



Adventure tours that delve deeper

Aspiring Myanmar (Burma)

TRIP LENGTH: 14 days

STARTS: Yangon (formerly known as Rangoon)

ENDS: Mandalay

Exotic, hypnotically beautiful, emerging from mists both literal and figurative, Myanmar is a dream destination. It's only recently reopened to foreign tourists, and we're so happy to be here – it's everything we love about travel, plus our presence here helps the repressed local economy.

Fairytale pagodas, floating villages, Buddhists on bikes, balloons over the jungle, jaw-dropping shrines in caves, on mountains, and everywhere in between, hill stations, tea plantations... come and live the dream with us!

Day 1: Welcome to Yangon!

We'll meet you at 1pm for a traditional meal at a local favourite restaurant. In the afternoon your guide will show you around Yangon's centre – a mind-bending mash-up of colonial and Asian architecture, with a skyline where skyscrapers and massive Buddhist pagodas jostle for space.

We'll need to take it easy today as we adjust to the tropical heat. A relaxed exploration of Yangon's famous street food the perfect way to start sampling local delights while not over-exerting ourselves!

Accommodation: Hotel in Yangon's colonial centre

Meals: Lunch and dinner included

Day 2: Massive Buddhas

This morning we'll check out Yangon's excellent museum for a necessary crash-course in Myanmar's cultural heritage. Then we'll go experience it for real, visiting a series of Buddhist monuments of unusual, and increasing, size.

First is Nga Htat Gyi, a five-storey high seated Buddha which, incredibly, soon pales into insignificance beside Chauk Htat Gyi, a 65m-long reclining Buddha!

Gilded, 99m (324ft) tall Shwegadon pagoda is Myanmar's most famous sight, and arguably southeast Asia's most impressive religious construction. Sunset here is an awe-inspiring, and for many people, spiritual experience, one we are privileged to have this evening.

Accommodation: Charming hotel in Yangon's colonial centre

Meals: All meals included

info@aspiringadventures.com | www.aspiringadventures.com

South America HQ: Apartado 611, Cusco, Peru | Pacific HQ: 13 Wickliffe St, Mosgiel 9024, New Zealand

Free Call: 1800 ASPIRING (Australia) | 0508 ASPIRING (New Zealand) | 1 877 438 1354 (US & Canada) | +64 3 489 7474 (Worldwide)

Day 3 Markets and Inle Lake

This morning there's time to explore some of Rangon's colourful, bustling traditional markets, before spending the afternoon flying, driving and boating to otherworldly Inle Lake.

Accommodation: Community owned hotel on Inle lake

Meals: All meals included

Day 4 Inle Lake

The 'one legged' fisherman of Inle Lake is perhaps the most iconic image of Myanmar. Many men of the local, Intha population make their living fishing from their small boats, which they row with one leg while standing up and using their hands to fish.

The other staple of the local economy is farming *on* the water – most of Myanmar's tomatoes are grown here, on floating gardens laboriously constructed from bamboo and lake weed.

Floating markets, monasteries on stilts, and silk weavers and silversmiths plying their trade on the water are a few more of the things that make this place so special. We'll spend today exploring the highlights of Inle Lake in our private longboat.

Accommodation: Community owned hotel on Inle lake

Meals: All meals included

Day 5 Nyaung Shwe

This morning we'll explore upstream waterways rarely penetrated by tourists, and wander a pathway through a spectacular series of ancient and modern pagodas. In the afternoon we'll head for the northern shore of the lake, where we'll have dinner in vibrant Nyaung Shwe, and take a relaxed stroll around the streets, marina and night market of this laid-back, visitor-friendly little town.

Accommodation: Lakeside hotel

Meals: All meals included

Day 6 To Kalaw

We'll journey to Kalaw this morning, stopping to meet monks and umbrella makers along the way.

In Myanmar, as in other parts of Asia that were colonised by the British, highland (so, cooler) weekend getaway places were known as hill stations. Kalaw is one of Myanmar's most famous hill stations, and with its refreshing climate, lush green mountain surroundings and flower-lined streets, it's not hard to see why the British loved it. There are strong Nepali and Indian influences in the food here too – Kalaw is a lovely place to be, and there's time this afternoon to explore and savour it.

