

# EXPLORE!

## Hidden Trails of Burma

14 days

Burma (Myanmar) - Trip code HW



## Hidden Trails of Burma

After decades of relative isolation, the way of life in Burma (Myanmar) remains largely untouched by modern times. On this adventurous introduction to Burma we walk through remote lands and also spend time visiting the highlights of the country. We trek to hilltribe villages in Shan state, admire the sunset across the temple plains of Bagan, join Buddhist pilgrims on our hike to Golden Rock and walk in the beautiful surrounds of Inle Lake. Sadly, recent events surrounding the Rohingya minority have seen Burma thrust into the international spotlight again. The areas of unrest are concentrated within the north of Rakhine state, far away from any location our itineraries visit. We actively monitor the situation on the ground and closely follow the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). We also remain acutely aware of our ethical responsibility; and in order to ensure that the local communities benefit the most from our trips, we use a privately-owned Burmese local ground agent for all of our local services. Our itineraries have been carefully planned to limit the use of services owned by, or affiliated with, the government.

This ensures that the Burmese people benefit as much as possible from our tours. We strongly believe that we contribute positively to the local economy, whilst providing our customers with the privilege of direct and genuine interaction with the local people, as well as an insight into the country's unique culture and heritage.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Rangoon (Yangon)** - British colonial heritage and the golden Shwedagon Pagoda
- ★ **Golden Rock** - Hike up to one of Burma's most sacred pilgrimage sites
- ★ **Bagan** - Breathtaking vast plain studded with over 2000 ancient temples
- ★ **Inle Lake** - Floating gardens, stilted villages and leg-rowing fishermen
- ★ **Shan Highlands** - Trekking the tribal highlands of the Akha, Lahu and Paluang ethnic minorities

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Standard

Our standard, 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.

#### WALKING GRADE:

##### Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

#### GROUP SIZE:

##### 10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join trip Rangoon (Yangon)

Arrive in Rangoon and check-in at the hotel.



**Accommodation: Panda Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Hike up to Golden Rock for sunset

After a leisurely start, we drive for around five hours to Kin Pun at the foot of Mount Kyaiktiyo (the Golden Rock). Swapping to a local truck, we drive part way up the sacred mountain to Yatetaung and join local pilgrims on an ascent of one of the most sacred Buddhist sites in the country. We will carry our own overnight things in our daypacks and spend the night at a hotel on top of the mountain, allowing us the chance to enjoy the spectacle of sunset on the shimmering Golden Rock. Believed to be held in place by a single hair of the Buddha, the Rock perches precariously on the edge of the mountain, topped by a six metre high pagoda. The one-and-a-half kilometre ascent of Golden Rock is expected to take about 45 minutes. Time allowing, there's the option to extend the walk to the Mosdu Taung cave - an additional three kilometres taking one hour.



**Accommodation: Mountain Top Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Descend Golden Rock; drive back to Rangoon via Bago

This morning you can choose to rise early and watch the sunrise from the top of Mount Kyaiktiyo before breakfast. Saying farewell to the Golden Rock, we walk back down to Yatetaung and drive to Rangoon. The journey takes us by way of the historic town of 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. If time allows we'll pay a visit to the pagoda, as well as the Shwethalyaung Reclining Buddha (the second largest in the world) and the Kyaik Pun Pagoda. We may also have time to take a look around Bago's local market, before continuing on to Rangoon. The return one-and-a-half kilometre walk to Yatetaung will take around 30 minutes.



**Accommodation: Panda Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Fly to Bagan; explore the temples by bicycle

We catch an early flight this morning to Bagan, one of the most impressive religious sites anywhere in Asia. Bagan rose to prominence during the 11th to 13th centuries and at its height its 13,000 temples and pagodas presented a sea of colour and spectacle. Today just over 2,000 remain and include the Shwezigon Pagoda, the 13th century frescoes of Wetkyi-in-Gubyaukgyi and the Ananda Pagoda, one of the best preserved monuments in the entire city. Our explorations today will be by bicycle and we expect to cover around 20 kilometres around the temple complex. We plan to enjoy sunset from one of the upper terraces of the Shwesandaw Pagoda.



**Accommodation: Thazin Garden Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - In Bagan; explore villages and temples on foot

We continue our exploration around Bagan today on foot. Starting out from the 14th century Thitsawadi temple we follow flat sandy paths to reach the monastic university complex of Su Than Pyay, part of which is still in a good condition. Continuing past fields of corn and cotton, we reach Thein Pyin Swan, a new monastery rebuilt with the assistance of the people of South Korea. Our next stop is the 12th century Pyatagyi monastery, a great place to enjoy the extremely photogenic panoramas of many of Bagan's major temples. The walk ends at the Dhammayangyi temple which is one of the most significant architectural structures in Bagan. In the late afternoon we will take to bicycles once again and enjoy a ride out to Minanthu Village to visit the three interconnected shrines of the Payathonzu Pagoda and watch the sunset from the Tayok Pye Temple. We expect to cover around two kilometres walking around the temples, taking us approximately two hours.



