EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Comfort Itinerary Version (TMBU3)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOUR DURATION **22** DAYS

Tour Type: Tailormade

Tour Code: TMBU3

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:

Included Meals: 20 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 0 dinners

Transport:

Countries: Burma

Tailormade Burma Encompassed

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.

Your tour 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.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Depart UK

Depart the UK for your overnight flight.

DAY 2 Arrive Rangoon

Arrive in Rangoon and transfer to the hotel. The rest of day is free and leisure.

DAY 3 Drive to Mawlamyine

Leaving Rangoon behind this morning you transfer to the city of Mawlamyine, situated around 300 km to the south-east, at the mouth of the Thanlwin River. If road conditions allow we travel by way of the Kawkung Natural Cave

DAY 4 Bilu Island

Taking a ferry across to Bilu Gyun, Ogre Island you visit some of the local communities that lie along the Thanlwin River, and explore the villages where you see traditional craftsmen at work. This afternoon, back in Mawlamyine you visit Pa Auk Taw Ya Monastery, one of the largest meditation centres in the country, the 100-year old Seindonn Minbaya Kyaung and watch the sun set from the 9th century Kyaikthanlan Phayar, the highest structure in the city.

DAY 5 Drive to Kyaikhtiyo

Departing Mawlamyine you transfer to Kyaikhtiyo, stopping en route at Thanbyuzayat the WWII cemetery. Dedicated to the prisoners of war who died building the infamous 'Death Railway', the cemetery contains the graves of over 3,700 Allied POWs. After an emotive visit to this site you continue on your journey to Kin Pun 'base camp' where, on arrival, you continue in an open truck up a steep

Why Book this tour?

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. The cool season, from October to February has average temperatures from 18-24C; at higher altitudes such as Inle Lake and Kalaw, the temperatures are slightly cooler and can drop down to zero at night. Hot season, March to mid-May has temperatures of around 25-38C, and can be particularly hot in Bagan and Rangoon. The rainy monsoon season is mainly in the southwest from mid-May to September and has average temperatures 23-33C; practically all of the country's rain falls in this period.

11km track to Yathetaung. From here you then walk for another 45 minutes to the mystical Mount Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda (Golden Rock) in time for sunset.

DAY 6 Drive back to Rangoon via Bago

Today you may have the opportunity to watch the sunrise from the pagoda platform, before driving back to Rangoon. You stop in Bago, founded in 573AD, the town is home to a number of sacred shrines and pagodas, including the Shwemawdaw Paya (the Golden God Temple) the tallest pagoda in the country, the Shwethalyaung Reclining Buddha, the second largest in the world, and the Kyaik Pun Pagoda. If time allows you may also take a look around Bago's local market, before continuing on to Rangoon.

DAY 7 Fly to Bagan; half-day sightseeing tour

Depart Rangoon and fly to Bagan. This afternoon visit some of Bagan's most distinctive pagodas, including the Shwezigon Pagoda, the 13th century frescoes and cave temple of Wetkyi-in-Gubyaukgyi, Ananda Pagoda, one of the best preserved monuments in the entire city and Htilominlo Temple which is known to be the last Myanmar style temple built in Bagan. Late in the day, watch the sunset from a panoramic viewpoint on one of the upper terraces overlooking the temple site.

DAY 8 Sightseeing in Bagan, PM free

This morning you continue your exploration of Bagan with visits to the Sulamani Temple of King Narapatisithu and the finely crafted brickwork of the Dhammayangyi Temple, the largest shrine on the site. This afternoon has then been left free to explore at your leisure. You may wish to take a trip out to Mount Popa, Burma’s sacred abode of the Nats (spirit gods).

DAY 9 Irrawaddy Cruise to Pakkou. PM drive to Monywa

This morning you have a boat ride to Pakkou, a bustling tobacco trading centre on the banks of the Irrawaddy River. From here you continue by road for about three hours to Monywa, in the Chindwin Valley. This afternoon offers the chance to visit the colourful Thanbuddhay Pagoda, home to more than 500,000 images of Buddha, and the Hiaungdawmu Buddha, the second largest reclining Buddha in Burma.

DAY 10 Transfer to Mandalay

Crossing the Chindwin River this morning you visit the Po Win Daung Caves and Shwe Ba Daung. A system of 492 sandstone caves, containing around 450,000 paintings, statues and carvings, they represent what many experts believe to be the most comprehensive collection of Buddhist art anywhere in South East Asia. Continuing your journey by road to Mandalay, Burma’s last royal capital, you stop en route in Monywee Kayemon village to visit a blacksmith and local cottage industries where they make slippers.

