

## Complete Myanmar

This comprehensive 3-week tour takes in the very best of Myanmar, from the beautiful central coast to northernmost Putao on the border with Tibet



### Day 1 – Arrive Yangon

Arrive in Yangon, where you will be met at the airport by your guide and transferred to your hotel in the city centre. Afternoon at leisure.

This evening, visit the magnificent **Shwedagon Pagoda**. Sheathed in 11 tons of pure gold and 4,350 diamonds, Shwedagon is Myanmar's most magnificent religious structure. At sunset, the pagoda – lit up and always busy with locals, pilgrims and curious travellers – offers visitors a spectacular show of lights and shadows. Overnight in Yangon.

### Day 2 – Explore Yangon

Start your full-day tour of Yangon with a visit to the **Chauk Htat Gyi Pagoda**, notable for its giant (65 x 16m) reclining Buddha, before continuing to the floating palace of **Karaweik** on Lake Kandawgyi.

In the afternoon visit the **Maha Pasana Cave**, a close replica of India's Satta Panni Cave, and the World Peace Pagoda, **Kabar Aye**. Of historic rather than aesthetic interest, the Cave and Pagoda were built in 1952 by Burma's first president, U Nu, for the sixth Buddhist council, and are prominent Yangon landmarks.

### *Your Financial Protection*

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

### Day 3 – Yangon to Bagan (by morning flight)

After breakfast, transfer to Yangon airport for your flight to Bagan. On arrival at Nyaung Oo airport meet with your guide and drive to the **Nyaung Oo Market**, a lively, bustling food market. Wandering the stalls, you'll be amazed by what is grown in this hot and arid region.

After exploring Nyaung Oo, continue on to the **Shwezigon Pagoda**, an early model of the 'bell'-shaped stupa that would later become synonymous with Burmese religious architecture, then **Gubyaukkyi (Wetkyi-in) Temple**, with its display of fine mural paintings, and finally the elegant **Htilominlo Temple**, notable for its detailed plaster carvings. Early afternoon, continue to your hotel.



After you've rested and lunched, continue your exploration of Bagan with a visit to **Ananda**, one of the earliest and most spectacular temples in the region; **Thatbyinnyu Temple**, the highest pagoda in Bagan at 61m; and **Dhammayangyi Temple**, notable for its intricate brickwork. In the evening, climb **Shwesandaw**. The sunset view from the top of this iconic pagoda is famous (though beware the steep steps!)



### Day 4 – Bagan tour

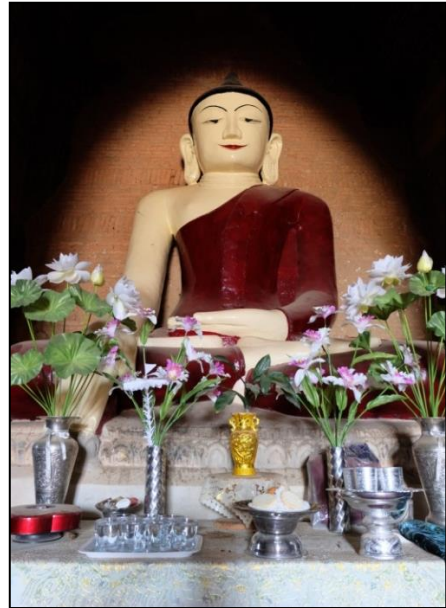
After breakfast, take a trip to **Myinkaba** village. Bagan is renowned as the traditional home of Burmese lacquerware, and in Myinkaba you can observe methods that have been used in its production since the 12<sup>th</sup>-century. After touring a laquer workshop, visit **Myinkaba Gubyaukkyi** – an early Pyu-style temple with a clear Hindu influence – before continuing to **Manuha Temple**, remarkable for its towering Buddha images, and **Nanpaya**, an early Bagan temple with fine stone carvings.

In the afternoon, enjoy a relaxing excursion to the countryside village of **Minnanthu**. If you're not templed-out, you can also visit some of the other intriguing temples that fill the landscape (with over 3,000, you're spoilt for choice!) In the evening, watch the sun set over the Irrawaddy River at **Bupaya**, where, if the view is not quite as spectacular as it is from the Sunset Pagoda, the crowd is always smaller.

### Day 5 – Mt Popa

After breakfast at the hotel, depart with your guide for an excursion to **Mount Popa**. One of the most sacred sites in Myanmar, Popa is believed to be the home of the legendary 37 nat, spirit deities that pre-date the introduction of Buddhism to the country.

