

MYANMAR

DETAILED ITINERARY

THE ROAD TO MANDALAY

Aug 21/23

Pagan



Myanmar is a vibrant tapestry of culture, history and geography. A delightful blend of diverse ethnic groups, graceful Buddhist monasteries, and ancient pagodas welcome travelers to this exotic country. Bordering Thailand, Laos, India, Bangladesh and China, Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) is at the cultural crossroads of Southeast Asia. Our extensive 20-day itinerary has been designed to explore this country's extraordinary cultural and geographic treasures to the fullest.

Beginning in Yangon (Rangoon), we visit the opulent Shwedagon Pagoda, beautifully ensconced in gold. Join pilgrims on their journey to Golden Rock Temple. Explore the monasteries and historic sites of Mandalay before traveling back in time as we take in the breathtaking countryside and traditional riverside villages during our 2-day Irrawaddy River journey to Bagan. With over 2,600 ancient monuments in

FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 20 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start and finish in Yangon • All meals included • Includes 4 internal flights • Visit the famed Shwedagon Pagoda and Golden Rock Temple • Meet ethnic Hilltribe minorities • See the skillful leg rowers of Inle Lake
- Visit ancient Bagan and its 2600 monuments
- 2-day journey down the Irrawaddy River • Explore the monasteries and historic sites of Mandalay
- Explore the world's biggest book • Visit the extinct volcano of Mount Popa

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

Feb 05 - Feb 24, 2024 - \$5995 USD

Activity Level: 2-3

Comfort Level: Some rough roads and long drives.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Comfortable hotels with private bathrooms. 2 nights basic accommodation in Kyaing Tong. 2 nights on a boat on the Irrawaddy River with private bathrooms.

ELDER TREKS



SMALL GROUP
EXOTIC ADVENTURES
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

Bagan, we visit the most impressive temples and pagodas, adorned with statues and mural paintings. We travel to Mount Popa to view the shrine atop an extinct volcano and walk around the historical hill station of Kalaw. On Inle Lake, we travel by longtail boat to see one-legged rowers, floating gardens, lakeside markets, monasteries and the ancient ruins of In Thein Pagoda. In Kyaing Tong, on the Shan Plateau, we trek to the Hilltribe villages of the Akha, Arn, Lahu, Palaung, Khun Shan and Wa people.

This is your invitation to a sublime country inhabited by some of the friendliest people on Earth.

DAY 1 ARRIVE IN YANGON

Upon arrival at Yangon airport you will be met and transferred to our hotel. We enjoy dinner and an orientation briefing tonight.

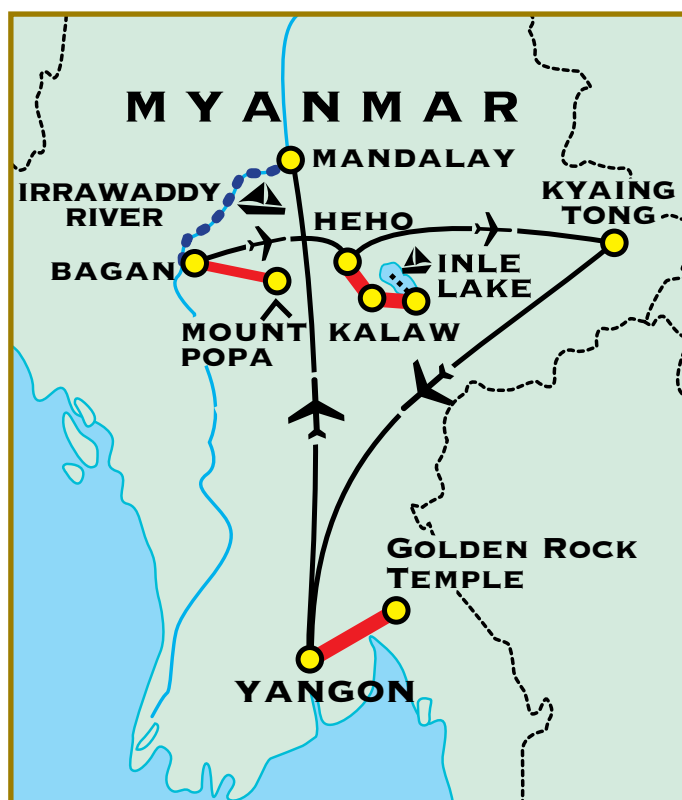
Overnight in Yangon.

