EXPLORE!

Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Burma Highlights + Ngapali beach Extension (BUHB 2016)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TRIPDURATI(
17
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: BUHB

Trip Highlights - Burma Highlights + Ngapali beach Extension

- ✓ Rangoon (Yangon) - British colonial heritage and the golden Shwedagon Pagoda
- ✓ Inle Lake - Floating gardens, stilted villages and leg-rowing fishermen
- ✓ Mandalay - Cruise on Irrawaddy River and visit nearby U-Bein Bridge
- ✓ Bagan - Vast plain studded with thousands of ancient temples
- ✓ Ngapali Beach - Off the beaten track palm-fringed beaches and warm tropical waters

Trip Essentials

Accommodation:	16 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	16 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join trip: Rangoon (Yangon)
End Point:	Trip ends: Rangoon (Yangon)
Transport:	Bus, Train, Boat, Flight, Ferry
Countries:	Burma

Burma Highlights + Beach extension

Half-hidden from the world for decades, Burma (Myanmar) is an exciting and adventurous destination. On this journey we admire the gold-encrusted Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon and cruise past floating gardens and stilt villages on Inle Lake, as well as explore the vast temple plains of Bagan. We take a boat on the Irrawaddy River and visit the fabled city of Mandalay, from where we walk over the iconic U-Bein teak bridge in nearby Amarapura. We also explore the Shan Highlands, discovering the old British hill station of Kalaw. We end the trip relaxing on the palm-fringed beaches of Ngapali.

Should I go?
Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese pro-democracy leader, gave her blessing to the return of tourism to Burma in November 2010. National League for Democracy (NLD) leader U Win Tin said: "We want people to come to Burma, not to help the junta, but to help the people by understanding the situation: political, economic, moral - everything." This marked the end of the tourism boycott started in 1995 and the return of small groups and individuals to Burma has been endorsed by Burma Campaign UK and the Free Burma campaign. Explore are delighted to return to Burma after pulling out in 1995 in response to the call for boycott. We use a privately-owned Burmese agent for all of our services, and whilst each itinerary has been carefully planned to try and avoid using any service owned by or affiliated with the government or former military junta, we accept that some money will make its way into their hands. We strongly believe that by operating tours in Burma we contribute to the local economy in a positive way, whilst providing our customers with an insight into the culture, through direct interaction with Burmese people.

Why Book this trip

Our best selling tour is made even better with an unescorted extension to the unspoilt white sand beaches of Ngapali on the Indian Ocean coast! For travellers with a little extra time who want to relax after our unforgettable Burma Highlights tour this is the perfect destination. The beaches in Burma are reminiscent of how beaches would have been in Thailand decades ago, before mass tourism descended. You will stay in a comfortable hotel and be able to choose how to while away the hours at your own pace.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

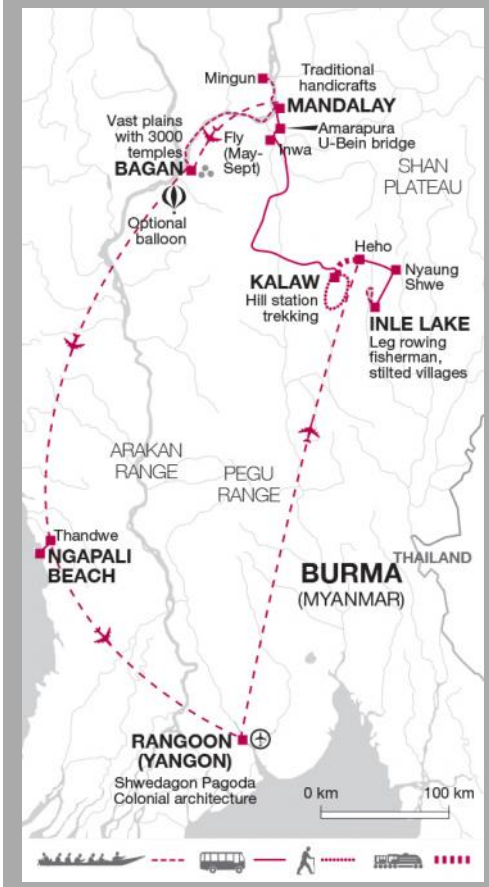
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.



Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

DAY 1 Join tour Rangoon (Yangon)

Arrive in Rangoon and check-in to our hotel. The rest of your day is free to relax after your flight. Alternatively, you may choose to venture out into Burma's largest city. Although replaced by Naypyitaw as the capital in 2006, it remains the industrial and commercial centre of the country.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Discover the sights of Rangoon; fly to Inle Lake

This morning's sightseeing takes us by foot and bus to Rangoon's major sights, starting with the magnificent Shwedagon Pagoda - the most revered temple in the country, which all Burmese Buddhists hope to visit at least once in their lifetime. Containing the relics of the past four Buddhas, its shimmering, 100 metre-high central stupa spire is covered in gold leaf and 4,531 diamonds, well and truly dominating the city skyline. We continue to the downtown area to walk along Pansodan Street, where we will see some impressive British colonial architecture and pass by street markets. Indeed, years of Burmese isolation have resulted in Rangoon preserving the largest number of colonial buildings in Southeast Asia. Our next stop is the Chaukhtatgyi Paya. Home to a giant 70 metre-long reclining Buddha, its serene features are topped by a crown encrusted in diamonds and other precious stones. This afternoon, we take a short flight to Heho, from where we drive to the idyllic setting of Inle Lake. Our base is in the nearby town of Nyaung Shwe for the next couple of days.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Full day to explore Inle Lake by longtail boat

Inle Lake enjoys a picturesque, high-altitude setting on the Shan Plateau, surrounded by hills and home to the Intha people, as well as some Shan, Taungyo, Pa-o and Danu ethnicities. Local communities are devout Buddhists that live in simple houses of wood and woven bamboo, raised above the water on stilts. They are mostly fishermen, skilled artisans and self-sufficient farmers, whose vegetables are grown on floating gardens made of grass and seaweed. The local fishermen are known for practicing a distinctive rowing style which involves standing at the stern of their boat on one leg and wrapping the other leg around the oar. We spend time amongst these village communities and visit their cottage industry workshops, admiring their talents for silk and cotton weaving, as well as paper and silver production. We are also likely to visit a local market over the course of the day.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 At Inle Lake; boat to visit Shwe Indein pagoda complex

This morning's boat trip takes us up a small creek in the western part of the lake to Indein village. Here, we visit a complex of about 1,000 stupas of varying sizes built between the 17th and 18th centuries. We can enjoy wandering around these overgrown ruins before returning to the hotel in the afternoon, the rest of the day is free. You may choose an optional excursion to visit one of Burma's first wineries, or you may choose to sample a traditional massage in town.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Train and drive to hill station of Kalaw

This morning we will enjoy a colourful train journey sitting among the locals to the town of Aung Ban. Although scheduled to take two hours, a relaxed timetable and frequent delays sometimes result in the journey taking longer, but this is all part of the experience and the stunning scenery that we journey through more than makes up for it. Next we drive to Kalaw, which sits high on the western edge of the Shan Plateau and became a popular hill station in British colonial times for the escapism it provided from the searing summer heat. Nowadays, having maintained a sense of quaintness reminiscent of the colonial era, it serves as an ideal base for hilltribe treks. The rest of our day is free to explore the town or simply enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the area.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Walk in Shan Highlands; free afternoon in Kalaw

Today we can look forward to a gentle four-hour trek through the Kalaw tribal heartlands. Starting in the village of Say Wingabar, we ascend through pine forest to Lu Pyi village. Our trail passes through rural countryside and provides us with views of the valley - a picturesque patchwork of rice and vegetable fields. We might see tribal villagers working on their farms, or en route to the market with their produce. At the end of our walk we make a stop at Myinmathi Cave to see its many Buddha images and small stupas. After a lunch stop, we have a short bus transfer back to the hotel where we can relax for the rest of the day. For those who would prefer not to take part in the trek, there is the option to relax at the hotel for the day.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7 Drive to Mandalay

Leaving the Shan mountain scenery behind us, we embark on an interesting land journey to Mandalay, making our own version of Kipling's famous journey to the gateway to the north. The condition of the road can be poor in places, so we expect the 160 mile journey to take about 9 hours in total. We will make short stops where we can along the way. Mandalay was the last royal capital of the Burmese kingdom and is considered to be Burma's most historical and culturally-rich region. We spend time discovering its rich and beautiful heritage, much of which is represented in intricate and skilled local arts and crafts.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Explore Mandalay; boat trip to Mingun village

