could do...

Thailand: Why not extend your trip with a stopover in Thailand either on the way out or the way back? Depending on your available time we can offer a number of different ideas.

Mrauk U & the Chin Villages: Why not travel up to the northwest of Myanmar to visit the ancient Rakhaing capital of Mrauk U? Smaller than Bagan, it also has a multitude of temples and pagodas to explore, which are much more lived in than those in Bagan. You can also visit the Chin villages whose tribal people are renowned for their facial tattoos. You will finish with a stay in Sittwe, a thriving fishing port in the Bay of Bengal. 4 & 5 night itineraries available.

Mawlamyaing & Kyaikhtiyo (the Golden Rock): Why not take a train ride to visit the place where the British first landed for a taste of Old Burma. You can also join the pilgrims as they visit the gravity-defying Golden Rock (5 night package).

Ngapali Beach: Why not relax on an idyllic white sand beach after your tour with a few days stay in Ngapali? We have a variety of beachfront hotels available for you to choose from.

Contact the office for extension specifics.

TOUR DETAILS

Version: BUR/D

Tour price: All our tours are priced on a LAND ONLY basis, giving you maximum flexibility when deciding how to get to and from your tour.

Single Supplements: These are NOT compulsory for any Wild Frontiers tour. Where single supplements are available please note that a single room cannot always be guaranteed for every night of the tour as depending on the destination, rooms may be limited. On this tour we are happy to offer an optional single supplement that will cover you for all nights of the tour.

Flights: If you would like us to send you a quote for the suggested tour flight (see GETTING THERE) or on any alternative flight that may suit you better, please let us know.

In all cases, for the latest prices, please refer to our website or contact the office.

Please remember that all Wild Frontiers tour prices mean NO hidden extras, NO local payments or kitty and NO compulsory single supplements.

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- Full services of a Wild Frontiers Tour Leader with local guides and drivers
- Meal plan as detailed in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner) with mineral water as required
- All transport, as outlined in the itinerary
- All accommodation
- All entrance fees, as per itinerary

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED?

- Visas (if applicable)
- Local airport taxes
- Tips
- Beverages & any costs of a personal nature
- International Flights
- Airport transfers (unless booking suggested flights through WF office)

GETTING THERE

For this trip our suggested flights (subject to change) are:

03MAR TG911 LHR-BKK 11:50/06:10 +1
04MAR TG303 BKK-RGN 07:55/08:50
17MAR TG306 RGN-BKK 19:45/21:40
18MAR TG910 BKK-LHR 01:10/07:15

Key:

LHR - London Heathrow

BKK - Bangkok

RGN - Yangon

TG - Thai Airways

NB If you wish to arrange your own flights you are completely free to do so and in this case we can arrange any transfers or supplementary accommodation that you may require.

Please note that if you are making your own flight arrangements, we recommend that you only purchase flights that are totally flexible and refundable as due to the nature of adventure travel, itineraries can change at any time. For more information, please refer to our booking conditions.

PRACTICALITIES

Accommodation will be in good quality, privately-owned hotels and bungalows.

Any accommodation mentioned in the itinerary is subject to availability and if not available substitutes will be of a similar quality.

Transport on this tour includes minibuses, boats, train and domestic flights.

Trip Grading:

Adventure Rating ❖❖❖❖❖

Comfort Grade ❖❖❖❖❖

Fitness Level ❖❖❖❖❖

Cultural Interest ❖❖❖❖❖

Please note that this grading is an indication only and should you have any concerns please contact the office.

Recce Tours: As we all know, the world is a constantly changing place - destinations & routes that were once cutting-edge now regularly find themselves appearing in mainstream brochures. Coming up with truly original tour ideas is a constant challenge but at Wild Frontiers we are committed to offering you a real alternative to the mainstream and each year we plan to run a handful of new and original adventures. These are our so-called Recce Tours and since the very beginning have proven incredibly popular with those of you who like to act as our "guinea pigs" and join us on these tours. Fantastic fun and highly rewarding, Recce Tours will assuredly not go 100% to plan and it is not uncommon for clients to take an active role in tweaking the itineraries along the way. More challenging than our normal tours, these will often require a greater degree of flexibility...they will not be for everyone.