DAY 11 Mingun and Mandalay

This morning you have a short cruise to Mingun village and the ruins of the Mingun Pahtodawgyi, although uncompleted, it would have been the world’s largest pagoda however building stopped with the death of King Bodawpaya in 1790. This afternoon return to Mandalay where you spend the afternoon exploring some of the city’s major highlights, including the world’s largest book at the Kuthodaw Pagoda and the intricate wooden majesty of the Shwenanda Monastery. You can also visit the craft shops where you can observe traditional and skilled goldleaf making, tapestry making and wood carving.

DAY 12 Visit to Amarapura and Inwa

Visit Amarapura the former royal capital, just to the south of Mandalay, perhaps best known for the 19th century, 1.2km teak footbridge that spans Lake Taungthaman. You pay a visit to the Mahagondayon Monastery this morning, one of the largest and most important religious sites in the city and visit some local cotton and silk weavers. This afternoon drive to Inwa where you take a horse cart ride around the old city visiting the monasteries of Manu Ok Kaung and Bagaya Kyaung and the ‘Leaning Tower of Inwa’.

DAY 13 Transfer to Kalaw

Departing Mandalay you transfer to the British colonial town of Kalaw, arriving late afternoon.

DAY 14 Painebin Palaung hilltribe village trek

Today you trek to Painebin village. Walking at an easy pace, you stop en route to see tea and cheroot cultivation, orange groves and vegetable gardens. Arriving at the village you will meet the traditional Palaung people and learn about their tribal customs.

DAY 15 Transfer to Inle Lake

This morning you have the opportunity of visiting the morning market and Nee Paya, a gold lacquered bamboo Buddha, before departing for Inle Lake. This afternoon take a long-tailed boat to Phaungdaw U Pagoda and a short visit to Leshae Village where you can see the making of Buddha images from dried flower powder, followed by a visit to Nga Phae Chaung Monastery ('jumping cats' monastery) and floating gardens.

DAY 16 Sightseeing around Lake Inle Visit Indain

This morning take a boat trip up the small scenic creek that runs into Inle Lake, continuing to Indain on the west side of the lake, where you disembark and explore the 1000 stupas overlooking the lake. This afternoon proceed to Innpawkhone Village where you can see lotus and silk weaving crafts, followed by a visit to Nanpan to see traditional boat making, cheroot making factory and hopefully some local fishermen practicing their uniquely distinctive rowing technique.

DAY 17 Fly to Kyaing Tong

Departing Inle Lake you fly to Kyaing Tong. The remotely inhabited mountain valley if one of Burma's most scenic areas, with colonial architecture, Buddhist temples and ethnic groups. This afternoon you have a visit to the Standing Buddha image, where Kyaing Tong was founded approximately one thousand years ago and arrive for sunset at One Tree Hill where a lone, 245 year old Kanyin-byu tree stands. The tree was planted by Alaungmintaya, the founder of Third Myanmar Empire.

DAY 18 Loi-mwe sightseeing

Today you drive through Akhi village with a short stop to see village life, then continue through forests and terraced rice fields to Loi-mwe, meaning 'misty mountain' this small town sits 1600m above sea level. You will have guided walks around the villages and explore the native way of life.

DAY 19 PinTauk

Today you visit PinTauk where you can visit Akha, Lahu and Ann minority groups, with their beautiful costumes, silver decorations and bamboo rings, each group is very different.

DAY 20 Fly to Rangoon

This morning you will have time to peruse the central market before a visit to Wat Jom Kham pagoda, a tall gilded stupa inlaid with silver, rubies, diamonds, sapphires and jade. This afternoon fly back to Rangoon.

DAY 21 Rangoon

This afternoon walk down Pansodan Street to see the many colonial era buildings and colourful sidewalk markets. Also visit Chaukhtatgyi, a huge 70m reclining Buddha and Swedigon Pagoda for sunset views.

DAY 22 Depart Rangoon

Unfortunately, time to leave Burma for your return to the UK.

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 20 breakfasts, 1 lunch,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

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

Foreign Exchange

Burma

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 Tour

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

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

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 joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is

authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Vaccinations & Protection

Burma

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A and B. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Although not compulsory, travellers may wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. If travelling from a country in the yellow-fever zone within 6 days prior to entering Burma you will be required to produce a yellow fever vaccine certificate.

Preparing for your Tour

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.

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and 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. 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 £: 5.00

Dinner £: 8.00

Drink

Burma

Bottle of Beer £: 1.80

Water £: 0.70

Country details

Burma

Population: 60,282,000

Size of Country: 676,568 sq km

Major Language: Burmese

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 & 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, elephant, 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 and traditional, 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: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

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 http://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 http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/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 Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. 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.

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 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour 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: 3 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 3. 4/ itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 4.

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