We begin day by exploring Mandalay. Today we view the world's largest book at Kuthodaw Pagoda, where the entire Buddhist scripture sits on 729 marble slabs. Our next stop is the magnificent Shwenandaw Monastery, originally a 19th century royal palace and famed for its teak carvings of Buddhist myths which adorn its walls and roofs. Mahamuni Paya is the city's holiest temple where we can witness the local people paying their respects by applying gold leaf to an ancient Buddha image. We also plan to make stops at craft shops to watch skilled workers making gold leaf, ornate tapestries and intricate wood carvings. After lunch, we take a short and pleasant boat journey upriver to Mingun - the site of what would have been the world's largest pagoda, had King Bodawpaya not died, thus halting all further work in 1819. What remains is the giant core of a brick pagoda, dramatically split by an earthquake in 1838 and towering 50 metres above the Irrawaddy (Ayeyarwady) River. The original plans would have created a structure three times this height. A nearby shrine houses the 90-tonne bell that was cast to be hung in the finished pagoda, now considered to be the world's largest uncracked bell. As the sun sets over the surrounding hills, we make the seven mile journey back down the river. On our return to Mandalay we have the opportunity to walk through the evening fish market, a lively hub of activity located close to the jetty and a fascinating place to visit.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 9 From Mandalay, visit Inwa and U-Bein Bridge

After a leisurely start this morning we drive four miles southwest of Mandalay, we visit the ancient capital of Inwa (Ava), which had the longest stint of any royal capital between the 15th and 19th centuries. Our visit is conducted by horse-drawn cart along bumpy dirt roads. We plan to stop-off at the yellow stucco monastery of Manu Ok Kaung and Bagaya Kyaung Monastery, famous for its enormous teakwood foundation pillars. The Leaning Tower of Inwa is our final stop. As its name suggests, its precarious angle was the result of a 19th century earthquake. After lunch in a local restaurant (not included), we head to Amarapura. Just seven miles south of Mandalay, this was Burma's penultimate royal capital from 1783 to 1863. We plan to walk through the serene confines of the expansive Mahagandayon Monastery complex, perhaps catching a glimpse of monks going about their evening rituals. We end the day at the 1.3 km-long teakwood footbridge of U Bein. Here we join the locals on their evening promenade across the lake as the sun begins to sink in the sky.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 By boat along the Irrawaddy River to ancient Bagan

Tours taking place from October to April plan to take the express boat service from Mandalay Port to Bagan. Although requiring an early start, we can look forward to a relaxed, full day's cruise down the fabled and mighty Irrawaddy River, observing the sights

and sounds of river life. From May to September, and sometimes during April, water levels are too low for this boat trip, requiring us to fly to Bagan. If travelling by boat we arrive in Bagan in the early evening, we can look forward to a couple of days exploring this awe-inspiring site. As the stand-out highlight of the tour for a lot of our customers, many report that their photos do not do justice to Bagan's magnificence and scale. Without doubt one of the world's premier archaeological wonders, its vast plain is studded with literally thousands of 1,000 year-old temples and stupas. From the 9th to 13th centuries, Bagan was the capital of the Kingdom of Pagan - a precursor of modern Burma. During its height of success between the 11th and 13th centuries, over 10,000 buildings were constructed here, of which over 2,200 still remain. Its sheer magnitude can be realised when you consider that there are more temples, stupas and pagodas on this Manhattan Island-sized plain than there are medieval cathedrals in Europe.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 11 Explore the 1000 year old temples of Bagan

Before visiting the temples today, we stop in Phya Saw village to gain an insight into the traditional ways of life that have changed little over the centuries. We are likely to engage with the local people as they go about their daily business - cotton weaving by hand, grinding peanut oil with oxen and caring for various village animals. Moving on to the temples of Bagan, with so many to choose from, we plan to visit some of the most iconic and distinctive. These include Shwezigon - a prototype of later Burmese stupas; Wetkyi-in-Gubyaukgyi - a 13th century cave temple with some interesting frescoes and Ananda Pagoda - one of the finest, largest and best preserved in Old Bagan. We are also likely to visit Ananda ok Kyaung - a former monastery with spectacular 18th century wall paintings. In the late afternoon, a horse drawn carriage will take us through the temple complex to help us to gain a greater appreciation of the scale of the site. As we travel on and on, amongst a seemingly infinite number of temples and stupas, it is easy to understand why Bagan is known as 'The City of Four Million Pagodas.' We hope to finish our day with a memorable sunset view from an upper terrace of one of the temples.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 12 In Bagan; optional visit to Mount Popa

