



Eastern Myanmar

Includes →

Nyaungshwe	197
Inle Lake	206
Taunggyi	211
Pindaya	215
Kalaw	217
Thazi	223
Kyaingtong (Kengtung)	223
Mong La	227
Loikaw	230

Best Places to Eat

- Thu Maung Restaurant (p220)
- Sin Yaw Bamboo Restaurant (p204)
- Lin Htett Myanmar Traditional Food (p203)
- Live Dim Sum House (p203)
- Shwe Let Yar (p233)

Best Places to Sleep

- Inle Princess Resort (p210)
- Royal Kalaw Hills Resort (p220)
- Sanctum Inle Resort (p210)
- La Maison Birmane (p202)
- Song of Travel Hostel (p201)

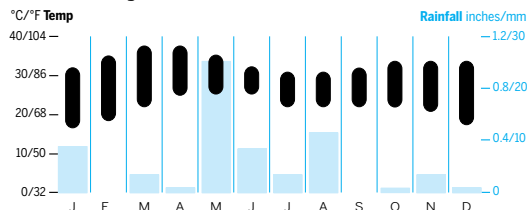
Why Go?

Travellers to eastern Myanmar get the chance to experience both beautiful Inle Lake and some of the finest trekking in the country. Then there's the intriguing opportunity of getting right off the tourist trail in areas that see very few foreigners. While much of eastern Myanmar remains closed due to ongoing conflict, more and more places are opening up to visitors. Now, tiny Kayah State and its charming capital Loikaw have joined Shan State's Kyaingtong and its surrounding hill-peoples' villages as one of the least-visited but most rewarding destinations in Myanmar.

So whether you just want to kick back and glide across the placid waters of Inle Lake in a boat, or are up for hiking through remote villages in the region's back hills, eastern Myanmar is an essential stop.

When to Go

Eastern Myanmar



Nov–Jan During winter the daytime temperatures are a comfortable 68°F to 79°F (20°C to 26°C).

Mar–May Daytime temperatures can climb close to 104°F (40°C).

Jun–Oct If you can, avoid trekking during the rainy season.

INLE LAKE & AROUND

The Inle Lake region is one of Myanmar's most anticipated destinations and all the hype is justified. Picture a vast, serene lake – 13.5 miles long and seven miles wide – fringed by marshes and floating gardens, where stilt-house villages and Buddhist temples rise above the water, and Intha fisherfolk propel their boats along via their unique technique of leg-rowing. Surrounding the lake are hills that are home to myriad minorities: Shan, Pa-O, Taung Yo, Danu, Kayah and Danaw, who descend from their villages for markets that hopscotch around the towns of the region on a five-day cycle.

Nyaungshwe is the accommodation and transport hub of the region. It's a scrappy place, but once you've experienced the watery world that sits right by it and explored the environs of Inle Lake, that won't matter. Few people leave here disappointed with what they've seen and done.

i Information

There is a compulsory K12,500 fee to enter the Inle Lake area, which you must pay on arrival at the **permit booth** (Map p200; ☎ 6am-9pm) located by the bridge at the entrance to Nyaungshwe. Tickets are valid for one week, although you're unlikely to be asked to pay again if you stay longer.

i Getting There & Away

By far the easiest way to reach the Inle Lake region is to fly. Most long-distance road transport finishes in Taunggyi – to reach Nyaungshwe, you'll have to change at the junction town of Shwenyaung on the highway between Taunggyi and Heho.

AIR

The main airport for the Inle region is at Heho, 25 miles northwest of Nyaungshwe on the way to Kalaw.

Airlines flying out of Heho include **Air Bagan** (☎ Heho 081-63324; www.airbagan.com), **Air KBZ** (☎ Heho 081-63331; www.airkbz.com), **Air Mandalay** (☎ Heho 081-63066; www.airmandalay.com), **Asian Wings** (☎ Heho 081-63327; www.asianwingsair.com) and **Yangon Airways** (☎ Heho 081-63339; www.yangonair.com). The airline offices are in Heho and/or Taunggyi, but several Nyaungshwe-based agents can sell tickets. The airlines have a spider-web-like network of flights across the country with some destinations only reachable via multiple stops; be sure to check if your flight is direct or not.

Taxis waiting at the airport charge K25,000 to Nyaungshwe (one hour). If you're pinching pennies and have the time, a cheaper but much,

much less convenient option is to hike the mile to NH4 and wait for a pick-up truck or bus bound for Taunggyi (from K2000, 1½ hours); ask to be let off at Shwenyaung, from where you can charter a *thoun bein*, (motorcycle trishaw) to Nyaungshwe (K6000). You will most likely face a long wait.

Nyaungshwe

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Scruffy Nyaungshwe is the main access point for Inle Lake. Located at the north end of the lake, the town was once the capital of an important Shan kingdom (the former palace of the *saophas*, or sky princes, who ruled here is now a museum). These days, Nyaungshwe has become a bustling travellers' centre, with dozens of guesthouses and hotels, an increasing number of restaurants, a few bars and a pleasantly relaxed vibe. If Myanmar can be said to have a backpacker scene at all, it can be found here.

👁 Sights

There are stupas and monasteries all over Nyaungshwe. Most of the latter are clustered around the Mine Li Canal, southeast of the market.

Shwe Yaungshwe Kyaung

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(ရွှေရောင်ဝဲကျောင်း; Nyaungshwe-Shwenyaung Rd; ☎ daylight hours) **FREE** This is probably the most photographed monastery in Nyaungshwe: the unique oval windows in the ancient teak *thein* (ordination hall) create a perfect frame for portraits of the novices. The monastery is 1½ miles north of town on the road to Shwenyaung.

Yan Aung Nan Aung

Hsu Taung Pye Paya

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(ရန်အောင်နံအောင်ရာတောင်းပြည့်ဘုရား; Map p208; Nanthe; ☎ daylight hours) **FREE** In the village of Nanthe, this Buddhist temple complex features a 26ft-high sitting buddha surrounded by stucco *deva* (celestial beings) and *chinth* (half-lion, half-dragon guardians). Although heavily restored, the statue is said to be more than 700 years old. Nanthe is just south of Nyaungshwe.

Yadana Man Aung Paya

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(ရတနာမာန်အောင်ဘုရား; Map p200; Phoung Taw Site St; ☎ daylight hours) **FREE** The oldest and most important Buddhist shrine in Nyaungshwe, this handsome gilded stupa is hidden away inside a square compound south of the Mingala Market. The stepped stupa is unique in Myanmar, and the surrounding