



# Myanmar (Burma)

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## Best Regional Specialities

- » Mohinga (p489)
- » Leq-p'eq thouq (p484)
- » Shan-style noodle soup (p489)
- » Tamarind flakes (p527)

## Best Places for Cultural Connections

- » Hsipaw (p522)
- » Myitkyina (p530)
- » Mrauk U (p534)
- » Moustache Brothers (p518)

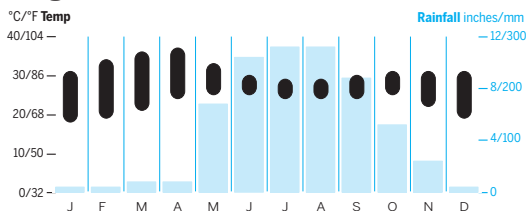
## Why Go?

Turn back the clock in this time-warped country that's a world apart from the rest of Southeast Asia. Travelling in Myanmar is a chance to swap the hubbub and electronic demands of modern life for the calm of gilded temples and ancient monasteries. Enjoy slowly unfolding journeys through serene landscapes including meandering rivers, lush jungles, ethnic minority villages and pristine palm-fringed beaches.

Democracy champion Aung San Suu Kyi is free from house arrest and the tourism boycott has been lifted. Myanmar remains a troubled land and it's up to you to decide whether to visit or not (see the boxed text, p488). Keep in mind that the long-suffering people are gentle, humorous, engaging, considerate, inquisitive and passionate; they want to play a part in the world and to know what you make of their world. Come with your mind open and you'll leave with your heart full.

## When to Go

### Yangon



**Jan** Independence day (4 Jan), celebrating the end of British rule, is marked by nationwide fairs.

**Apr** The Water Festival (Thingyan) can be fun, but it's also one of the hottest times in Myanmar.

**Dec** Peak season with many visitors heading to the country over the Christmas–New Year break.

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Burmese kyat (K)
- » **Language** Burmese
- » **Money** Cash only. See p488 for more information.
- » **Visas** Maximum 28 days, nonextendable. For details, see p548.
- » **Mobile phones** No international roaming. Prepaid SIMs available for local phones.

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 243 sq km
- » **Capital** Nay Pyi Taw
- » **Country code** 95
- » **Emergency** Police (Yangon) 199

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	K750
Canada	C\$1	K750
Euro zone	€1	K990
Japan	¥100	K9
New Zealand	NZ\$1	K740
UK	UK£1	K1155
USA	US\$1	K770

## Set Your Budget

- » **Guesthouse** US\$10–20
- » **Street stall meal** US\$1–2
- » **Large beer** US\$1.50

## Entering the Country

Land borders are closed to foreigners. Limited access via the following:

- » **Mae Sai, Thailand**
- » **Ranong, Thailand**
- » **Ruili, China**

## Don't Miss

Myanmar is one of the most devout Buddhist countries in the world. Yangon's **Shwedagon Paya** (p493), Mandalay's **Mahamuni Paya** (p514) and **Bagan's plain of temples** (p526) are all must-see locations, but there are also many other less internationally famous Buddhist religious sites that will impress you with their beauty and spirituality. A 10-storey tall seated buddha watches over Pyay's hill-top **Shwesandaw Paya** providing sweeping views of the town (p501). The old Rakhaing capital of **Mrauk U** (p535) is dotted with scores of ruined and functioning temples and monasteries, while in **Mount Kyaiktiyo** (p502) you can join the pilgrims as they fix gold leaf squares on this incredible balancing boulder.

## ITINERARIES

### One Week

In Yangon, visit the Shwedagon Paya and shop for handicrafts at Bogyoke Aung San Market. Overnight on a bus to Mandalay, climb Mandalay Hill, see the famed Mahamuni Paya and Moustache Brothers. Take a morning boat to Mingun, home to a giant earthquake-cracked stupa, following up with a sunset boat ride past U Bein's Bridge at Amarapura. Connect by bus or boat to Bagan, allowing a couple of days to explore the thousands of temples there.

### Three Weeks

In addition to the above venture east to beautiful Inle Lake; consider trekking there from Kalaw (minimum two days). From Bago head to Mt Kyaiktiyo to view the amazing Golden Rock, then to Mawlamyine for a taste of tropical Myanmar and the chance to ride a slow boat to the Kayin State capital, Hpa-an. Return to Yangon then fly to Sittwe where you can take another boat to the amazing temple ruins of Mrauk U (minimum five days).

## Essential Food & Drink

- » **āthouq** – light, tart and spicy salads made with raw vegetables or fruit tossed with lime juice, onions, peanuts, roasted chickpea powder and chillies. A common one is leq-p'eq thouq, which includes fermented tea leaves.
- » **mohinga ('moun-hinga')** – a popular breakfast dish this is rice noodles served with fish soup and as many other ingredients as there are cooks.
- » **Shan khauk-swe** – Shan-style noodle soup; thin wheat noodles in a light broth with meat or tofu, available across the country but most common in Mandalay and Shan State.
- » **htamin chin** – literally sour rice, this turmeric-coloured rice salad also hails from Shan State.
- » **black tea** – brewed in the Indian style with lots of milk and sugar.