

# BURMA

## THE GOLDEN LAND

### PAGODAS AND PAGEANTRY

**"This is Burma and it is unlike any land you know about."**

—Rudyard Kipling, *Letters from the East*, 1898

Marco Polo called Burma "the golden land" when he traveled to this ancient cultural paradise in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and saw the thousands of glittering, golden pagodas, religious shrines and stupas that stretched as far as the eye could see. Six hundred years later, the wonderfully preserved enchantment of this land inspired Rudyard Kipling, a young 19<sup>th</sup>-century British soldier, to write the "Road to Mandalay," a poem immortalizing the mystical beauty, grace and charm of Burma's lands and peoples. The "Road to Mandalay" is the mysterious Irrawaddy River, a centuries-old conduit flowing from Yangon (Rangoon) to Mandalay and passing the tranquil setting of Bagan, a serene golden plain gently dotted with 11<sup>th</sup>-century pagodas and temples that still distinguish the landscape.

Burma's allure continues to beckon travelers to experience a world where time has stood still—where vast, natural beauty, rich traditions, colorful pageantry and unsurpassed cultural heritage remain untouched and steeped in Buddhist traditions. Once cut off from the rest of the world, Myanmar has experienced a rebirth, opening its borders and allowing international visitors to see its exotic treasures and traditions, to encounter some of the more than 100 national races of people living together and to experience *cedana*, the creed that Myanmar people live by—a heartfelt goodwill towards friends and strangers alike.

**U.S.**  
Monday, Day 1

Depart from the U.S. Cross the International Date Line.

#### Yangon, Myanmar (Burma)

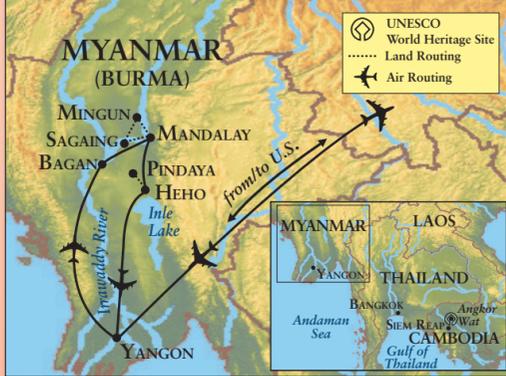
**Tuesday, Day 2**

Arrive in the garden city of Yangon, the country's former capital and home to the largest number of colonial structures in all of Southeast Asia. Check into the five-star CHATRIUM HOTEL ROYAL LAKE YANGON.

#### Yangon

**Wednesday, Day 3**

After breakfast, begin your tour of Yangon along its wide, tree-lined avenues and turn-of-the-century architecture. See the Sule Pagoda, where legend has it that a strand of hair from Buddha is enshrined in this golden stupa.



Notice that some young women wear yellowish-white paste on their faces called *thanaka*, made from ground tree bark, traditionally used for its cooling properties and as a sunscreen. Visit the 230-foot-long statue of the Chaukhtatgyi Paya Reclining Buddha and St. Mary's Cathedral, built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and known for its beautiful stained-glass windows and its fortitude during the Japanese invasion during World War II. Continue to the Botataung Pagoda, known for its mirrored maze-like walkway lined with glass cases exhibiting many ancient relics and artifacts. Following lunch in a nearby restaurant, visit the National Museum to view the richly decorated Lion Throne, royal jewelry and ancient artifacts.

Enjoy the Welcome Reception and Dinner this evening.

#### Yangon

**Thursday, Day 4**

Today, meet with warm, friendly Myanmar people at the Gitameit Music Center, established in 2003 as a musicians' community for adults and children, and hear a lively performance of traditional music. Continue to Kalaywa Tawya Monastery, home to over 1300 monks and novices. Observe the gathering of monks and nuns during the dramatic, silent serving of their second and last meal of the day.

This afternoon, walk Yangon's cobbled streets of Bogyoke Aung San Market (Scott Market) where thousands of stalls feature Burmese jewelry,

*Inle Lake's native people, the Inthas, have masterfully rowed their boats with one leg for generations, freeing their hands to fish using conical nets. This unique stance allows them to see fish at the bottom of the lake.*



art and handicrafts. Then, see one of the ancient wonders of the world: the glittering, 11<sup>th</sup>-century Shwedagon Pagoda, which is covered in gold—shwe being the Burmese word for gold. Its spire is studded with rubies, sapphires, topaz and over 2000 carats of diamonds, and its interior houses eight strands of hair from Buddha and other relics. Here, discover the heart and humility of the Myanmar people with their prayer offerings of flowers, incense and candles.

#### Yangon/Bagan

**Friday, Day 5**

This morning, fly to Bagan, home to over 2000 pagodas, temples and stupas and one of the most remarkable archaeological sites in Asia. Visit five of the most notable temples in Bagan's Archaeological Zone, including the Ananda Temple, a 12<sup>th</sup>-century architectural masterpiece built under the reign of King Kyanzitha.

Transfer to the deluxe AYE YAR RIVER VIEW RESORT, a resort located on the banks of the Irrawaddy River, for lunch. Then, enjoy a traditional horse-drawn carriage ride amid Bagan's remarkable temples, pagodas and stupas.

