



# Northern Myanmar

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Dat Taw Gyaik Waterfall Resort, (p256)
- » Mr Charles Guest House, (p260)
- » Malikha Lodge (p267)
- » Basic village homestays around Hsipaw (see p262)
- » Friendship Hotel, Bhamo (p243)

## Best Places to Eat

- » Club Terrace (p254)
- » Kiss Me, (p237)
- » Woodland (p254)
- » Feel (p254)

## Why Go?

Fascinating northern Myanmar covers a vast area but for now foreigners without special permits are essentially limited to two main out-and-back routes. One of these climbs rapidly from Mandalay to the British-era summer capital of Pyin Oo Lwin (Maymyo) then continues across the rolling Shan plateau to Lashio. The relatively cool days and crisp cold evenings are refreshing and hikes take visitors into timeless Lisu, Palaung and Shan hill-villages, notably around Hsipaw.

The second main option is taking a multiday ride along the mighty Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River. You'll need to allow a week or so if doing the whole stretch between Myitkyina and Mandalay, but shorter versions are possible starting from Bhamo or Katha, the setting of George Orwell's *Burmese Days*. The main attractions are the people you'll meet and the lazy, mesmerising journey.

Far beyond Myitkyina lie the snow-capped peaks of Myanmar's Himalaya. However, getting anywhere near there means joining expensive pre-organised fly-in/fly-out tours via Putao for which permits take at least two weeks to arrange.

## When to Go

November is probably the best time for boat travel on Ayeyarwady, with temperatures comfortable but water levels still high. As the season proceeds and river levels fall, boats take longer and larger ferries may need to stop at night to avoid hidden sandbanks. As in Mandalay, the Ayeyarwady valley might have mildly nippy nights in midwinter but days are warm and it gets progressively hotter into April before the rains start in May or June. The Shan Plateau offers an easy escape to cooler days and nights that can feel positively cold in the middle of winter. In Putao and the far north, rain is least likely in November and December but temperatures can dip almost to freezing. Snow can hinder serious climbing expeditions which are best timed for September or October despite the rain which makes far-north roads almost impassable.



## Northern Myanmar Highlights

① Walk into unspoilt Shan and Palaung villages from lovable **Hsibaw** (p258), a laid-back plateau town with princely connections

② Spend lazy days drifting down the mighty Ayeyarwady River starting from **Myitkyina** (p236), with its colourful market and dazzling festivals,

or from pretty little **Bhamo** (p242)

③ Be one of just a tiny handful of foreigners who jump ship at **Shwegu** (p244) to discover the town's historic island monastery and forest of mini-pagodas

④ Investigate the ancient pottery traditions of **Kyaukmyaung** (p246)

⑤ Discover George Orwell connections in sleepy riverside **Katha** (p245)

⑥ Take the cool upland air at **Pyin Oo Lwin** (p250), the old British summer capital of Myanmar