



Bagan & Central Myanmar

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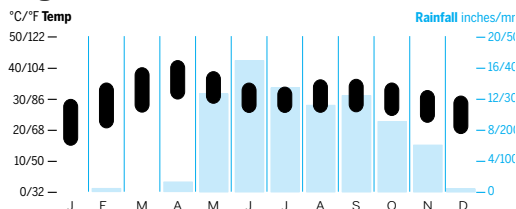
Why Go?

This heartland of the Bamar people has been the location of three former Burmese capitals – Bagan, Pyay and Taungoo – plus the latest surreal one, Nay Pyi Taw. Of this quartet, it's Bagan with its wondrous vista of pagodas and stupas, many dating 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 frescoes and topped with gilded *hti* pinnacles, mix Hindu and Buddhist images with locally brewed *nat* (spirits) in nooks and crannies.

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

Bagan



Nov–Feb Most visitors come in 'winter', when temperatures are moderately 'cool' at around 86°F.

Mar–May Hot season, when daytime temperatures boil at up to 100°F (40°C) and higher.

Jun–Oct Rainy season; the landscape is lush and hotel rates are at their lowest.



Bagan & Central Myanmar Highlights

- 1 Bagan** (p156) Clambering up the steps to the top of an ancient pagoda for a jaw-dropping view over the temple-studded plain of Bagan.
- 2 Ayeyarwady River** (p165) Taking a sunset boat ride from Old Bagan, enjoying the peaceful rhythms of life along the waterfront.
- 3 Mt Popa** (p172) Paying respects to Myanmar's 37 *nat* at their spiritual home, the monkey-tastic volcanic mountaintop temple at Mt Popa.
- 4 Than Daung Gyi** (p145) Exploring the peaceful Kayin village of Than Daung Gyi near Taunggoo that has only recently opened to visitors.
- 5 Bodhi Tataung** (p179) Pondering what the Buddha would have felt to see his likeness fashioned as a 30-storey concrete statue.
- 6 Nay Pyi Taw** (p146) Discovering Myanmar's surreal 21st-century capital.