DAY 2 TO GOLDEN ROCK

After breakfast, we depart for Golden Rock. On the way, we visit the Htauk Kyant War cemetery, the final resting place for 27,000 allied soldiers who died during World War II.

After lunch, we continue to Kyaik Hti Yo Pagoda (Golden Rock Pagoda) which is one of the most important religious sites in Myanmar and a dream destination for devout Buddhists. The boulder is painted gold and is balanced on the edge of a cliff atop Mt. Kyaiktiyo.

According to legend, the Golden Rock itself is precariously perched on a strand of Buddha's hair. The balancing rock seems to defy gravity, as it perpetually appears to be on the verge of rolling down the hill.





All pilgrims and visitors must take one of the local buses that pack people into the open air seats for an uphill drive filled with switchbacks and stunning scenery. Meeting the local pilgrims is typically one of the highlights of this excursion, both during our drive and also at Golden Rock itself! Once checked into our hotel, we continue to spend the rest of the day exploring this site before experiencing the sunset, which casts a beautiful glow.

Overnight in Kyaikhtiyo.

DAY 3 RETURN TO YANGON, CITY SITES

This morning we drive back to Yangon, making a few interesting stops along the way.

Overnight in Yangon.

DAY 4 FLY TO MANDALAY - GOLDEN PALACE MONASTERY

Today, we depart Yangon for our flight to Mandalay. After lunch, we visit Golden Palace Monastery and UNESCO Site Kuthodaw Pagoda, also known as the biggest book of the world because of its 729 marble slabs with Buddhist inscriptions.

Overnight in Mandalay.

DAY 5 MANDALAY - FORMER ROYAL CAPITALS AND MONASTERIES

After breakfast, we drive to Amarapura, an ancient city located 11km south of Mandalay. We visit Mahargandaryon Monastery to see the lunch procession of 1000 monks and take a short walk on U Bein Bridge, the longest teak bridge in the world. We then drive to the ancient city of Inna (Ava).

After lunch, we visit Bagayar Teak Monastery, Yadanar Se Mee Pagoda complex, and Me Nu Brick Monastery by horse carriages.

Overnight in Mandalay.

DAY 6 MANDALAY SITES

This morning our first visit is to a gold leaf making workshop. We then visit Mahamuni Pagoda, which is the second most famous pagoda after Shwedagon in Yangon. Next we visit a nunnery, which is off of the tourist track and a great experience! We see the procession of nuns for lunch.

We also visit Mandalay Hill for a spectacular sunset viewing.

Overnight in Mandalay.

DAYS 7-8 BEGIN 2-DAY IRRAWADDY RIVER CRUISE (TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE)

After an early breakfast, we transfer to the jetty for our 2-day river journey along the Irrawaddy River. We set sail upstream for Mingun village to visit the pagoda complex. After lunch on board, we visit the 90 ton Mingun Bell, which is the largest ringing bell in the world, and beautiful Sin Phyu Me Pagoda.

Overnight onboard.

The next morning, we continue downstream on the river. After lunch, we visit Yandabo village, a small rural village where a treaty between the British and Burmese was signed in 1826, after the first Anglo Burmese war. Now the village is famous for its handmade terracotta pots produced in traditional ways. We continue our Irrawaddy cruise until we get to the place where the Chindwin River and the Irrawaddy River meet. Here we will moor overnight.

*Please note that the Irrawaddy cruise line has halted operations until tourism resumes in the area. We will drive and overnight in Bagan in the meantime. ElderTreks continues to monitor the situation.