At sunset, enjoy spectacular views over Bagan from the unique vantage point of the Shwesandaw Pagoda. Return to the hotel for dinner.

#### Bagan

**Saturday, Day 6**

Begin the day exploring Nyaung U Market, where you have an opportunity to mingle with Myanmar's friendly people. Continue to the Shwezigon Pagoda, built by King Anawrahta to enshrine relics of Buddha; it is one of the most significant religious structures in Burma as it served as the architectural model for future stupas. Essential to your stay in Bagan is a visit to a local lacquerware workshop where you will see and learn more about this ancient craft.

Later, visit the Kuthodaw Pagoda, known for housing the "world's biggest book." Its 729 marble tablets, each inside its own small, white *pitaka* pagoda, are collectively inscribed with the entire text of the Tripitaka (teachings of the Gautama Buddha). Next, from Mandalay Hill Pagoda, enjoy exquisite sunset views. Check into the deluxe MANDALAY HILL RESORT HOTEL, near the Royal Palace. Enjoy dinner in the hotel.

#### Mandalay

**Monday, Day 8**

After breakfast, visit the restored Mandalay Palace and Fort, the last palace to be built by the Burmese monarchy. Completed by King Mindon in 1859, he moved his capital from Amarapura to Mandalay as the location



*The intentionally unfinished 18th-century Mingun Pagoda, still guarded by the remains of large stone lions, was irreparably damaged in an 1839 earthquake that produced wide cracks in its walls.*

After lunch in a nearby restaurant, continue touring Bagan's numerous pagodas. Enjoy a sunset cocktail cruise on the Irrawaddy River and watch as the changing light provides a breathtaking illumination of the ancient temples.

#### Bagan/Mandalay

**Sunday, Day 7**

This morning, fly to Mandalay. A former capital of the Myanmar kingdom and the heart of its royal history, Mandalay still has an imperial feel with the crowning glory of Mandalay Palace at its center. In Amarapura, the City of Immortality, stop at one of Myanmar's most photographed sites, the U Bein Bridge, the world's longest teak footbridge, which crosses Taungthaman Lake. Visit the serene Maha Ganayon Monastery, home to several thousand young monks, and Mahamuni Buddha Temple, a major pilgrimage site where gold leaf is regularly applied to the most revered Buddha in Myanmar by devoted followers. Lunch is in a nearby restaurant.

Later, visit the Kuthodaw Pagoda, known for housing the "world's biggest book." Its 729 marble tablets, each inside its own small, white *pitaka* pagoda, are collectively inscribed with the entire text of the Tripitaka (teachings of the Gautama Buddha).

*Considered by many to be the center of Buddhism in Myanmar, the serene Sagaing Hills are known for their more than 500 monasteries.*



promised favorable omens. Stop at a gold pounding workshop and watch as gold leaf is flattened into thin wafers, a traditional craft preserved by the Myanmar people. Also, meet local artisans and observe the creation of exquisite, handwoven embroidery or intricate woodcarvings.

The remainder of the day is at leisure to pursue individual interests.

#### Mandalay

**Tuesday, Day 9**

This morning, embark on your captivating cruise along the "Road to Mandalay," the Irrawaddy River. Dock in Mingun, known for its formidable Mingun Pagoda, left unfinished following a prophecy that warned if it was completed the country would be destroyed. See the famous 90-ton Mingun Bell, the largest intact bell in the world, which was to be installed at the top of the king's unfinished pagoda. Visit the beautiful white Hsinbyume Pagoda, designed for the Buddhist mythological mountain, Mount Meru and most atypical of the traditional Buddhist architecture.

After lunch, arrive in Sagaing, where the hills are dotted with significant religious shrines and pagodas. Learn more about the ancient arts at Ywahtaung, home of the



*The Shwe Indein Pagoda has an incredible collection of hundreds of weathered stupas dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. When the wind blows, listen for the bells ringing at the top of the small stupas.*

silversmiths' guild. Return to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

#### Mandalay/Heho/Inle Lake

**Wednesday, Day 10**

Fly to Heho and transfer to a restaurant in Pindaya for lunch. Enjoy a special visit to the 11<sup>th</sup>-century Shwe Oo Min Pagoda and its impressive limestone cave complex of winding chambers and passages filled with more than 8000 statues of Buddha dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The cave's stalactites and stalagmites form fanciful shapes giving rise to their names, such as "Fairy Princess Loom."

Board a longboat and pass authentic stilted villages en route to the deluxe MYANMAR TREASURE RESORT, ideally located on Inle Lake, a place of peace and tranquility that offers a glimpse of the Burmese traditional lifestyle in a serene environment. Dinner in the hotel is enhanced by lovely views of the lake.