### Accommodation: Thazin Garden Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Fly to Heho; trek to Yasakyi village and overnight in monastery

After flying to Heho this morning we drive on to the limestone caves of Pindaya, home to a remarkable collection of over 8,000 Buddhist images. We take a short tour of the site before continuing on to the start of our trek. The rest of the day then sees us trekking through villages and past tea plantations and chive farms, as we make our way towards our overnight stop in the remote village of Yasakyi. We overnight in the local monastery. Our accommodation will be basic (sleeping on individual mattresses in one large hall - mosquito nets provided), but the chance to interact with the villagers more than compensates for the rustic conditions. Our trek today covers a distance of approximately 12 kilometres and will take around five hours.



### Accommodation: Monastery in Yasakyi Village (or similar)



Simple Monastery



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 7 - Morning trek back to Pindaya; drive to Inle Lake

The trek back to Pindaya takes us by way of an alternative route, passing through Danu villages and on to Taung Paw Gyi, from where we can enjoy a panoramic view over Pindaya. Stopping to have lunch in this lovely spot, we then continue back to the bus for the 85 kilometre drive to the beautiful setting of Lake Inle, high up on the Shan Plateau. Surrounded by hills and populated predominantly by the Intha people, Lake Inle is one of the highest lakes in the country. Our trek today covers a distance of approximately 12 kilometres and will take around five hours.



### Accommodation: Hupin Nyaung Schwe Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 8 - Explore Inle Lake by longtail boat; hikes to tribal villages

Devout Buddhists, the local population of Lake Inle are self-sufficient farmers and fishermen, living in simple stilted houses of wood and bamboo and growing their food on floating gardens of grass and seaweed. Today we have a chance to explore this idyllic spot by longtail boat, heading to Indain village where we visit an enchanting 17th century pagoda. Back on dry land we will walk through some of the villages around the lake around the base of Udaun Taung mountain. There should be plenty of opportunities to meet the tribal communities who live here. Today's walk today covers a distance of approximately six kilometres and will take around two hours.



**Accommodation: Hupin Nyaung Schwe Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Fly to Kengtung; sightseeing in Kengtung

Returning to Heho this morning we then take a flight on to Kengtung, situated in the remote mountain valleys of eastern Shan State. Part of the Golden Triangle that encompasses neighbouring Thailand and Laos, Kengtung is a cultural and scenic gem that is home to dozens of minority tribes. On arrival we pay a visit to the Naung Tong Lake and the standing Buddha (the spot where the town was found over a thousand years ago), before heading up One Tree Hill to watch the sun set over the surrounding valleys.



**Accommodation: Princess Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Hiking around the villages of the Lahu and Akha people

An hour's drive out of Kengtung lies the village of Pan Kwai and the start of our trek through the Ho Kyin (Hochin) region. Leaving our vehicles behind, we hike out to explore the villages of the Akha and Lahu people, hill-tribes who can trace their ancestry back to the Yunnan province of neighbouring China. Returning to Pan Kwai later in the day we then return to Kengtung via the village of Mong Zine Khun, where we have a chance to watch a traditional Lahu blacksmith at work. Our trek today covers a distance of approximately 18 kilometres and will take around six hours.



**Accommodation: Princess Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 11 - Hiking through tribal villages to Pin Tauk Waterfalls

This morning we follow the main highway that runs between China and Myanmar, heading towards the tribal villages of the Akha, Lahu and Ann. The hour's drive takes us to Pin Tauk (Kyaing Tong), from where we hike out to the outlying villages. The people in this region still adhere to the old traditions, both in their dress and their customs and we have ample opportunity to enjoy this cultural goldmine before heading back to Pin Tauk. If time allows after lunch we'll also visit some of the Paluang villages before returning to Kengtung. Our trek today covers a distance of approximately 22 kilometres and will take around five hours.



**Accommodation: Princess Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 12 - Visit Kengtung market; fly to Rangoon

Before we return to Rangoon we pay a visit to Kengtung's morning market, where we can bargain for traditional clothing, lacquerware and other souvenirs from China, Thailand and the valleys of eastern Shan. We also visit the Wat Jom Khan a tall, gilded chedi that can date its origins back to a visit by the Gautama Buddha. The stupa is topped by a golden umbrella which is inlaid with silver, rubies and diamonds and decorated with tiny golden bells. We fly back to Rangoon for the final two nights of the holiday.