You'll set off early for Popa (it's a one hour drive) so that you can start the ascent in good time and avoid the midday heat. The mountain is almost 5,000ft high, but don't worry, you aren't expected to climb to the top. Rather, your goal is to reach the top of **Pedestal Hill**, or Popa Taung Kalat, a volcanic neck on the lower flank of the mountain that, at 2,500ft, is half the height of Popa itself. The hill is crowned with a gilded temple and monastery, one of the most remote in the world, reached by 777 steps. It's a tough climb, but the views from the top are simply wonderful, particularly on a clear day. Relatively few travellers make it to Popa, but you'll likely be joined by other pilgrims; if you're lucky and your visit coincides with a ceremonial day, you might be able to watch a monastic procession to the top of the hill.



If you're not comfortable with the climb, or if the heat is stifling, you may prefer to just admire the temple from a distance. Please do not attempt the climb if you're not feeling fit or are generally uncomfortable with heights!

Leave Popa around midday and return to Bagan. If of interest, you can stop along the way at a toddy farm. This palm fruit thrives in the dry, arid plains of Bagan, and is used to make juice and toddy alcohol. Expect to arrive back in Bagan in time for a late lunch.

After lunch and a rest at your hotel, continue your tour of Bagan with a visit to the temples of **Lay Myathna, Phaya Thonezu** and **Tayoke Pyay**, completing your overview of Bagan's major sites. Alternatively, you may prefer to hire a bicycle (ask your hotel or your guide to help) and spend your last afternoon in Old Bagan exploring at leisure. Return to your hotel early evening.

### Day 6 – Bagan to Mandalay (Irrawaddy River Cruise)

After breakfast, your driver will pick you up at the hotel and take you to the jetty to board a river cruiser for your ride to **Mandalay**. The relaxing cruise takes you along a lovely stretch of the Irrawaddy River.

The cruise arrives in Mandalay after sunset. You'll be met on arrival and transferred to your hotel.



*NB. It's also possible to take an overnight slow cruise to Mandalay. You'll moor at a village in the evening and spend the night on the river. The overnight cruise includes a visit to Yandabo Village,*

*notable as the site where the first Anglo-Burmese treaty was signed in 1826. Let us know in advance if this is of interest.*

## Day 7 – Mandalay and Amarapura

Begin the day with a visit to **Amarapura** (the City of Immortality). Amarapura was founded by the Burmese King Bodawpya in 1783, and served as the capital until 1857, when King Mindon founded Mandalay. Both cities have since grown to such an extent that Amarapura has become almost a suburb of Mandalay.

While in Amarapura, visit the **Mahagandaryone Monastery**, the largest teaching monastery in Myanmar. Every day at around 10:30a.m, hundreds of monks queue up in procession for their second and last meal of the day. Your guide will aim to get you in here in time for the start of the procession.

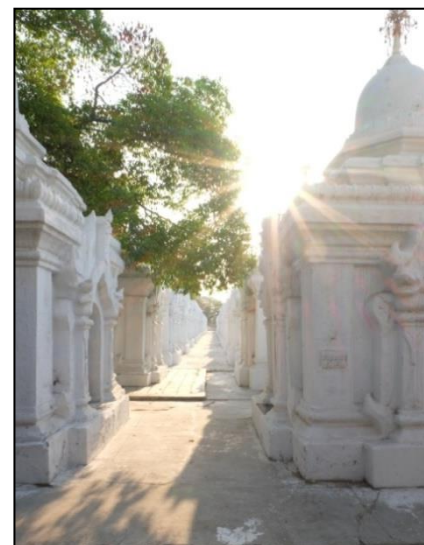


From Mahagandaryone, continue to the 1.2km long **U Bein Bridge**. The longest wooden bridge in the world, U Bein is constructed from 1,700 teak pillars and covers the entire span of **Taungthaman Lake**. Allow an hour to cross the bridge, which is always busy with locals en route to market and with monks from the local monastery.

After the morning tour, you can stop for lunch in Amarapura, where there are several nice cafes, or return to your hotel in Mandalay.

In the afternoon, continue your tour of Mandalay with a visit to the **Shwenandaw Monastery**, situated right in the heart of the city on the outskirts of the Royal Palace. Exquisitely carved from teak wood, this small, partially concealed monastery is one of the most beautiful in the city. It was built at the end of the nineteenth-century as the royal apartment of King Mindon, and only became a monastery after his death, when it was transferred from the Royal Palace to its current site. This allowed Shwenandaw to escape the ruinous bombing that destroyed much of the Royal Palace during WWII (it is the only structure from the original Palace to have survived to this day). Fascinating for its history, it is also quite simply a stunning example of Burmese teak wood-carving.