#### Inle Lake

**Thursday, Day 11**

Spend a full day exploring the treasures and natural wonders of magnificent Inle Lake by longboat. Watch for local leg rowers, or Inthas, in *sampans*. Cruise into the narrow and shallow canals of Indein Creek, and see thousands of beautifully decorated stupas nearby. Continue on to Phaung Daw U Pagoda, the most sacred

*Pindaya's remote limestone cave showcases more than 8000 gold-painted statues of Buddha in varying shapes and sizes, made from teakwood, marble, alabaster, brick and lacquer.*



site in Shan state, featuring five Buddha statues covered with layer upon layer of gold leaf.

Following lunch in a nearby restaurant, learn more about traditional cottage crafts by watching silk weavers and silversmiths. Visit the stilted Nga Phe Chaung Monastery, known for its domesticated jumping cats, a cheroot workshop and the fascinating floating markets. Enjoy a Farewell Dinner in the hotel.

#### Inle Lake/Heho/Yangon

**Friday, Day 12**

Fly to Yangon this morning. The afternoon and evening are at leisure. Continue on the Bangkok, Thailand, Post-Program Option with an overnight stay in Yangon or depart for the U.S.

#### Yangon/U.S.

**Saturday, Day 13**

Arrive today in the U.S.

#### Balloon Ride over Bagan

Let your spirit take flight on a once-in-a-lifetime early morning hot-air balloon flight over Bagan. Gently glide over temples, pagodas and stupas at sunrise, marveling at this magnificent, ancient kingdom from an elevated perspective. Space is limited. Weather permitting.

#### Included Features

##### In Yangon (Rangoon)

- ◆ Three nights and one day room (final day) in the **five-star** CHATRIUM HOTEL ROYAL LAKE YANGON.
- ◆ Breakfast each morning and one lunch.
- ◆ Welcome Reception and Dinner.
- ◆ Tour of Yangon, including the revered 230-foot **Reclining Buddha**, Dutch-designed **St. Mary's Cathedral**, historic **Botataung Pagoda** and the **National Museum**.
- ◆ Visit to the holistic Gitameit Music Center; Kalaywa Tawya Monastery, a scriptural learning center for monks, nuns and novices; and the lively **Bogyoke Aung San Market**.
- ◆ Tour of the legendary, gilded **Shwedagon Pagoda**.

##### In Bagan

- ◆ Two nights in the **deluxe** AYE YAR RIVER VIEW RESORT.
- ◆ Breakfast each morning, two lunches and one dinner.
- ◆ Excursions to the remarkable **Bagan Archaeological Zone**, including a tour in a traditional horse-drawn carriage and a visit to the gold-plated **Shwezigon Pagoda**, one of Myanmar's most significant religious sites.
- ◆ Visit to the local Nyaung U Market.
- ◆ Demonstration of the ancient techniques used by skilled artisans to make Bagan's famous lacquerware.
- ◆ Specially arranged sunset cocktail **cruise on the Irrawaddy River**.

##### In Mandalay

- ◆ Three nights in the **deluxe** MANDALAY HILL RESORT HOTEL.
- ◆ Breakfast each morning, two lunches and one dinner.
- ◆ Excursion to Amarapura, highlighted by visits to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century **U Bein Bridge**; **Maha Ganayon Monastery**; and the highly venerated **Mahamuni Buddha Temple**.
- ◆ Visits to **Kuthodaw Pagoda**, featuring 729 *pitaka* pagodas housing marble tablets of the world's largest book, and **Shwenandaw Kyaung**, an all-teak pavilion enveloped in intricate woodcarvings.
- ◆ Excursion to Mandalay Hill Pagoda for exquisite **sunset views over Mandalay**.
- ◆ Tour of **Mandalay**, including the beautifully restored Mandalay Palace and Fort and demonstrations in gold leaf, embroidery and woodcarving artisan workshops.
- ◆ Full-day, private **Irrawaddy River cruise** featuring visits to historic **Mingun Pagoda**, striking **Hsinbyume Pagoda**, the Buddhist center of **Sagaing** and a silversmith artisan workshop.

##### Transfer from Heho to Inle Lake including lunch.

##### In Inle Lake

- ◆ Two nights in the **deluxe** MYANMAR TREASURE RESORT.
- ◆ Breakfast each morning, one lunch and two dinners, including a Farewell Dinner.
- ◆ Excursion to the **Shwe Oo Min Pagoda caves** in Pindaya, filled with thousands of Buddha images.
- ◆ Full-day, private longboat cruise on Inle Lake, highlighted by the archaeological, cultural and natural wonders of this remote waterway.

##### Transfer from Inle Lake to Heho.

##### Enhanced Travel Services

- ◆ Transfers and luggage handling abroad for participants who have purchased their international air tickets through Gohagan & Company and whose arrival(s)/departure(s) coincide with the scheduled group transfer(s).
- ◆ All excursions and visits, as outlined in the itinerary, with experienced, English-speaking local guides.
- ◆ Gratuities to local guides and drivers on included excursions.
- ◆ An optional excursion is available at additional cost.
- ◆ Hospitality desk in the hotels and aboard ship.
- ◆ The services of an experienced Gohagan & Company Travel Director throughout the program.
- ◆ Travel document wallet, name badge and pre-departure information.
- ◆ Automatic \$250,000 flight insurance policy for each participant ticketed on flights by Gohagan & Company.