

# Temples of Bagan

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## Best Temple Murals

- ➔ Upali Thein (p174)
- ➔ Nandamannya Pahto (p181)
- ➔ Payathonzu (p181)
- ➔ Ananda Ok Kyaung (p174)
- ➔ Abeyadana Pahto (p179)

## Best Sunset Spots

- ➔ Shwesandaw Paya (p176)
- ➔ Buledi (p175)
- ➔ Pyathada Paya (p178)
- ➔ Thabeik Hmauk (p177)
- ➔ Tan Kyi Paya (p172)

## Why Go?

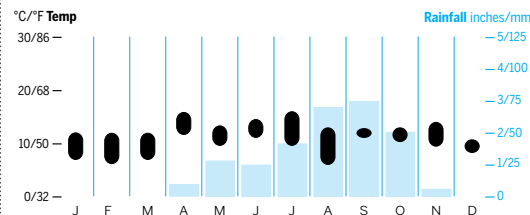
Marco Polo, who may have visited on his travels, described Bagan as 'one of the finest sights in the world'. Despite centuries of neglect, looting, erosion and regular earthquakes, not to mention questionable restoration, this temple-studded plain remains a remarkably impressive and unforgettable vision.

In a 230-year building frenzy up until 1287 and the Mongol invasions, Bagan's kings commissioned more than 4000 Buddhist temples. These brick and stucco religious structures are all that remain of their grand city, with the 11th- to 13th-century wooden buildings having long gone.

Many restoration projects have resulted in an archaeological site that can barely be described as ruins. Often the restorations bear little relation to the building styles and techniques used at the time of original. Still, Bagan remains a wonder. Working temples such as Ananda Pahto, give a sense of what the place was like at its zenith, while others conceal colourful murals and hidden stairways leading to exterior platforms and jaw-dropping views across the plain.

## When to Go

### Bagan



**Mar–May** Bang in the midst of the 'dry zone', Bagan is hot; avoid March to May or you may melt.

**Jun–Oct** The rainy season, with cheaper hotel rooms and fewer visitors, but it's still pretty steamy.

**Nov–Feb** Best time to visit, but the temples are crowded and it's difficult to find a room.



## Temples of Bagan Highlights

- 1 Marvel at the perfectly proportioned **Ananda Pahto** (p174), which houses four giant buddha statues carved from teak
- 2 Speculate over what lies inside the bricked-up inner sanctum of mysterious **Dhammayangyi Pahto** (p176)
- 3 Take in all the colours of the sunset from **Shwesandaw Paya** (p176) or **Buledi** (p175), or enjoy the spectacle, minus the crowds, at **Thabeik Hmauk** (p177)
- 4 Admire the intricate murals decorating **Upali Thein** (p174) and **Abeyadana Pahto** (p179)
- 5 Get acquainted with the 37 *nats* at the beautiful zedi **Shwezigon Paya** (p182) in Nyaung U
- 6 Inspect the fine internal ornamental work of **Sulamani Pahto** (p177), a temple known as the Crowning Jewel

## History

According to Pali inscriptions found here, Bagan kings apparently flirted with a couple of different city names during its heyday, including Arimaddanapura (City of the Enemy Crusher) and the less dramatic Tambadipa (Copper Land). The name Bagan may in fact derive from Pyugan, a name first written down by the Annamese

of present-day Vietnam in the mid-11th century as Pukam. The British in the 19th century called the site 'Pagan' while the military junta switched it back to Bagan in 1989.

## Glory Days

Bagan's two and a half centuries of temple building (from the 11th century to the 13th century) coincided with the region's