From Shwenandaw, visit the nearby **Kuthodaw Pagoda**. Sometimes referred to as the 'world's largest book', Kuthodaw is famous for its 729 marble tablets engraved with Buddhist



scriptures. Set out in neat lines and each contained within an identical stupa, the stone slabs are a marvel.



In the evening, ascend **Mandalay Hill** (you can go by car or join the local pilgrims in walking to the summit, but do bear in mind that it's a long climb and must be made barefoot!) Mandalay Hill is another of the city's famous religious sites, crowned by the colourful, beautifully decorated **Sutaungpyei Pagoda**, but it's also very much a public space popular with locals and travellers alike, who gather at the top of the hill each evening to watch the sun set over Mandalay.

## Day 8 – Ava and Sagaing

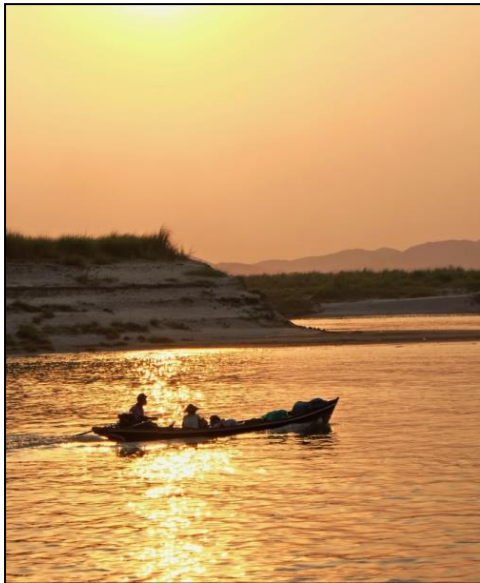
Depart Mandalay after breakfast for **Ava (Inwa)**, another of Myanmar's ancient capitals, founded by King Thado Minbya in 1364. The Kings of Ava, who ruled from 1364 to 1555, only governed Upper Burma, having lost control of the fertile central Burmese plains, and with them Bagan, to Mongol invaders. While the Ava Kings claimed descent from the Kings of Bagan, they ruled a vastly reduced kingdom.

Nevertheless, if Ava isn't as glorious as Bagan, it's a fascinating site that is often overlooked by visitors to the country. Like Bagan, it's barely developed, and its rural surrounds are a marked contrast to busy Mandalay (it's an hour's drive away). Donkey cart is the preferred form of transport (walking is also an option!) The main attraction is the 19<sup>th</sup>-century **Maha Aungmye Bonzan Monastery**. Built entirely of brick, rather than teak, this still-active monastery has an almost gothic quality. Nearby are the **Htilaingshin Paya** stupas. There are also a small number of ruins dating back to the Ava period, but nothing on the scale of those found at Bagan.



In the afternoon, continue your journey out of Mandalay and into the countryside with a visit to **Ywataung Village**, famous locally for its silver craft. Visit a silversmith and take a stroll around the village, before continuing on to the **Sagaing Hills**. Located about 20km south of Mandalay, the Sagaing Hills are home to a number of religious sites, including a small nunnery, the **Thirty Caves** temple housing a number of Buddha images (calling to mind the more famous Buddha Caves of Laos) and, crowning one of the higher hills, the **Soon Oo Ponnnya Shin Pagoda**, which offers an impressive vista of the

valley below. Climb to the pagoda in time to watch the sun set, before returning to Mandalay in the evening.



#### **Day 9 – River cruise to Mingun Village**

This morning, embark on a leisurely cruise up the Irrawaddy River to **Mingun**, a small village located just upstream from Mandalay.

A former royal retreat, Mingun houses a number of treasures, including the gigantic, unfinished **Mingun Pagoda (Pahtodawgyi)**, and the **Mingun Bell**, the world's largest functioning ringing bell. But beyond its sights and historical attractions, Mingun is simply a pleasure to explore, with lots of market stalls to browse and beautiful views of the river.

Return to Mandalay after lunch in Mingun.

In the afternoon, enjoy a tour of some of the city's famous workshops, visiting artisans specialising in gold leaf, silver, bronze casting, wood and marble carving.

Return to your hotel late afternoon, with the rest of the day at leisure.