Fitness...

Anyone in a reasonable state of health, with an open mind and a sense of adventure should be perfectly able to cope with this tour.

It may sound obvious but...

Wild Frontiers tours are not always for everyone and it is important to us that the tour you choose is the most suitable.

Please therefore take time to read the dossier carefully. All our tours are graded to give an overall picture of the trip but these are only guidelines and you should check the daily itinerary. Should you have any concerns about your ability to partake in any aspect of the tour then please contact the office.

Insurance: Insurance that provides cover for emergency repatriation in case of a medical emergency is compulsory for all tours. You should be aware that many standard insurance policies may not cover you adequately for all aspects of a Wild Frontiers trip and so we strongly recommend that you purchase a suitably designed insurance policy. One such policy is the "Wild Frontiers" policy underwritten by Travel & General Insurance Company plc, which is available to UK and Republic of Ireland residents through our website or via the insurance company direct on 0845 408 0583. Under this policy there are two different levels of cover available and for this trip the minimum requirement would be the Standard policy.

Cover explained:

Standard policy: a comprehensive travel insurance policy that provides cover for all Wild Frontiers activities, including trekking up to 6,000m. This policy does not provide cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel.

Elite policy: provides the same comprehensive level of cover as the standard policy. In addition the Elite policy also provides cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel. The policy will not provide cover for any claims arising from or relating to the reasons why the FCO is advising against travel.

If purchasing the Elite policy you also have the option to extend the cover provided by the policy to include cover for claims arising from a terrorist act in an area where the FCO is advising against travel. You can add this cover to your policy when purchasing online or over the telephone.

These policies are only available to those travelling on a Wild Frontiers holiday.

For more information and to purchase your policy online please visit the Insurance section of our website.

The cover is underwritten by the International Insurance Company of Hannover Limited (IICH), who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). Wild Frontiers Limited is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Travel & General Insurance Company plc, details of which can be found at the FSA's website www.fsa.gov.uk.

If you do decide to purchase alternative insurance, then you must ensure that it covers you for every aspect of this trip.

Visas: Visas are necessary for many of the destinations we travel to and while we aim to provide you with the most up-to-date information, requirements frequently change and as such we advise that you check with the relevant embassies or contact our recommended visa agency, Travcour (020 7223 5295) www.travcour.com for the latest advice.

For this tour, UK passport holders currently require a visa for Myanmar.

Non-UK passport holders should contact the relevant embassies for individual requirements.

Further details will be sent out to you on booking, however ensuring that correct and valid visas are obtained remains the sole responsibility of the client.

Responsible Travel: Responsible travel and sustainable tourism are fundamental ideas that Wild Frontiers has been committed to since our birth. It is our strong belief that these words should not be simply 'tagged on' to dossiers and websites but should be at the very core of each trip, and our adventures are therefore designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. We believe that a successful trip not only delivers a unique and unsurpassable journey for our clients, but that it also benefits the peoples whose lands we are privileged to visit.

The Wild Frontiers Foundation: In order to facilitate an enduring support structure for the communities we visit,

and to show a commitment to these values, Wild Frontiers has set up a charitable foundation through which we can channel funds to both existing NGOs and our own development projects. In addition to organising ethically sensitive tours, having our own charitable foundation allows us to raise money - through the cost of our tours, charity trips and fund raising events - which can then be used to fund various projects in education, sanitation, reforestations and a number of other important issues facing developing communities. Wherever possible we are happy for our clients to visit these projects to see for themselves where and how this money is being spent. For a full list of partner NGOs please visit our website. Should you wish to donate to the foundation please contact the office for details.

