



Bagan & Central Myanmar

Includes »

Nyaung U	116
Old Bagan	121
Myinkaba	123
New Bagan (Bagan Myothit)	124
Mt Popa	126
Salay	128
Monywa	130
Taungoo	136
Nay Pyi Taw	139
Meiktila	141
Pyay (Prome)	143

Best Places to Eat

- » Aroma 2 (p118)
- » Be Kind to Animals the Moon (p122)
- » Grandma Café (p144)
- » Golden Rain Tea Center (p142)
- » Maw Khan Nong (p141)

Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel @ Tharabar Gate (p122)
- » Thazin Garden Hotel (p124)
- » Mya Yatanar Inn (p129)
- » Myanmar Beauty Guest House II, III & IV (p138)

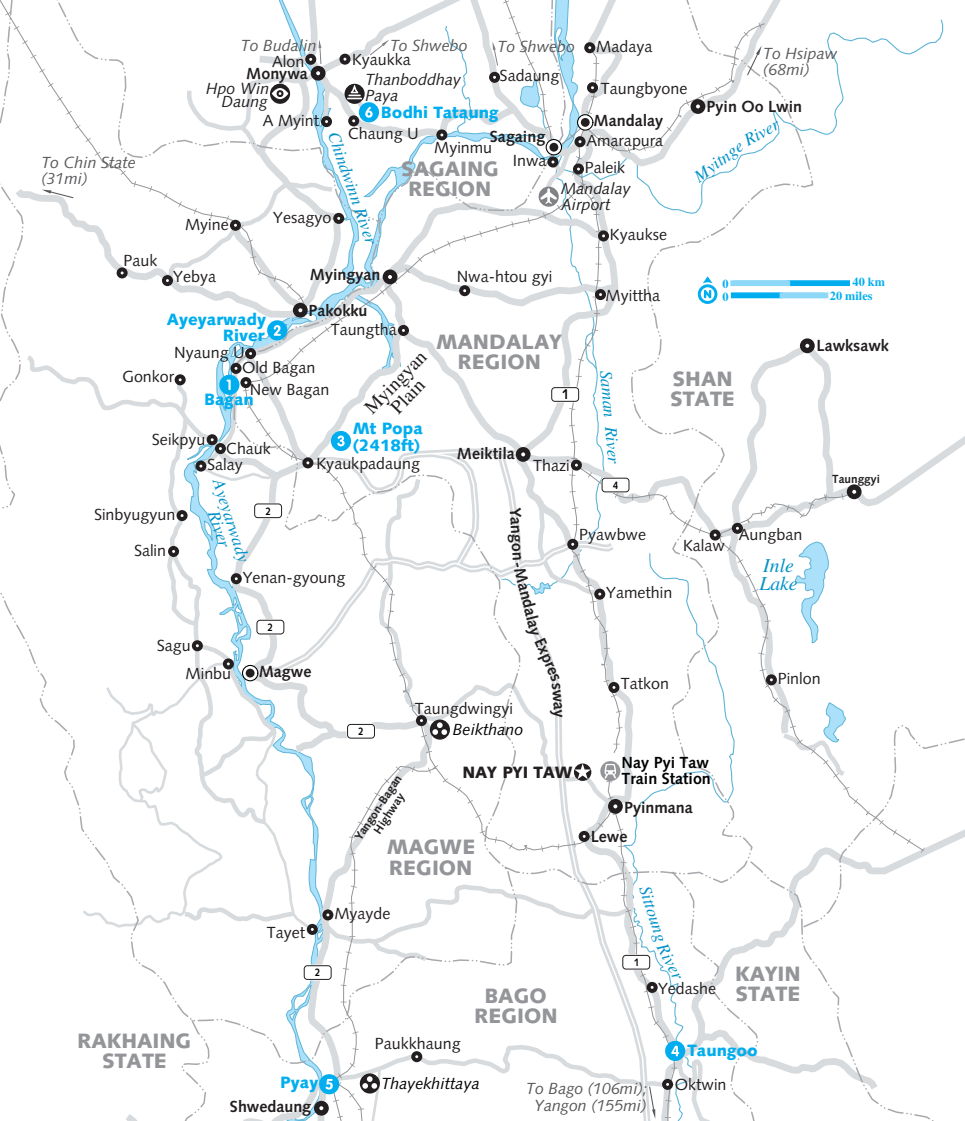
Why Go?

This heartland of Bamar culture has been the location of three former Burmese capitals – Bagan, Pyay and Taungoo – as well as the current one, Nay Pyi Taw. Of this quartet, it's Bagan with its wondrous vista of pagodas and stupas, many dating back to the 12th century, that's the star attraction. The tallest and most majestic of Bagan's temples – built of brick, decorated inside with beautiful frescos and topped with gilded *hti* pinnacles – mix Hindu and Buddhist images with locally brewed *nat* (spirits) in nooks.

Most visitors fly directly to Bagan, but central Myanmar also provides scenic rewards for adventurous travellers. It may be known as the 'dry zone', but the region is far from a desert. Beside highways and rickety train tracks amble ox carts through rice fields and rolling plains, all rimmed by the Shan Mountains to the east and the snaking Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River to the west, creating scenes that hark back centuries.

When to Go

This area comprises the bulk of the 'dry zone' of Myanmar, and it remains hot and dusty for much of the year. Most visitors come in winter (November to February), when daytime temperatures are a relatively chilly 86°F (30°C) during the day and about 50°F (10°C) at night. From March to May, the hottest season, daytime temperatures boil at up to 109°F (43°C). Rains peak in June and October, but run throughout the months between. There are several temple festivals in Bagan (p158) and elsewhere that you may want to try and build your itinerary around or avoid, depending on your interests.



Bagan & Central Myanmar Highlights

- 1 Watch from a **hot-air balloon** (p113) as the sun rises or sets over the temple-studded plain of Bagan
- 2 Hit the **Ayeyarwady River** on a Bagan–Mandalay boat (p120), or on a half-day trip to nearby temples (p165)
- 3 Pay respects to Myanmar's 37 *nat* at their spiritual home, the monkey-arama volcanic mountaintop temple at **Mt Popa** (p126)
- 4 Hang with elephants at a working camp east of **Taungoo** (p137)
- 5 Explore the colourful riverside market in the morning and the hilltop Shwesandaw Paya in the afternoon at **Pyay** (p143)
- 6 Ponder what the Buddha would have felt to see his likeness fashioned as a 30-storey concrete statue at **Bodhi Tataung** (p133)