Accommodation: Kalaw hotel

Meals: All meals included

Day 7 Countryside and caves

In the morning we'll take a walk through farmland, traditional villages, and coffee and tea plantations.

In the afternoon we'll visit Shwe Oo Min, one of the most surreal sights on the entire trip! It's a natural limestone labyrinth filled with an ever-growing (8,094 at last official count) collection of statues of the Buddha... the cave complex is an experience in itself, and all the Buddhas really take it to the next level!

Accommodation: Kalaw hotel

Meals: All meals included

Day 8 Travel to Bagan

Today we'll drive across the plains to Bagan. It's a long (6-7 hour) drive, but the change in ecosystem to drier, acacia-shaded plains, where palm oil and peanuts are grown, keeps life interesting. Anyway, this is the perfect point in the trip for a rest day, and it certainly ends perfectly, with a cooling cocktail by the pool at our hotel!

Accommodation: Bagan resort

Meals: All meals included

Day 9 The plains of Bagan

The plains of Bagan are the most important tourist attraction in Myanmar. In a land improbably stuffed with Buddhist temples, pagodas, stupas and statues, this place takes the cake. None other than Marco Polo described Bagan as one of the finest sights in the world!

There are more than 4,000 temples, and the remains of at least 10,000 structures, thickly scattered across the forested plains. We'll spend the day checking out a few of them!

Accommodation: Bagan resort

Meals: All meals included

Day 10 Bagan again

The plains of Bagan are so amazing you may well want to spend today exploring them as well – possibly on an e-bike to make navigating the huge area (68 square km/26 square miles), a bit easier! Or if you'd like to take a hot air balloon flight over the site (November to April only, US\$350pp approx), we'll help you organise it.

Or you may choose to spend the day shopping for souvenirs – fabrics and lacquerware are awesome souvenirs from this area – or just lazing by the pool at our accommodation... it's rather irresistible!

Accommodation: Bagan resort

Meals: Breakfast included

Day 11 The road to Mandalay

This morning we'll drive to Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city and cultural capital. There's time for a swim at our hotel pool and a relax in the afternoon, before we tackle a 45-minute hike up 1,729 steps to the top of Mandalay hill. Here we'll chat to young Buddhist monks eager to practise their English, and notch up yet another unforgettable Burmese sunset.

Accommodation: Mandalay hotel

Meals: All meals included

Day 12 Explore Mandalay

Mandalay is bursting with things to do and sights to see. Luckily we have our expert guide to help us make the best of the day as we check out pagodas, teahouses, mosques, a royal palace, and the world's largest book. For people-watchers, there's a bustling riverside, a vibrant street food scene, and opportunities to watch local artisans working with gold and marble.

Accommodation: Mandalay hotel

Meals: All meals included

Day 13 Boat ride to Mingun

Mingun is just 10km (6 miles) downriver from Mandalay, but as we float down the Irawaddy River in our private boat, it feels like we've entered a different world. An incredibly charming and peaceful rural landscape culminates in the peaceful community of Mingun, home to the world's largest functioning, 90-ton bell! We dare you to try to resist ringing it!

We'll enjoy the cool river breeze as we chug back to Mandalay in time for an afternoon swim, last-minute shopping, or a final visit to one of Mandalay's many fascinating corners, before our final dinner and last evening together in Myanmar.

Accommodation: Mandalay hotel

Meals: All meals included

Day 14 Departure day

You can book your flight out of Mandalay for any time today – we'll get you to the airport in time. If you're staying on in Myanmar, we're delighted to help out with suggestions for the rest of your time here.

Meals: Breakfast included

What's included:

- All accommodation (based on double occupancy. Single Supplement available for US\$600)
- All ground transport, including flight between Yangon and Inle Lake
- All activities specified in itinerary
- Dedicated Aspiring Adventures Myanmar specialist guide
- Entrance to all attractions specified in itinerary
- Meals as specified in itinerary
- Drinking water with meals

What's not included:

- Tips for your guide
- Flights to start and from end of trip

Accommodations:

We'll stay in interesting, characterful accommodations of high three-star level. You will definitely have a private bathroom, and you'll enjoy hot water most if not all of the time. Wi-fi access is unreliable throughout Myanmar and you should not count on having access to it.