The Environment: Trying to do our bit for the environment, in 2005 we were among the first UK-based travel companies to automatically offset every client's international flight (if booked with us) with a payment to Carbon Clear to help promote sustainable energy.

Climate: The best season for visiting Myanmar is from November to March, when it rains least and isn't too hot. The southwest monsoon starts between mid-May and mid-June, and brings frequent rains until October. We expect temperatures of around 30 degrees during this tour, but it will be cooler in the hill towns of the Shan Plateau. Please note towards the end of the tour things could be a little hotter.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO): The FCO travel advice highlights potential hazards people might experience when travelling abroad. Given the nature of destinations offered by Wild Frontiers it is inevitable that from time to time some itineraries contravene this advice. Whilst WF takes the safety and security of its clients extremely seriously, we will not necessarily cancel a trip because of the FCO advice. It is recommended therefore that clients check this advice before booking and contact us if they have any queries or concerns. Please see our website for further information.

Further information:

When you make a confirmed booking with Wild Frontiers we will send you our confirmation pack with complete pre-departure information giving you details on visas, health and vaccinations, packing lists, suggested reading on the region, insurance, photography and other useful tips to make your trip more enjoyable.

MYANMAR (BURMA) - THE FACTS



Like most of Southeast Asia's countries, Myanmar's people and history is a glorious mishmash of settlers and invaders from all fronts. The Mon and the Pyu are thought to have come from India, while the now dominant Bamar (Burmese) migrated through Tibet and by 849 had founded a powerful kingdom centred on Pagan. For the next millennium, the Burmese empire grew through conquests of Thailand (Ayutthaya) and India (Manipur), and shrank under attacks from China and internal rebellions.

Eventually, Britain conquered Burma, as it was then known, over a period of 62 years (1824-1886) and incorporated it into its Indian Empire. Burma was administered as a province of India until 1937 when it became a separate, self-governing colony. During the Second World War, Burma was a major battleground as the Allies fought the Japanese for dominance over Asia. The Burma Road was built to get supplies to

China. Large parts of Western Burma, particularly the hilly areas bordering India and the city of Mandalay, were severely damaged during the war. Independence from the Commonwealth under the name Union of Burma was attained in 1948.

General Ne Win dominated the government from 1962 to 1988, first as military ruler, then as self-appointed president, and later as political kingpin. Pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988 were violently crushed, with general Saw Maung taking over in a coup and installing the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to rule the country, now renamed Myanmar. Multi-party legislative elections were held in 1990, with the main opposition party - the National League for Democracy (NLD) - winning a landslide victory (392 of 489 seats). But SLORC refused to hand over power, instead placing NLD leader and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest, where she has remained on and off until her release in November 2010.

Yangon: Yangon, formerly Rangoon, was the capital of Myanmar until it was superseded by Naypyidaw in November 2005. The city is an amalgamation of British, Burmese, Chinese and Indian influences, and is known for its colonial architecture, which although decaying remains an almost unique example of a 19th-century British colonial capital. New high-rise buildings were constructed from the 1990s as the government began to allow private investment. However, Yangon continues to be a city of the past, as seen by its lyongi-wearing pedestrians, its street vendors and its pungent smells.



Yangon began as a small Mon village known as Dagon. It was captured by King Alaungpaya and was renamed Yangon, "end of strife". The town remained insignificant until it became the colonial capital of the British in the 1850s, after

the capture of Lower Burma. The British knew it as "Rangoon", the Anglicised form of Yangon. The city grew rapidly during the colonial period, which left a legacy of solid 19th century colonial architecture. Myanmar attained independence in 1948, but its true 'modern' period began with the 1962 military coup and the institution of an isolationist Socialist regime in 1964, resulting in the steady decay of the city and its infrastructure. In 1988 Rangoon was the site of peaceful pro-democracy protests in which thousands, including monks and students, were gunned down. In 1989 the city was renamed Yangon by the military junta. In 2005 the capital was moved to Naypyidaw, but Yangon continues to be an important commercial and cultural centre.