Lunch, dinner and overnight onboard. (Temporary plan - dinner and overnight in Bagan)

DAY 9 BAGAN

In the early morning, we disembark from the boat. After a stroll through the colorful local market, we continue with visits to the most significant pagodas and temples of Bagan. We visit the Shwezigon Pagoda, built by King Anawrahta in the early 11th century as a religious shrine, as well as Ku Byanuk Gyi, a temple with superb murals of Jataka scenes, and then Ananda Temple, with four standing Buddha images.

After lunch, visit a lacquerware craftsmen's workshop in nearby Myinkaba village, which is one of Myanmar's most treasured handicrafts. We visit Manuha Temple, built in the Mon style in 1059 by the captive Mon King Manuha. We then visit a viewing point where we can watch the sunset over the majestic Irrawaddy River.

Overnight in Bagan.

DAY 10 ANCIENT SITES & TEMPLES OF BAGAN

After breakfast, we visit Min Nan Thu Village, Phaya Thone Zu Phaya and Nandamanya Temples, noted for exquisite murals of 13th century, as well as Kyat Kan Cave Monastery, a famous meditation retreat



Mount Popa







Ancient temples of Pagan



in Bagan. We also visit the archaeological museum where we see beautiful Buddha images of bronze, stone and lacquer.

In the afternoon, we visit Dhamayarzinka Pagoda and continue to farming villages around Bagan to gain an insight into the lives of the local people. We complete the day by watching the sun set over the many ancient temples dotting the countryside.

Dinner and overnight in Bagan.

Optional 1 Hour 'Sunrise over Bagan' Balloon Excursion: \$320USD

We recommend you book this in advance.

DAY 11 MOUNT POPA

After breakfast, we drive to Mount Popa. We stop at Palm Forest to see how they climb the trees to get the sap and observe how they make palm sugar and moonshine. We continue to Mount Popa, an extinct volcano with spectacular views. Its shrine is dedicated to animist spirits known as "37Nats". The setting and views are spectacular. On the way back, we visit Shwesintaing village near Mount Popa and then we return to Bagan.

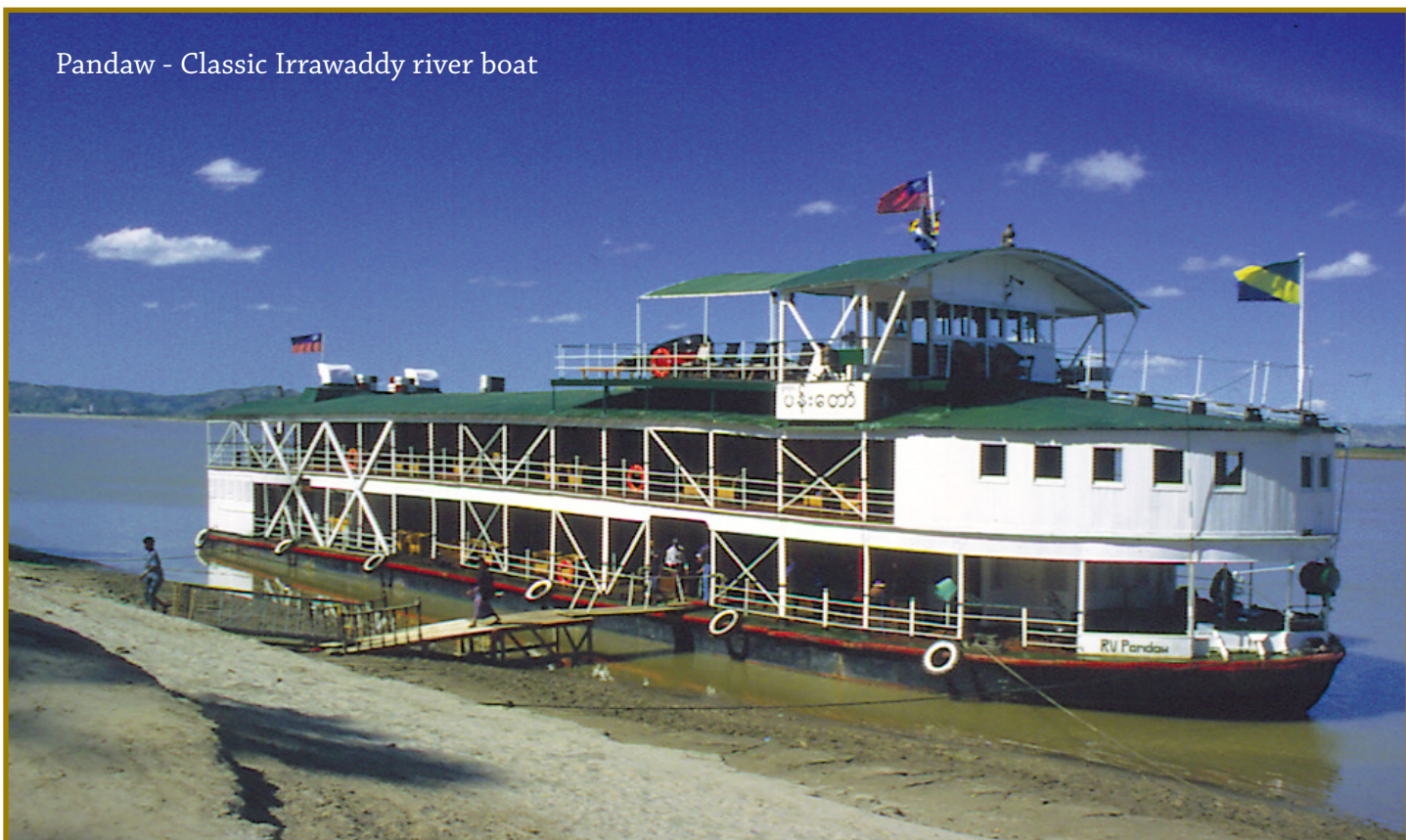
Overnight in Bagan.

