



# Yangon

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Aung Thukha (p60)
- » Nilar Biryani & Cold Drink (p58)
- » Feel Myanmar Food (p58)
- » SK Hot Pot (p60)
- » 999 Shan Noodle Shop (p58)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Strand Hotel (p52)
- » Mother Land Inn 2 (p52)
- » Panorama Hotel (p53)
- » Governor's Residence (p53)
- » Three Seasons Hotel (p53)

## Why Go?

Many travellers tend to give Yangon (ရန်ကုန်) short shrift, sacrificing the city for extra time in Myanmar's high-profile upcountry destinations. This is a pity, as the city is – in its own quirky way – one of the more distinctive in Southeast Asia. In addition to possessing what is quite possibly the most awe-inspiring religious monument in the region, international isolation over the last five decades has left Yangon with an enduring colonial charm that has all but disappeared elsewhere. And although a sense of melancholy is a frequent backdrop to this setting, your memories are more likely to be of Yangon's vibrant and colourful streets, its hectic open-air markets, some of the friendliest urbanites anywhere and what is most likely your first experience with an entirely unfamiliar cuisine.

## When to Go

Weather in Yangon follows the familiar pattern of hot in the summer (March to May) and relatively comfortable in the winter (November to January), with average highs of 84°F to 97°F (29°C to 36°C) and average lows of 64°F to 77°F (18°C to 25°C). Winter is the best time to visit, as the days are tolerable and the evenings often cool. As elsewhere in Myanmar, you can expect daily showers during the rainy season, from approximately June to November, although these are often short and shouldn't generally inconvenience your visit.

## Yangon Street Names

The English terms 'street' and 'road' are often used interchangeably in Yangon for the single Burmese word *làn*. Hence, some local maps may read Shwegondine Rd, while others will say Shwe Gone Daing Rd or Shwe Gone Daing St; in Burmese, it's simply Shwe Gone Daing Làn. This chapter uses the most common English version that travellers encounter.

And as the previous examples demonstrate, different maps may also present the actual names of streets differently; eg Shwegondine Rd is Shwegondaing Rd on some local maps.

### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Yangon is an incredibly safe city: you are far less likely to be robbed here than almost any other big city in South-east Asia. Having said that, rich foreigners and badly lit side streets at night don't mix, and you should show some caution at such times. A far bigger danger is getting hit by a belligerent motorist, stumbling on the uneven paving slabs in central Yangon or even disappearing completely into a sewage-filled pot hole. Keep your eyes peeled for such obstacles and carry a torch at night.

## Worth Noticing in Yangon

- » Driving me crazy – Yangon is most likely where you'll first encounter Myanmar's unique driving situation: right-hand-drive cars being driven on the right side of the road.
- » Smooching – Myanmar people get somebody's attention by making a kissing sound.
- » No late nights here – just about the entire city closes down by 9pm.
- » Motorcycle free – if you believe the rumours, a high-ranking military leader's car was hit by a motorcycle several years ago, leading him to issue a total ban on the two-wheeled vehicle on the streets of Yangon.
- » Betelgeuse – red stains and even redder teeth will tip you off that this is betel nut country.
- » Weird sex – on the streets of Yangon you'll see stalls selling bizarre sexual aids. In addition to flavoured condoms, we saw dodgy pills, penis enlargers and scary looking rings with hair and beads.
- » Powerless – the lack of a consistent power source means noisy smoke-pumping generators are ubiquitous on the streets of Yangon.

### DON'T MISS

Yangon's **Shwedagon Pagoda**, arguably the most famous and impressive religious structure in the entire country, is a must-visit.

## Fast Facts

- » Population: c4,348,000
- » Telephone code: 01
- » Elevation: 46ft

## Planning Your Trip

- » Be sure to arrange your Myanmar visa ahead of time – at the time of research, visa on arrival had temporarily been suspended.
- » Bring cash – ideally US\$ – and make sure it's in perfect condition.

## Resources

- » The **Irrawaddy** ([www.irrawaddy.org](http://www.irrawaddy.org)) has put together an 'Alternative Tourist Trail' of lesser-known historical and political sights in Yangon at [www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=6862](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=6862).