**Accommodation: Panda Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Walking tour in Rangoon

On our final day in Rangoon we will explore the rich history and architecture of the city on a walking tour. Listening to the stories of our leader, we hope to be able to enter some of the old buildings, many of which are virtually unchanged since the colonial era. In the late afternoon we visit to the magnificent Shwedagon Pagoda, the most revered Buddhist temple in Burma, whose golden stupa dominates the city skyline, making it the ideal spot from which to watch the sunset and contemplate our time spent in Burma. The Shwedagon complex is large with a number of surrounding statues and temples and locals still visit and contribute to its special ambience as the holiest of Buddhist shrines. Our walking tour will cover around 2 kilometres and take us approximately two-and-a-half hours.



**Accommodation: Panda Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - Trip ends Rangoon

The trip ends this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



# Walking and Trekking information

## DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2	1.5km	3km
Day 3	1.5km	
Day 4		
Day 5	2km	
Day 6	12km	
Day 7	12km	
Day 8	6km	
Day 9		
Day 10	18km	
Day 11	22km	
Day 12		
Day 13	2km	

Optional Walks

### Walking grade

Moderate

### Trek details

Walks on 9 days for between 30 minutes and 6 hours. For the walking tours and at Bagan, the timings include sightseeing. We have graded the overall walking level as Moderate.

## Tourism in Burma



Sadly, recent events surrounding the Rohingya minority have seen Burma thrust into the international spotlight again. The areas of unrest are concentrated within the north of Rakhine state, far away from any location our itineraries visit. We actively monitor the situation on the ground and closely follow the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

We also remain acutely aware of our ethical responsibility; and in order to ensure that the local communities benefit the most from our trips, we use a privately-owned Burmese local ground agent for all of our local services. Our itineraries have been carefully planned to limit the use of services owned by, or affiliated with, the government. This ensures that the Burmese people benefit as much as possible from our tours.

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# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 13

Lunch: 4

Dinner: 1



## Transport

Bus

Boat

Flight



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader

Boat Crew

Driver(s)

Local Guide(s)



## Accommodation

12 nights standard hotel

1 nights simple monastery

# Trip information

## Country information

## Holidays to Burma (Myanmar)

### Climate

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.

### Time difference to GMT

+6

### Plugs

3 Pin Flat

### Religion

Theravada Buddhism, Hinduism

### Language

Burmese

## Budgeting and packing

## Optional activities

Bagan - Sunrise visit to Temples from US\$ 8; Mount Popa Excursion approximately US\$ 42 (based on 3-4 participants); Traditional Massage US\$ 10; Rangoon - Scott Market and sunset visit to Shwedagon Pagoda US\$4 transfer plus US\$ 5 entrance fees Inle Lake - Winetasting US\$ 9; Traditional massage US\$ 8

## 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 temperatures may reach near zero at night. 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.

## Footwear

We recommend you bring waterproof walking boots with ankle support, make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself. On the overnight treks to Golden Rock and Yasakyi Village your main luggage will be left in secure storage and you will be required to carry your rucksack, large enough to carry essential items for the two days (bedding is already provided). In Golden Rock it is possible to arrange for a porter to carry your bags and this can be arranged and paid for locally. Daypack On the trekking days at Inle Lake and Kyiang Tong you will only be required to carry your day pack or light rucksack, large enough to carry essential items such as water, snacks and sun/weather protection.

## Equipment

Mobile phones: Your mobile will not work in Burma. It is possible to buy a local SIM card for \$20 in order to make/receive international calls, as long as your phone is un-locked. SMS messaging is not possible. WiFi is available in most hotels. Bedding provided in Yasakyi Village: For the night spent in the basic monastery you will be provided a sleeping mat or mattress, pillow, mosquito net and blanket or sleeping bag. You may choose to bring a sleeping sheet liner. Walking Poles: These may be useful for the steeper sections on trek. Not available locally. Sunglasses: A good pair of sunglasses are essential for protection against UV rays. Sun Hat, High Factor Sun Cream/Block & Lip Salve: Bring sunscreen (Factor 15 or more) to protect your skin against the sun. A combination sunblock/lipsalve is ideal for facial protection. Torch/Batteries/Bulb: A small torch is essential for the overnight in Yasakyi. Street lighting in 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: We strongly advise that you bring your own helmet with you. Helmets are not available locally.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

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

### Local crew

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.

## Country Information

### Holidays to Burma (Myanmar)

#### Food and drink

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.

##### Lunch price

£3

##### Dinner price

£5

##### Beer price

£1.8

**Water price**  
£0.7

## Foreign Exchange

**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).

### **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.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

## Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Flight

## Essential information

## FCO Advice

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 click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

### **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.

## Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

## 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. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### 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 below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### 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.

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

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 [click here](#)

## 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.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### 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 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.

## Holidays to Burma (Myanmar)

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A plus Polio and diphtheria. 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.