DAY 12 FLY TO KALAW, HILL STATION

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport for our flight to Heho in Shan State. Upon arrival, we drive to Kalaw, a delightful hill station on the rim of the Shan Plateau, which is the market center for hilltribes from surrounding regions. At 1,320 meters, Kalaw has a cool and pleasant climate. We will visit the Pindaya Caves, where thousands of golden Buddhas line the rocky shelves and stalagmite altars, that date back to the 18th century. We will



Pandaw - Classic Irrawaddy river boat



Inle Lake







enjoy lunch in the area, surrounded by gorgeous agricultural landscape.

After lunch, you can simply relax or enjoy a walk in the neighborhoods of Kalaw.

Dinner and overnight in Kalaw.

DAY 13 SIGHTSEEING IN AND AROUND KALAW

After breakfast, we start our sightseeing in the surrounding areas of Kalaw. We drive to Myin Ma Htee village of the Danu ethnic group. We visit Shwe Oo Min Pagoda, a small cave with several Buddha statues, Kalaw Train Station and a local market. The town is a market center for ethnic minorities from surrounding regions.

We return to Kalaw for lunch, followed by a visit to Hnee Phaya, which houses a 500 year old lacquer Buddha. In the late afternoon, we enjoy a walking tour through this peaceful place with an atmosphere reminiscent of the colonial era, or explore more of the town.

Overnight in Kalaw.

DAY 14 INLE LAKE

We take a morning drive to Nyaung Shwe for Inle lake. On the way, we stop at Shan Paper and Parasol workshop. We continue by boat to visit the Phaungdaw Oo Pagoda, one of the main principle shrines in Myanmar, dating back to the 18th century. We visit the weaving village of Inpawkhon and a Charoot factory at Nampan village.

We will also stop at Tha Yet Pu village of Pa O's tribe. The Pa O tribe are the second largest group in Shan state, famous for wearing their traditional black and indigo dress and colorful turbans.

Overnight on Inle Lake..

DAY 15 ONE-LEGGED ROWERS OF INLE

LAKE

We take a morning journey by boat to view life around the lake where we see the famous one-legged rowers, typical floating gardens, local methods of fishing and magnificent scenery.

After lunch, journey to the western shore of Inle Lake and the beginning of a stair path leading to the hidden Inn Thein Pagoda complex. A large covered passage, supported by 406 pillars, leads into the complex of over a thousand stupas. The passage holds many small ancient stupas, carved with figures and floral designs which leads to the Inn Thein Pagoda, said to have been built by the missionary of the Indian Emperor Asoka, who reigned over most of the Indian subcontinent in the 3rd century BC.