A tremendous panoramic view of the temple-studded plain provides a great photo opportunity to kick-start our day before we continue with our visits to the most interesting sites. This will include Manuha Temple - built by King Manuha to represent his displeasure of captivity; Nanpaya - Bagan's first cave-style shrine and Gubaukgyi Temple - an early period temple with well-preserved paintings. The afternoon is free. You can choose to take an optional bike ride around the ruins, a sunset cruise, or simply explore more of the temples in your own time. Alternatively, you can take an optional trip to Mount Popa, about 30 miles from Bagan. At a height of 1,518 metres, Mt Popa juts impressively out of the tropical landscape. It is the famous home of the Nats (Spirit Gods) and, as such, Burmese superstition recommends that you don't wear red, black or green on your visit, for fear of offending the Nats. If you choose to climb the 777 steps to the stunning gold-tipped monastery perched on top of the mount, you will be rewarded with panoramic views. This trip also includes a visit to one of many toddy farmers to witness how toddy palm juice and sugar is produced.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 Fly to Thandwe; drive to Ngapali Beach

Today we leave the temples and pagodas of Bagan behind and fly to Thandwe. Our tour leader accompanies the group back to Rangoon so the beach extension is unescorted. From the airport you are met and driven to your hotel on sleepy Ngapali Beach.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 At Ngapali; free time to relax on the beach

The day is free and perhaps the ideal way to spend it is by simply relaxing on the unspoilt white sand beaches overlooking the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15 At Ngapali; options to explore by bicycle or by boat

If you can tear yourself away from the beach the nearby fishing village is a great place to witness local life, bicycles can be hired locally and are a great way to explore. Alternatively boat trips and snorkelling are available for those keen to get into the inviting tranquil waters of the ocean.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 16 Fly back to Rangoon; free afternoon

Leaving the beach behind you return to Rangoon by plane. The remainder of the day is free for further sightseeing. You may like to visit the immense Bogyoke Market, formerly known as Scott's Market, for souvenir or gift hunting (closed on Mondays, full moons and public holidays) or explore the many street markets in the heart of the city. Perhaps another visit to Shwedagon Pagoda would be the ideal way to end your Burmese adventure.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 17 Tour ends in Rangoon

Tour ends after breakfast.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 16 breakfasts, 4 lunches,0 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Local Fees

Cameras and video-cameras are permitted in Burma for which some sites charge a small fee. Restrictions on photography include military facilities and any structure considered strategic (including bridges and train stations though this last may be loosely enforced).

There is a departure tax of US$ 10 payable on international flights.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Burma

Lunch £: 3.00

Dinner £: 5.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Burma

Bottle of Beer £: 1.80

Water £: 0.70

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Bagan - Sunrise visit to Temples from US$ 8; Mount Popa Excursion approximately US$ 42 (based on 3-4 participants); Traditional Massage US$ 10;
Hot Air Balloon US$300-350 depending on Regular or Premium service and time of the year (available Oct - Mar). Due to high demand, if you are planning on taking the optional hot air balloon excursion you may wish to consider booking this in advance to secure your place on the flight. Please refer to your tour notes or personalised itinerary to check which days you will be waking up in Bagan and therefore able to do the excursion. We do not recommend booking on the day you are due to leave Bagan in case an early departure is planned. The balloon excursion does not form part of your included Explore holiday package. Please book and pay with the balloon operator directly: http://www.easternsafaris.com/balloonsoverbagan_home.html
Rangoon - Scott Market and sunset visit to Shwedagon Pagoda US$ 4 transfer plus US$ 5 entrance fees
Inle Lake - Traditional massage US$ 8
Mandalay - Traditional dance performance US$ 12

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.
Accordingly you should allow approximately US$ 40 for this purpose.

