

Myanmar (Burma): Irrawady River Cruise, the pagodas of Bagan, Mandalay, Inle Lake and Yangon (Rangoon)

Tour Highlights

- River Cruise on the Irrawady River on the luxury m/v Kindat Pandaw
- Explore the Burmese countryside by boat, tuk tuk and coach
- The Pagodas of Bagan
- The Palaces and Temples of Amarapura
- Yangon and the Shwedagon Pagoda
- Inle Lake with its 'Villages on the Lake'

START DATE: October 02, 2015

Day 1 Arrival in Yangon

Today we arrive in Yangon (Rangoon), Myanmar's former capital and main port.

Founded in 1755 by King Alaungpaya, it grew into a trading port after the British annexed lower Burma in 1826 and became the capital after the whole of Burma fell to the British in 1890. The city is an amalgamation of British, Burmese, Chinese and Indian influences, and is known for its colonial architecture, which even today remains a unique example of a 19th-century British colonial capital. Today it's a bustling, rapidly modernizing place full of energy and hope for the future.



Later today (or at a later time in our program) we visit the Shwedagon Pagoda. This golden stupa dominates Yangon, and it is the spiritual rallying point for much of the population. Somerset Maugham said it was "like a sudden hope in the dark night of the soul". The Pagoda is said to date back 2,500 years, and was built to house eight sacred hairs of the Buddha. Its bell-shaped structure is covered in almost 60 metric tonnes of gold-leaf, and on top of the Pagoda there are gold and silver bells studded with rubies, sapphires and topaz. The diamond orb is encrusted with 4,350 diamonds and crowned with a 76 carat diamond. Legend has it that two Burmese merchants travelled to India and met the Buddha under the sacred bodhi tree.

Overnight in Yangon. Meal plan: dinner

Day 2 Yangon – Mandalay. Join Irrawady Cruise

We fly to Mandalay, the "Golden City", founded in 1857 by King Mindon after a legend that told of the Lord Buddha's visit 2,400 years previously when he prophesied the founding of a holy city. It lies on



the east bank of the Irrawaddy, about 805 km (500 miles) north of Yangon. It was Burma's last capital before it came under British rule. The magnificent Mandalay Palace was burned down during the Second World War and only a scale model remains in the palace grounds, which are surrounded by a moat. However, many pagodas and monasteries still stand.

Afternoon excursion to central Mandalay visiting the palace and hill areas, crafts workshops and shopping.

Overnight Pandaw River Cruise Ship. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 2 Mingun

Today we travel up the Irrawaddy River to Mingun and the Myatheindan Pagoda. The seven wavy terraces around the pagoda represent the seven mountain ranges around Mt Meru, while the five kinds of mythical monsters can be found in niches on each terrace level. Mingun has two remarkable objects which we see on our tour, both the brain-child of King Bodawpaya -- the Mingun Bell and the Pagoda.

In 1838 an earthquake struck and part of the building collapsed; today you can still see a huge fissure in the giant slab. Guarded by a pair of dilapidated brick chintses, the Mingun Pagoda is truly a bizarre and incongruous sight. This may not have been the largest pagoda in the world, but it does have the world's largest uncracked bell, 14 times the size of that of St Paul's. It is possible to crawl inside, and pray that none of the entourage of giggling kids rings it while you're underneath! Not surprisingly, the bell fell off during the earthquake of 1838 and it lay on the ground until 1896 when it was re-mounted. It is now covered by a shelter open on all sides. Afternoon cruise up river to further sailing upstream.



Overnight Pandaw River Cruise Ship. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 3 Kyauk-myoung

Cruise up river to Kyauk-myoung (a Nwe Nyein village) with its amazing pot villages. Later return downstream to Sagaing jetty.

Overnight Pandaw River Cruise Ship. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 4 Ava and Amarapura

Arrive Mandalay early for a morning excursion to the picturesque Sagaing Hills with its many hermitages and nunneries. This afternoon we drive to the picturesque Sagaing Hills with its many hermitages and nunneries. This afternoon we drive to the ancient capital of Amarapura, the "city of immortality," described in its heyday as a microcosm of Burmese civilization. As a capital it was founded by King Bodawpaya in 1783, the year after he came to the throne. Bodawpaya died in 1819 and his grandson Bagyidaw shifted the capital back again to Ava in 1823. That was not the end of Amarapura though, for in 1841, during the reign of Tharrawaddy (the brother of Bagyidaw), it became the capital once more. Sixteen years later, with King Mindon in power, Amarapura was finally displaced by Mandalay. We also cross the U Bein Bridge Wooden Bridge (named after the former town mayor), constructed out of materials salvaged from



the forsaken Ava Palace, to see paintings in a temple. The bridge, the longest made from teak in the world, is about three-quarters of a mile in length.

