

ASIA · SACRED SITES · HISTORY · CULTURE · HIKING · OFF THE BEATEN PATH

 Myanmar

Myanmar's great sights, the temple plain of Bagan, the gilded Shwedagon Pagoda, Inle Lake's stilt villages and the Golden Rock, rank among Southeast Asia's most memorable. Since the 2021 military coup the country has seen conflict and few tourists, and a powerful earthquake struck around Mandalay in 2025, so read the FCDO travel advice before planning any trip.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Myanmar.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 4 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Naypyidaw	 CURRENCY Burmese kyat (MMK) £1 ≈ MMK 2,800	 LANGUAGE Burmese, Shan Karen	 BEST TIME Nov–Feb
 DAILY BUDGET £30–£150 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, D, F, G 230V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 15h via Bangkok, Singapore or Doha ~£650–£1,100 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+6:30 standard time

Myanmar's classic first trip is a loop of four places: Yangon for the Shwedagon and its colonial downtown; Bagan, where more than 2,000 temples and stupas rise from the plain beside the Ayeyarwady; Mandalay and the old royal capitals around it; and Inle Lake in the Shan hills, often reached on a two- or three-day trek from Kalaw. Kyaiktiyo's Golden Rock and the karst caves around Hpa-An make a southern extension. Distances are long and roads slow, so most visitors fly between the main hubs and save overland travel for shorter hops.

In the years when tourism flourished, Myanmar was among Asia's least commercialised destinations: monks collecting alms at dawn, tea shops pouring sweet milky tea, thanaka paste on cheeks and longyi sarongs on almost everyone. Food and transport are cheap, though hotels can be pricey for what you get. Since 2021, visitor numbers have collapsed, many businesses have closed and conditions change quickly, while the March 2025 earthquake damaged monuments around Mandalay and Sagaing. Anyone considering a trip should read the FCDO advice, check their insurance carefully and travel with reputable local operators.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Bagan

More than 2,000 brick temples and stupas, built mainly between the 11th and 13th centuries, scatter across the plain by the Ayeyarwady, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2019. Explore by e-bike and watch sunrise from a designated viewing mound.
- 2

SACRED SITE

Shwedagon Pagoda

Yangon's gold-plated stupa rises about 99 m above a hilltop terrace ringed by shrines and planetary posts. Myanmar's most sacred Buddhist site is best at dusk, when lamps are lit and pilgrims walk clockwise around it barefoot.

3

CULTURE

Inle Lake

Intha fishermen row with one leg, tomatoes grow on floating gardens, and stilt villages, markets and monasteries line this shallow lake in the Shan hills. Boat trips leave from Nyaungshwe; the ruined stupas of Indein are a highlight.

4

SACRED SITE

Kyaiktiyo (Golden Rock)

A gold-leafed boulder balanced on a cliff edge, said to be held in place by a strand of the Buddha's hair, draws pilgrims who ride open trucks up from Kinpun. Stay overnight for sunset and the candlelit evening atmosphere.

5

ARCHITECTURE

U Bein Bridge

Built around 1850 from salvaged teak, this 1.2 km footbridge crosses Taungthaman Lake at Amarapura, just south of Mandalay. Walk it at sunset, or hire a small boat to watch monks and cyclists silhouetted against the sky.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Yangon

≈ 5.2 million people

The former capital's crumbling colonial downtown, Sule Pagoda, tea shops and slow Circle Line train fill two days, crowned by sunset at the Shwedagon.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Mandalay

≈ 1.2 million people

The last royal capital is the base for Amarapura, Inwa, Sagaing and Mingu; the 2025 earthquake damaged the palace and many monuments, so check what has reopened.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Naypyidaw

≈ 330,000 people

The purpose-built capital, proclaimed in 2006, is known for near-empty multi-lane boulevards, vast ministries and the Uppatasanti Pagoda; few visitors stay longer than a curious stopover.

Rounded 2014 census figures. Naypyidaw's covers the built-up capital including Pyinmana; the much larger Naypyidaw Union Territory, which takes in farmland and villages, had about 1.16 million people.

When to go to Myanmar

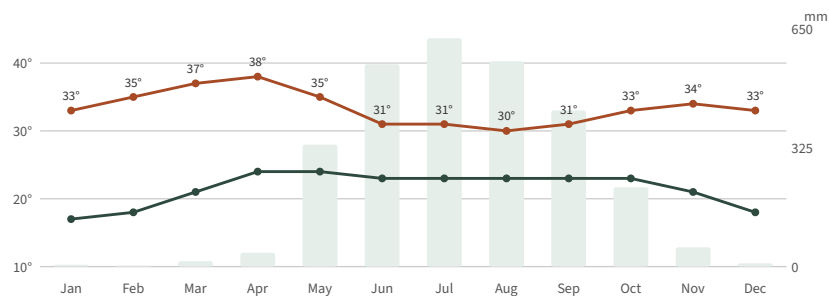
Best time: **Nov–Feb.**



■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Yangon

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Apr	Thingyan The Burmese New Year water festival, usually 13–16 April, turns streets into a nationwide water fight from stages and trucks; many businesses close for the holiday.
Oct	Thadingyut The festival of lights at the October full moon marks the end of Buddhist Lent, with candles and lanterns on homes and pagodas and families paying respects to elders.
Nov	Tazaungdaing balloon festival At the November full moon, Taunggyi in Shan State launches giant paper hot-air balloons, some laden with fireworks and lanterns, into the night sky over several days of competition.