#### **Day 10 – Fly to Putao**

Leave Mandalay this morning and catch the morning flight to **Putao**, in northern Kachin state. This is one of the most remote regions of Myanmar, close to the border with Tibet. Here, in one of the least visited and most beautiful regions of South-East Asia, you'll spend the next 5 days exploring deep forests, mountain villages and the lower foothills of the Greater Himalayas.

You'll be met on arrival in Putao and driven to your guesthouse. After you've settled in at the lodge, take a walk around Putao town. You might need a bit of time to adjust to the climate—Putao is on average 10 to 15 degrees cooler than the hot plains of central Myanmar!

When ready, return to your guesthouse for dinner.

#### **Day 11 – Trek to Namtunko**

Wake early this morning and start the day with a visit to Putao market, where the local Rawang, Lisu, Shan and Kachin people gather to trade. It's very much a local rather than a tourist market, but you can pick up some local crafts and trinkets as souvenirs.

After breakfast at the guesthouse, set off on foot for **Namtunko**, a small Lisu village to the west of Putao. The walk follows well-trodden paths through small hamlets and farms to begin with, but you soon find yourself in the wilderness. Much of the trek is uphill but at a gentle pace. You'll trek for 5-6 hours, stopping to enjoy a picnic lunch en route. Arrive at Namtunko early evening, just as the villagers are returning home from work. You stay tonight in a local homestay, with a home-cooked dinner.



#### **Day 12 – Trekking in the Putao Valley**

Say goodbye to your hosts after breakfast and set off from Namtunko and into the surrounding bamboo forest. You'll climb to approx. 800m this morning, before descending into another valley

(with marvellous views of the Putao plains as you descend) in the afternoon, where you'll be picked up by your driver and taken back to Putao for the night. Approx. 6 hours trekking today.



### Day 13 – Machanbaw

Today involves less walking. In the morning travel one hour by car to **Machanbaw** by car. One of the largest towns in the region, Machanbaw was the site of northern Myanmar's first British colonial administration in 1914, but only briefly, as the British soon moved their administration to Fort Hertz in Putao. There are only a few traces of this colonial past; some officer houses still stand, as does the dusty, now-abandoned British Club, but little else remains.

Explore the town market as well as Machanbaw's most prominent landmark, the **Stone Dragon rock**, an rocky outcrop said to resemble a dragon. It's a short walk from town into the surrounding countryside to reach the rock. Afterwards, return to Putao for lunch. The rest of the day is free. Explore Putao, or perhaps enjoy an afternoon trek or bike ride in the valley.

### Day 14 – Trekking in the Putao Valley

Set off for the village of **Lonsut** after breakfast, trekking through paddy fields and over a low plateau with wonderful views of the valley. From Lonsut, continue through bamboo groves and small settlements to the village of **Hopaing**. Hopaing is a Shan settlement, and houses a small Buddhist monastery (a rare sight in this region, as other than the Shan the tribes of Putao are predominantly Christian or Animist). While in Hopaing you can visit the monastery and learn more about the Shan people, their unique Buddhist customs and striking dress, before returning to Putao via Namtun creek.



### Day 15 – Fly to Heho (afternoon flight)

Morning at leisure. In the afternoon, depart Putao and fly to **Heho**, Shan State, travelling via Mandalay (please note that flight times are somewhat irregular, and it is sometimes necessary to spend a night in Mandalay depending on the day of the week you leave Putao).

On arrival in Heho, drive to **Nyaung Shwe** on the shores of **Inle Lake**. It's a two-hour drive through a beautiful stretch of hill country and past paddy fields.

From Nyaung Shwe, travel by boat to your lodge on the lakeshore, arriving early evening just as the sun is setting over the lake.



## Day 16 – Inle Lake

Embark on a full-day tour of Inle Lake. Travelling by private boat, you'll spend the morning visiting a number of workshops, including a cheroot making factory, boat building workshop and a silk weavers – all providing an opportunity to learn more about the local economy and way of life on the lake.

In the afternoon, continue your tour with a visit to the famous jumping cat monastery and to **Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda**, the most iconic religious site in Shan state.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure today will be exploring the lake itself, where you'll see fishing villages, lakeshore paddy fields, and floating gardens of water hyacinth and bamboo. Let your guide know if you'd like to reduce the number of stops and enjoy more time on the lake.