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Foreign Exchange

Burma

Major Language: Burmese

ATM Availability: ATMs are becoming more widely available and some hotels may have them, including the Panda Hotel in Yangon. You are more likely to find them in the larger cities, but they are now starting to appear in some of the smaller towns and villages. Please be aware that they are prone to occasional breakdowns so you would be wise to top up your cash before it runs out completely.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are becoming more widely accepted but you should not rely on them. The places where you are most likely to be able to use them are in the cities of Yangon and Mandalay and there may be a charge.

Travellers Cheques: Not accepted.

Local Currency: Kyat.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in U.S. Dollars cash, larger denominations tend to get better exchange rate. NB - PLEASE ONLY BRING NEW U.S. DOLLAR BILLS (BIG HEADS INSTEAD OF SMALL) AND THEY SHOULD BE NEW AND IN A PRISTINE STATE. ANY OLD, TORN OR MARKED NOTES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. U.S. Dollar bills with the series CB will not be accepted for exchange.

Where to Exchange: The official rate is far different from the market rate, we recommend you consult your tour leader for advice regarding the best place to exchange. The exchange booth at airport offers a very poor rate so we recommend you wait until getting into town (taxis accept dollars if agreed beforehand).

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific ‘Joining Instructions’ prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Burma: An e-visa is required to enter Burma and must be arranged prior to travel through the following website: http://evisa.moip.gov.mm/. Visas are valid for 90 days from issue and allow a 28-day, single-entry visit.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Burma

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A plus Polio and diptheria. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Following the advice given by the Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, we strongly recommend the wearing long sleeved shirts and the liberal application of insect repellent as a precautionary measure to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. These precautions should be taken at all times as the mosquitoes are also active during daylight hours. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Burma

Burma is a tropical country and has three seasons. Temperature and rainfall varies across the country; Rangoon, Bagan and coastal areas tend to have higher temperatures and rainfall. Cool season = October to February with average temperatures from 18-24C; at higher altitudes (Inle Lake, Kalaw) the temperature is slightly cooler and temperatures can drop down to about zero at night. Hot season = March to mid-May 25-38C; particularly hot in Bagan and Rangoon. Rainy (Southwest Monsoon) = mid-May to September 23-33C; practically all of the country's rain falls in this period. Monsoon period means that the beach extension is only possible from October to April.

Clothing

You will need loose fitting, comfortable clothes for hot, humid conditions. Sunhat, sunglasses, long trousers and long sleeved shirt essential for protection from the sun.
Warm weather clothing is suitable for Rangoon, Mandalay and Bagan. The Shan highlands, Inle Lake and Kalaw are cooler and in the winter season and temperatures may reach near zero at night, with the mornings often remaining cold. Please dress respectfully when visiting temples and religious sites, covering your torso, shoulders and legs to below the knee and easily removable footwear for convenience as you can only enter sacred sites
barefoot. In general, as Burma is a traditional, conservative and largely Buddhist culture we recommend you do not wear revealing clothing.

Equipment

Mobile phones: Mobile coverage in Burma is improving but be aware that your mobile may not work. It is possible to buy a local SIM card for around $4 in order to make/receive international calls, as long as your phone is un-locked. SMS messaging may not be possible. WiFi is available in most hotels.

Torch/Batteries/Bulb: A small torch is recommended for travel in Burma. Street lighting in both cities and rural areas can be very poor so a torch is useful to help light your way while out at night. Additionally power cuts can occur from time to time, particularly in rural areas. Remember to bring some spare batteries.
Cycling Helmets: If you wish to take part in the optional bike ride we advise that you bring your own helmet with you. Helmets are not available locally.

Footwear

Lightweight walking/hiking boots with good ankle support, trainers and/or sandals for travelling.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Burma

Population: 60,282,000

Size of Country: 676,568 sq km

Major Language: Burmese

ATM Availability: ATMs are becoming more widely available and some hotels may have them, including the Panda Hotel in Yangon. You are more likely to find them in the larger cities, but they are now starting to appear in some of the smaller towns and villages. Please be aware that they are prone to occasional breakdowns so you would be wise to top up your cash before it runs out completely.

Religion: Theravada Buddhism, Hinduism

Time Difference to GMT: +6

Electric Supply & Plugs

Burma

3 Pin Flat

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2016 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2016. 2017/18 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2017.

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