We continue on to the Nga Phe Kyaung Monastery, once famous for its jumping cats trained by monks.

Overnight on Inle Lake.

DAY 16 FLY TO KYAING TONG

After breakfast, we fly to Kyaing Tong (via Heho or Mandalay). In Kyaing Tong, we make a visit to One Tree Hill view point, as well as the Shan Lacquerware workshop and take a stroll around the scenic Naung Tong Lake.

Overnight in Kyaing Tong.

DAY 17 HILLTRIBES OF KYAING TONG

Today we explore the colorful Kyaing Tong market and enjoy a full day excursion to the surrounding hilltribe villages. We drive about one hour to visit an Arn village. Arn people are animist and known for their black teeth. We walk for about 2 hours in a very natural setting through tribal villages. We visit the Akha tribe to see their famous and spectacular head

dresses that jingle with silver and colored tassels. We also stop to meet the Lahu people, whose origins date back to the Tibeto-Burman era, as well as the Khun people, known for their elegant embroidered silk longys and colorful turbans. Enjoy a simple lunch at a Shan village. We visit a Shan monastery and Palaung village before we end our day with a pleasant drive passing through many picturesque forests and terraced rice fields.

Overnight in Kyaing Tong.

DAY 18 FLY TO YANGON

Enjoy a leisurely morning before we depart for the airport for our return flight to Yangon.

Overnight in Yangon.

DAY 19 YANGON SITES - SHWEDAGON



PAGODA

We visit one of the world's most spectacular monuments, the Shwedagon Pagoda.

For Burmese Buddhists, Shwedagon is the most sacred of all Buddhist sites in the country, one which all Burmese hope to visit at least once in their lifetime.

Next, we visit the magnificent reclining Buddha at Chauk Htat Gyi Pagoda. We then visit the Karaweik Hall - a floating barge on Kandawgyi Lake, the colonial city center of Yangon. We also visit the famous Scott's Market of Yangon.

We drive to the Nanthida jetty to cross the Yangon River on a local ferry. We visit Dalla village, riding in rickshaws through the small village streets, which provide an interesting glimpse of local life. Visit the old colonial Strand Hotel, built in 1896 by Aviet and Tigran Sarkie, two of the Sarkie brothers. The hotel was used to quarter Japanese troops during World War II.

Dinner and overnight in Yangon.

DAY 20 DEPART YANGON

After breakfast, you have free time until your transfer to Yangon Airport for your departure flight.





QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (portage), national guide, bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit museums and ancient ruins and have talks and discussions on many aspects of history, culture and nature. But this is only a portion of the educational experience. We believe that it is equally educational to meet local people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most “educational” moments are spent wandering around a morning market.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All local transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We travel by private vehicle, bicycle taxis, planes (4 domestic flights), traditional overnight boat on the Irrawaddy river and, of course, by foot.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We always stay in good accommodations — both hotels and lodges, where rooms have a private bath or shower. Please note that in more isolated areas, such as Kyaing Tong, the accommodation is basic. We spend three days on the R/V Pandaw 1947 (our comfortable boat) where each room has private bath facilities.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

We travel to Myanmar/Burma during the dry season: November – March. The temperatures during this period are comfortably lower than the hot season and nights can even be cool.

In November – February, the temperature ranges from 60°F (15°C) – 90°F (32°C) Evening temperatures at the Shan Plateau can drop into 40°F (5°C). In the dry season, occasional rains known as “mango showers” bring temporary relief when the temperatures rise.

8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the adventure. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

**Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit which we will send to you after receiving your booking deposit for the trip.

11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals during the itinerary are included, starting with dinner on day 1, and finishing with breakfast on departure day. We eat a variety of local foods prepared in a wide range of settings. In many cases, we simply order a number of dishes and share, allowing you to sample new foods and decide what you enjoy best.

12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over enroute, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the trip, please do not hesitate to contact our office for additional information. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked on the tour.

