



# Western Myanmar

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Royal Beach Motel (p272)
- » Pleasant View Resort (p272)
- » Shwe Thazin Hotel (p277)
- » Mrauk U Princess Hotel (p284)

## Best Places to Eat

- » Pleasant View Islet Restaurant (p273)
- » Gisspanadi (p278)
- » Mondri stand (p278)
- » Moe Cherry (p285)

## Why Go?

Travelling in Rakhaing (Arakan) State, bordering Bangladesh and cut off from the rest of Myanmar by a 600-mile long mountain range, almost feels like you're in a different country – which, in fact, it once was. The landscape is tropically lush, proud locals speak the Rakhaing language, the food comes with more chilli, and the mix of cultures reflects the Indian subcontinent.

Few tourists head this way and most who do confine themselves to the relaxing resorts of Ngapali Beach where the pristine sand is lapped by the turquoise waters of the Bay of Bengal. The more adventurous head to the state's scrappy, atmospheric capital Sittwe (Akyab) and the old Rakhaing capital of Mrauk U (Myohaung), an amazing archaeological site, studded with hundreds of temples.

Looming to the north is elusive, underdeveloped Chin State, a richly traditional area where travel requires government permits, although it's easy to get a taste of Chin life at riverine villages accessed on boat trips from Mrauk U.

## When to Go

Those wishing to risk the heat or rains outside the high season (November to March) will find that downpours or jellyfish will discourage much fun at Ngapali Beach. Sittwe and Mrauk U receive more rain than most of the country – about 200in per year. Sudden rainstorms during the monsoon season (mid-May to mid-September) are dangerous if travelling by boat to Mrauk U, or between Sittwe and Taung-gok. Cyclones and tropical storms tend to occur just before and after the rainy season.



## Western Myanmar Highlights

- 1** Lose yourself amid hundreds of ruined temples and fortifications in timeless **Mrauk U** (p279), former grand capital of Rakhine
- 2** Savour the squid and other seafood at beautiful **Ngapali Beach** (p270), Myanmar's top beach destination
- 3** Boat to **Chin villages** (p286) upriver from Mrauk U, where tattoo-faced women lead you around by the arm
- 4** Wander about one of Myanmar's most exotic scenes: Sittwe's morning **central market** (p275)
- 5** Sort out a permit to climb **Mt Victoria** (p287), the country's second-highest peak
- 6** Hire a jeep in Mrauk U and drive to **Mahamuni Paya** (p287), original home of one of Myanmar's most venerated images of Buddha