

MYANMAR EXPLORER

- DURATION – 16 days
- DEPARTURE – Flexible
- PRICE pp share twin
 - 2pax/NZD4360 3>5pax/NZD3970; 6>7pax/NZD3840
 - prices current at the time of publication (09/02/2009)*
- INCLUDES – **Yangon, Kyaikhtiyo (Golden Rock), Bagan, Mandalay, Pindaya, Inle Lake, Mrauk-U, Sittwe.**

This a gem of a tour that explores the cultural heart of Myanmar and includes some off the beaten track destinations such as Golden Rock and the historic former kingdom of Rakhaing on the Bay of Bengal astride the ancient Hanka archipelago trade route. Best time to visit October to March

Day 1. Yangon

Met and transfer to hotel. Sightseeing in Yangon includes a walk through "downtown" Yangon, a diverse mix of faded colonial architecture from the British times, and high-rises built by more recent investors. Late afternoon visit the magnificent Shwedagon Pagoda of Rudyard Kipling fame and one of Myanmar's most sacred places. The massive bell shaped stupa is plated with gold and the tip of the stupa is set with diamonds and rubies, sapphires and topaz – a stunning sight as the sun sets and a most fitting place to begin our trip in this "Golden Land". Overnight at the Hotel.

Day 2. Yangon – Golden Rock by car

Early morning drive to Kyaikhtiyo, passing the World War II War Cemetery. From 'base camp', we transfer to an open truck to drive to the second base camp and then a walk through the bamboo forest to the Golden Rock. The rock is completely covered by gold leaf and delicately balanced on the edge of the cliff. Stay till sunset before descending to the Golden Rock Hotel for overnight.

Day 3. Golden Rock – Yangon by car

After breakfast, drive down to base camp to rejoin our transport to return to Yangon via Bago. En route, visit the cashew nut, rubber plantation and an orphanage house. A short visit to Bago town including the local market; Shwetharlyaung, 55m reclining Buddha and Shwemawdaw Pagoda. Continue through rice fields and small villages to Yangon.

Day 4. Yangon – Bagan by flight

Morning flight to Bagan. Sightseeing at Bagan Archaeological Area will include Nyaung Oo market; Shwezigon Pagoda, the prototype of later Myanmar stupas; Kyansittha Umin; Wet-kyi-inn Gubyaukgyi Temple with exquisite 13th century mural painting and Htilominlo Temple. In the afternoon, visit to lacquer ware workshops; continue to Manuha Temple, Ananda Temple, and Oak-Kyaung monastery. Evening visit to one of the temples for a spectacular view of the sunset over the pagoda fields.

Day 5. Bagan – Mt. Popa – Bagan

Head to Mt. Popa about 48 km south east of Bagan. Mt. Popa is known as the abode of Nats (spirits) - climb 777 steps to the summit before driving to Popa Mountain Resort for lunch with spectacular views of Mt Popa. On the return drive to Bagan stop at a village cottage industry to see the conversion of palm juice to brown sugar.

Day 6. Bagan – Mandalay by flight

Morning flight to Mandalay. Drive to the ancient capital of Amarapura for a visit to Bagaya Monastery, silk weaving workshop and the two-century old U-Bein teak bridge on the Taungtaman Lake. Also visit the nearby monastery. Continue to Mandalay and check into hotel. Afternoon sightseeing including Mahanumi temple, a gold leaf workshop, the Old Palace grounds, Kuthodaw Pagoda, Golden Palace Monastery and conclude the day with a panoramic view of the city from Mandalay Hill.

Day 7. Mandalay – Mingun – Inwa(Ava) - Mandalay

This morning a boat ride across the river to visit Mingun to see the ruins of the unfinished Pathodawgyi Pagoda, the Mingun Bell, and the Myatheintan Pagoda. Return to Mandalay, after lunch, drive to Ava, 30-minute to the south of Mandalay, travel by pony-cart around Ava to Nanmyint leaning tower with a birds' eye view of the mighty Ayeyarwaddy River; Bagaya wooden monastery; Aungmyaybonza Monastery made of brick and stucco. Though the Royal Palace has gone, the Pagodas, Temples and Monasteries still remain. Return to Mandalay, enroute visit the silversmith work place on our way back to hotel.

Day 8. Mandalay – Heho – Pindaya by flight & car & boat

Morning flight to Heho on the Shan plateau. Transfer by road to Pindaya about 90 minutes drive. Visit the Thousand Buddha caves and explore the district, famous for traditional paper & umbrella making. Overnight at the hotel in Pindaya.

Day 9. Pindaya – Inle Lake by car

After breakfast drive down into the Inle basin and by "long-tail" boat across the lake to our Hotel on the Lake. In the afternoon, visit nearby craft villages to sample the spectacular array of traditional handicrafts. You will see the unique method locals use to row their boats, fishermen with their own style of fishing, floating farms and gardens and a handloom weaving cottage with its own showroom. Also visit Phaungdawoo Pagoda which houses the five most revered Buddha Images in the southern Shan State.

Day 10. Inle Lake boat excursions

After breakfast visit a floating market before continuing up a narrow canal to Indein pagoda complex close to a small Pa O tribe village, in the south-west of the lake. From the village, follow an old covered path to a 13th century monastery and the very impressive ruins of hundreds of ancient pagodas, some hidden in the vegetation. The main stupa-area on the top of the hill offers breathtaking views over the surrounding mountains and down to the valley and the lake in the far distance.

Day 11. Inle Lake – Heho – Sittwe – Mrauk U (via Thandwe or Yangon)

We are heading back down country today to return to the airport at Heho for our flight to Sittwe via Yangon. Transfer to a simple boat for 5 hour up-river cruise to the ancient capital of Mrauk U.

Day 12. Mrauk U

Sightseeing of this ancient city includes remains of walls, gateways and the unusual 16th century temples such as the maze-like Shittaung Pagoda, Andaw Thein and Htukkan Thein Temples. Afternoon visit a making 'roofing sheet' business, using the leaf of "Ra Own" tree, a Toddy palm juice shop and Rakhine traditional bronze Buddha Statue casting and stone carving workshop. Enjoy sunset at Shwe Taung hill with view of the Mrauk U city.

Day 13. Mrauk U

Drive to Sin Oh village through the paddy fields. We'll have our breakfast on board as a small boat as we head to Kritchhaung. Visit to a tattooed woman's house to see she harvests the rice. Continue to Sin Gay, a bamboo-producing village. Picnic lunch in a bamboo house in Sin Gay village before returning to Mrauk U as the sun sets over the river.

Day 14. Mrauk U – Sittwe – Yangon (by flight)

Early morning, depart Mrauk U by private boat, head down river to Sittwe. Transfer to Sittwe airport for return flight to Yangon.

Day 15. Yangon

Sightseeing in Yangon will include Karaweik, a royal barge for excellent views along the "pilgrims" causeway across the Royal Lake with stunning views of Schwedagon Pagoda; Chaukhtutgyi, a huge reclining Buddha image and National Museum where precious collections are displayed. After lunch, visit a local glass making factory and Bogyoke Aung San Market (Scott Market) for souvenir shopping.

Day 16. Yangon Departure

After breakfast at hotel, transfer to Yangon International airport for departure flight