Overnight Pandaw River Cruise Ship. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 5 Yandabo

Cruise downstream to Yandabo through the early morning and arrive at a Yandabo village, famous for its production of terracotta pottery from the river bank clay.

Overnight Pandaw River Cruise Ship. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 6 Pakokku

We visit a local market and town centre by tuk tuk to see life in a typical Burmese country town.

Overnight Pandaw River Cruise Ship. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner



Day 7 Bagan

Today we arrive in Bagan, where across 40 sq km stand thousands of pagodas and temples. Bagan was once the largest and most splendid city ever built in Burma and it was a rival to Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Its pure Hinayana Buddhism had no rituals, no sacrifices and no priests; only monks, vowed to poverty and meditation.

Upon arrival we begin our sightseeing program,* which will include several temples that are unique or important in some way. Many of the monuments are undergoing restoration, and may be either closed or obscured on a rotating basis. Our program usually includes Sulamani Temple, restored after the 1975 earthquake, utilising brick and stone, with frescoes in the interior; and Ananda, as important as it is huge. Considered to be the best surviving masterpiece of Mon architecture, Ananda is the finest, largest, best-preserved and most revered of the Bagan temples. visiting some of the more important and picturesque monuments therein.



We will visit the Manuka temple, with its reclining Buddha image, which records a captive king's impression of life in prison; the fine stone carvings of Nanpaya Temple; Thatbyinnyu Temple, the tallest in Bagan; and Bupaya Pagoda (to name a few).

* The exact order and content of our Bagan area sightseeing will likely vary depending on restorations, weather, group interest, and Tour Leader preference.

Overnight Pandaw River Cruise Ship. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 8 Bagan – Heho (Inle Lake)

We disembark at the Ayar Jetty before 09.00 and drive to Bagan airport for our short flight to Heho from where we continue by road to Inle Lake via a stop in Kalaw where we do a quick town tour and visit a local market.

Inle Lake actually has two meanings: "little lake" and "four lake" (because there are four big villages on the lake, though 200 in all). People began migrating to the lake area as early as the 14th Century, completing their resettlement during the 18th Century. To survive, they became fishermen and developed their unique style of leg-rowing and catching fish in conical traps. Since the land fronting the lake belonged to the Shans, they were forced to build their homes and villages on the water itself.

Depending on the timing of today's flight, we may be able to accomplish some of our sightseeing program today upon arrival.

Overnight at Inle Lake area. Meal plan: breakfast and dinner

Day 9 Inle Lake Area

This morning we have a boat excursion to Indein Village, located at the western side of the lake. Passing Nyaung Ohak Monastery and following a stair path lined with many hundreds of wooden columns, we reach the impressive Shwe Indein Pagoda complex. From the hillside we have great view over the lake area. On the way back to the boat, we walk through a romantic bamboo forest at the riverside.

We then return to Inle and have afternoon visit to Nga Phe Kyaung Monastery, a silver and goldsmith, observe cheroot making, as well as the blacksmith, cotton and silk weaving industries.



Overnight at Inle Lake area.
Meal plan: breakfast and dinner

Day 10 Inle Lake - Yangon

Today we fly back to Yangon.
Depending on flight schedules, we may accomplish any Yangon sightseeing missed during our first visit. Time-permitting we'll visit the National Museum and other sites, such as the Sule Pagoda and / or Reclining Buddha.
Overnight in Yangon.
Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 11 Departure

Departure from Yangon. Departure transfer to airport for our return flight to Canada.
BON VOYAGE!
Meal plan: Breakfast

Price: C\$ 3780 per person . Single Supplement: C\$1125*

*(Single on cruise subject to availability and possible higher cabin price)

INCLUDED:

- Experienced local guides for the land part of the tour. Expert guides on cruise
- Most meals as stated in itinerary
- All sightseeing on a private guided basis with entrance fees included
- Accommodation in a twin or double rooms in Myanmar in superior hotels
- Bottled water during transfers and excursions
- Domestic air tickets within Myanmar

NOT INCLUDED:

- Personal medical or travel insurance.
- Tips and gratuities
- International airfare

