



Mandalay & Around

Includes ➔

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Best Religious Structures

- ➔ Bagaya Kyaung (p249)
- ➔ Mahamuni Paya (p228)
- ➔ Mingun Paya (p255)
- ➔ Pahtodawgyi (p249)
- ➔ Shwe In Bin Kyaung (p230)

Best Views

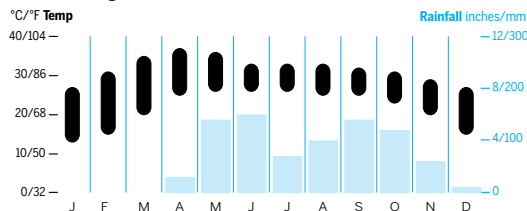
- ➔ River scenes, Ayarwaddy River View Hotel (p236)
- ➔ U-Bein Bridge (p248), Taungthaman Lake
- ➔ City panoramas, 10th-floor Skybar of Shwe Ingyin Hotel (p236)
- ➔ Sagaing from Shin Pin Nan Kain (p253) or Shwe-Kyet-Kya (p254)

Why Go?

For those who haven't been there – and that includes *The Road to Mandalay* author Rudyard Kipling – the mention of 'Mandalay' typically conjures up images of Asia at its most traditional and timeless. The initial reality can be a major anticlimax – a traffic-choked grid of interminable straight roads full of anonymous concrete buildings. But don't despair – though it's a relatively 'young', dynamic city, Mandalay is Myanmar's cultural capital. It's easy to escape from the fumes and architectural banalities of the main streets in quarters full of craft workshops and tree-shaded monasteries. The temple-topped Mandalay, Yankin and Yedagon Hills offer welcomed exceptions to the city's pan-flat topography, and several mini-theatres showcase traditional performing arts. Meanwhile, Mandalay is the main transport hub for northern Myanmar and offers a panoply of easy day-trip destinations, including four former royal capitals and the site of what would have been the world's biggest stupa, had it ever been finished.

When to Go

Mandalay



Nov–Feb Peak tourist season: days hot but bearable, evenings mild or occasionally chilly.

Apr–Sep Heat gives way to serious rain midsummer; widespread closures during Thingyan festival.

Oct & Mar Budget hotels less busy than at peak but air-con will be useful and rain is still possible.



Mandalay & Around Highlights

- 1** Watch sunrise or sunset from the world's longest teak bridge, **U-Bein Bridge** (p248)
- 2** Survey Sagaing's monastery-dappled hills and gilded pagodas from **Shin Pin Nan Kain** (p253) pagoda
- 3** Ponder unfinished **Mingun Paya** (p255), reached by boat from Mandalay
- 4** Escape Mandalay's bustle with our **cycling tour** (p233)
- 5** Potter around Mandalay's lesser-known monasteries, including the teak masterpiece **Shwe In Bin Kyaung** (p230)
- 6** Arrive at **Mahamuni Paya** (p228) by 4am as attendants wash the face of the country's most famous buddha image
- 7** Discover crafts being made, including edible sheets of gold leaf, in the **Gold Ponders' District** (p227)
- 8** Witness the two-man **'elephant' dance** during an annual festival at little-visited Kyaukse (p257) or with free evening performances at Mya Nandar Restaurant (p240)