## Day 17 – Indein Village

Start the day with a visit to **Indein Village**. This is the site of a 12<sup>th</sup>-century pagoda complex, Shwe Indein, that has only very recently become accessible. The site consists of hundreds of gently-decaying stupas of varying sizes, neatly set out in compact lines, and partially obscured behind the dense foliage.

Some say that the complex was built in the first-century BC by King Ashoka, the great tyrant monarch turned Buddhist reformer, but archaeologists prefer to date them to the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, making them roughly contemporary with the temples of Bagan.

Return to your lodge early afternoon after exploring Indein. The rest of the day is at leisure.



## Days 18-20 – Fly to Thandwe (morning flight); at leisure on Ngapali Beach (3 nights)

Depart Inle Lake early this morning and drive to the airport for your flight to **Thandwe**, Rakhine state. On arrival, transfer to your hotel on **Ngapali Beach**. The next three days are at leisure on the coast.

Ngapali is Myanmar's most popular beach destination, but it is not a busy resort. Compared to Thailand's famous beach resorts, and even those of Cambodia and Vietnam, Ngapali is decidedly sleepy – there are few activities or available locally, and no nightlife, but those just looking for sand and surf will find Ngapali a welcome alternative to the region's noisier beach retreats.





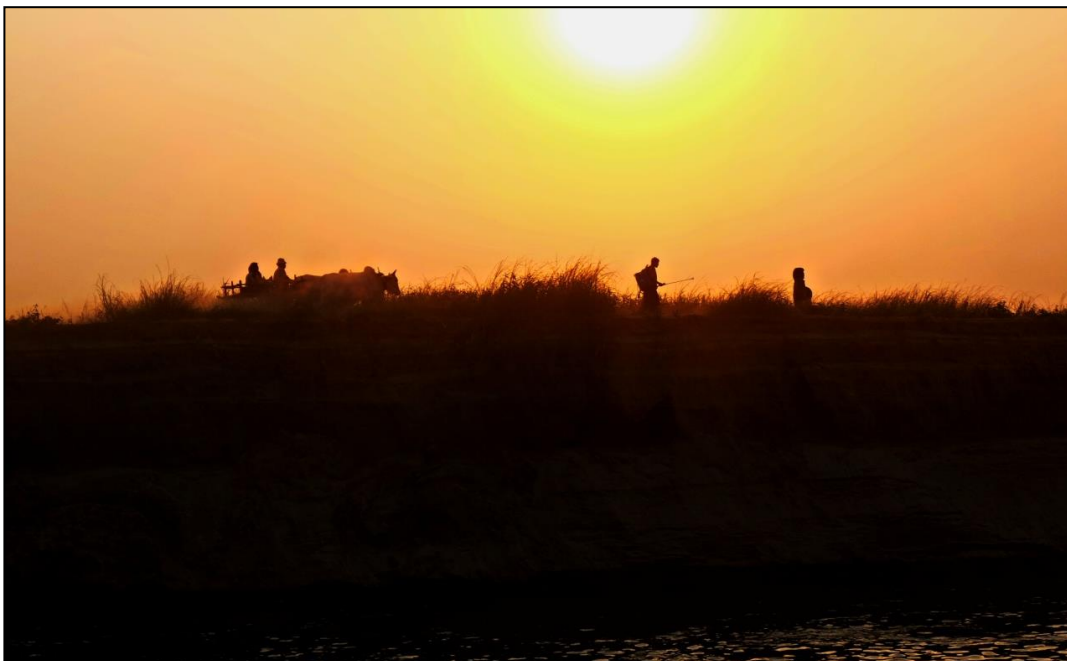
### Day 21 – Thandwe to Yangon (morning flight)

Catch the morning flight to Yangon from Thandwe. On arrival, you'll be met by your guide and transferred to your hotel.

After lunch, visit the **Bogyok Aung San Market**, the city's liveliest bazaar, for a spot of souvenir shopping, followed by a visit to **Botataung Pagoda** in the city centre. Time allowing, you can wander around Chinatown and Yangon's busy fruit market before returning to your hotel in the evening.

### Day 22 – Departure

Free until your scheduled transfer to the airport for your return flight home.



## Price Guide:

The cost of this itinerary is from **£2,985 per person** (without Putao, from **£2,195**) based on a group size of 2 and subject to availability at the time of booking. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).

### Includes:

- Twin/double accommodation (B&B basis)
- Internal flights and airline taxes
- Private transportation throughout
- All entrance fees
- Experienced regional guides

### Excludes:

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Visas
- Personal travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips
- Lunch and dinner to own account unless stated otherwise in itinerary