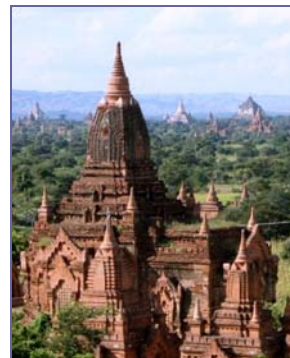


Inle Lake: Sitting at 875m and surrounded by high protective hills this beautiful lake, which is 22km long and 11km wide, contains a microcosm of aquatic life which supports the indigenous Intha people who live in stilted villages around the lake. They are said to have migrated from Dawei in southern Myanmar in the late 1300s. Most are involved in fishing with cone shaped nets for the local carp and other freshwater fish that are abundant in the lake. The Inthas are renowned for rowing their flat-bottomed boats from the stern with one leg, so that they can watch for shoals of fish, and avoid the large clumps of water hyacinth and low-lying islands that are scattered about Inle. Inle Lake also supports a thriving farming community that produces a wide range of vegetables and flowers, and rice is cultivated at the northern end of the lake on extremely fertile floating islands. The local men also produce silver and brassware, pottery and lacquerware, while the lake's womenfolk are highly skilled silk weavers. The area is the second largest producer of silk products in the country. The surrounding countryside is home to a harmonious

blend of national races including Bamar, Danaw, Danu, Intha, Kayah, Pa-O, Shan, and Taung-yo peoples, among others.



Bagan: Also spelled Pagan, Bagan lies on the banks of the Ayerwaddy River and is home to the largest area of Buddhist temples, pagodas, stupas and ruins in the world - many dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries. The shape and construction of each building is highly significant in Buddhism with each component part taking on spiritual meaning. King Anawratha unified Myanmar under Theravada Buddhism and Bagan became a central powerbase of the mid 9th century. It is estimated that at one time more than 13,000 temples and stupas stood on this 42 sq km plain in central Myanmar, and Marco Polo once described Bagan as a "gilded city alive with tinkling bells and the swishing sounds of monks' robes". Approximately 2,200 remain today, in various states of disrepair. Some are large and well maintained, such as the Ananda Pahto, others are small tumbledown relics in the middle of overgrown grass. All, however, are considered active sacred sites.



Bagan's golden age ended in 1287 when the Kingdom and its capital city was invaded and sacked by the Mongols. Its population was reduced to one village that remained amongst the ruin. In 1998 this village and its inhabitants were

forcibly relocated a few kilometres to the south of Bagan, forming "New Bagan". Today the ancient city is abandoned, with the exception of a few hotels and religious centres.

Mandalay: Formerly its capital, Mandalay is Myanmar's second largest city (after Yangon) and remains the economic and religious hub of upper Myanmar. The city is centred around the Royal Palace with wide lanes filled with bicycles and motorcycles. Mandalay is known for its millionaires, its monks (half of the country's monks reside in Mandalay and surrounding areas) and its cultural diversity.



Founded in 1859, Mandalay was the last royal capital of the Burmese monarchy, before the British conquered Burma. King Mindon decided to build a capital centred on the Royal Palace in 1857 under a Buddhist prophecy. Several public works projects took place afterwards, including the completion of many pagodas. The Royal Palace was heavily bombarded during World War II and was used to store artillery and weapons by the British.

Mandalay is ethnically diverse, with the Bamar (Burmese) forming a slight majority. In recent years there has been a major influx of Chinese who, together with colonial-era immigrants, form 30 to 40% of the population. Their influence is seen in the Chinese-style glass buildings throughout the city. Other prevalent ethnic groups include the Shan, who are ethnically and linguistically related to the Thais and Laotians, and the Karen (Kayin). There is also a sizable ethnic Indian population, including Nepalese and Sikhs.

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