How much does Myanmar cost?

SHOESTRING £30 per person / day ≈ MMK 83,987 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £70 per person / day ≈ MMK 195,970 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £150 per person / day ≈ MMK 419,935 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Mohinga Rice noodles in a fish broth thickened with chickpea flour and scented with lemongrass and banana stem; Myanmar's favourite breakfast, sold from street stalls.	Lahpet thoke Fermented tea leaves tossed with crunchy fried beans, peanuts, sesame, tomato and garlic, a salad served at the end of meals and to welcome guests.	Shan khauk swè Shan noodles: flat rice noodles in a light tomato sauce with chicken or pork, topped with peanuts and pickles; best around Inle and Kalaw.
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Getting around

Domestic flights connect Yangon, Mandalay, Nyaung-U (for Bagan) and Heho (for Inle), saving long days on the road. Overnight express buses are comfortable and cheap, while trains are slow, scenic and prone to suspensions. Boats have traditionally run down the Ayeyarwady from Mandalay to Bagan in the cooler months. Hire cars normally come with a driver. Routes and schedules can change at short notice, so confirm everything locally.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  C D F G 230V — UK plugs fit	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 192 Fire: 191 Police: 199 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +95	TIME ZONE UTC+6:30 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not traditional, but small tips for guides, drivers, boatmen and hotel porters are appreciated; some upmarket restaurants add a service charge.

ETIQUETTE

Remove shoes and socks at every pagoda and monastery, cover shoulders and knees, never point your feet at a Buddha image or a person, and women should not touch monks.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Yangon International Airport (RGN), Yangon; Mandalay International Airport (MDL), Mandalay

Visas & entry for Myanmar

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to enter Myanmar. If you must apply for and receive your visa before travelling. You cannot obtain a visa on arrival.

If you have any queries about visas or entry requirements, check with your nearest Myanmar embassy.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Japanese encephalitis

Measles

Rabies

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

Low risk of malaria

- For areas above 1,000 metres there is a low risk of malaria: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Myanmar

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 25 Oct 2026	Thadingyut Holidays
Mon 26 Oct 2026	Thadingyut Holidays
Tue 27 Oct 2026	Thadingyut Holidays
Tue 10 Nov 2026	Diwali
Tue 24 Nov 2026	Full Moon Day of Tazaungmon
Fri 4 Dec 2026	National Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Mon 4 Jan 2027	Independence Day
Fri 8 Jan 2027	Karen New Year
Sat 6 Feb 2027	Chinese New Year
Fri 12 Feb 2027	Union Day
Tue 2 Mar 2027	Peasants' Day
Mon 22 Mar 2027	Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Sat 27 Mar 2027	Armed Forces Day
Tue 13 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Wed 14 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Thu 15 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Fri 16 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Sat 17 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Sun 18 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Mon 19 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Tue 20 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Wed 21 Apr 2027	Myanmar New Year
Sat 1 May 2027	May Day
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Thu 20 May 2027	Full Moon Day of Kason
Sun 18 Jul 2027	Full Moon Day of Waso
Mon 19 Jul 2027	Martyrs' Day
Thu 14 Oct 2027	Thadingyut Holidays
Fri 15 Oct 2027	Thadingyut Holidays
Sat 16 Oct 2027	Thadingyut Holidays

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Burmese

ENGLISH	BURMESE	SAY IT
Hello	မင်္ဂလာပါ	<i>min-ga-la-BAH</i>
Thank you	ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါတယ်	<i>jeh-zoo tin-BAH-deh</i>

ENGLISH	BURMESE	SAY IT
Please	ကျေးဇူးပြုပြီး	jeh-zoo PYU-pee
Excuse me	ခွင့်ပြုပါ	kwin-PYU-bah
How much is this?	ဒါ ဘယ်လောက်လဲ	dah beh-LOUK-leh

Know before you go

- Read the FCDO travel advice and confirm your insurance covers you before booking: conditions, permits and transport can change at short notice.
- Carry crisp, unmarked US dollars as a back-up: torn, creased or old-series notes are routinely refused, and card payments and ATMs can be unreliable.
- Wear slip-on shoes, as you go barefoot at every pagoda, and visit major temples early or at dusk before the stone terraces get scorching hot.