

# *Myanmar*

A LAND LOST IN TIME

SAMPLE ITINERARY :: AUTHENTIC ASIA



*This journey will begin in the bustling capital city of Rangoon, where, in the heart of the city, the golden spires of the Shwedagon Pagoda light up the evening sky. From here we proceed to Pagan, a desert like landscape dotted with thousands of red brick temples, before we journey to the enchanted land of the Shan People and the breathtakingly beautiful shores of Inle Lake. Watching the fishermen return home to their floating villages as the sun sets over the lake in a shining orange hue is an unforgettable experience. Our last part of the journey takes us off the beaten path when we travel to Sittwe and continue by boat for a visit to the old ruins of Mrauk-Oo, some of them predating Pagan!*



## Day 1 | Rangoon

Arrive in Rangoon today and transfer to the Governor's Residence.

The Governor's Residence is the most beautiful hotel in Rangoon. It is a colonial-style mansion dating from the 1920's. It's redolent of the days when it was home to the ruler of Myanmar's southern states. With its fan-cooled verandas and teak armchairs, this delightful Orient-Express hotel in the elegant Embassy Quarter of Rangoon conjures up a bygone era while offering every modern pleasure. Set in a verdant garden dotted with lotus pools, the hotel is a little slice of heaven.

Time permitting you will include a sunset visit to the Shwedagon Pagoda - perhaps one of the most beautiful shrines in Asia. The great golden spire dominates the whole city of Rangoon. The pagoda itself is said to contain relics of the Buddha, and pilgrims come from all over to pay

homage. The morning and evening are the best time to soak in the atmosphere created by the many colorful people who throng to the Shwedagon. Kipling once called it “a golden mystery... a beautiful winking wonder”! It is a must see!!!

**Accommodations: Governor’s Residence**

*“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”*

*- St. Augustine*

## Day 2 | Rangoon

We start the morning with a driving or walking tour through the commercial hub of Rangoon. As a result of its isolation, the older parts of the city boast one of the best preserved colonial cityscapes in the world. Here you will find some grand old buildings that are reminiscent of the time of the British Raj – the High Court, the Lloyds Bank Building, Rowe & Co- which once was one of Asia’s greatest department stores that sold the latest UK fashions and appliances, the Bombay Burmah Trading Company, and the offices of the Bibby Line, who were in charge of ships that transported passengers from Rangoon to England.

Next, you will visit some of Rangoon’s local sites such as the Botataung Paya Stupa with its golden spire rising high up in the sky. It is the only hollow monument containing hundreds of Buddha images and ancient relics. Just down the road sits Sule Paya. If the Shwedagon Pagoda is the soul of the city then surely Sule Pagoda is its heart. For centuries it has been the focus for much of the social and religious activity of the city.

The British established the pagoda as the center of the urban area when they structured their Victorian grid-street system around it in the mid 19th century. Today, the 48-meter pagoda remains the tallest building in the town area.

In the afternoon you will allow for some time to stroll through Bogyoke Aung San Market, the largest of Rangoon's markets and a must see for every visitor. Here you can find all the consumer goods a Burmese family could possibly need or want all under one roof. From spices to bicycles to local artifacts, everything is available.

Tonight you will sample traditional Burmese cuisine at the The House of Memories. It is an old colonial building that once housed the office of Aung Sung Suu Kyi’s father. Old black and white photographs adorn the walls. Today, it is a hidden gem where many of Rangoon’s foreign diplomats come to dine.

**Accommodations: Governor’s Residence**

### Day 3 | Rangoon

Today you will explore a bit of Rangoon's art scene. The city is famous for its artist community. There are some wonderful galleries to be visited such as the Golden Valley Gallery, the River Gallery at the Strand Hotel, and the Mangosteen Gallery. If possible a meeting with its owner Patrick Robert, an internationally recognized French designer who has lived in Myanmar for over 20 years, will be arranged. Mangosteen Mansion is his vast residence in the heart of the city where his original collection of porcelain, rare lacquerware, old bronze and terra-cotta objects are displayed.

There will be time to stop at the Strand Hotel for a drink at its famous bar. The Strand is one of the most recognized landmarks in the city – “The finest hostelry East of Suez” wrote early 20th century travelers about this 1901 built, three-story Victorian building, considered one of Southeast Asia's grand old colonial hotels. Once patronized exclusively by ‘royalty, nobility, and distinguished personages’ according to Murray's 1911 Handbook for Travelers in India, Myanmar, and Ceylon; today this National Landmark in the heart of downtown Rangoon confers a sense of its rich history to all who pass through its colonnaded exterior and enter the marble floor lobby, following in the footsteps of past guests, Somerset Maugham, George Orwell, Sir Noel Coward, and Rudyard Kipling among them.

**Accommodations: Governor's Residence**

### Day 4 | Inle Lake

A short morning flight takes you to Heho. From here you continue on a one hour drive to Jetty Town. Board a private longtail boat bound for the Inle Princess Resort, tucked away on the shores of Inle Lake. There is nothing more serene than to sit on your balcony and watch the sun set over the lake!

Mystical, magical, and wonderfully picturesque... these are many words that have been used to describe the fairy-tale land of Inle Lake and the amazing Inthas who live along the lake shores and on the lake in villages built on wooden stilts. This tribe has perfectly adapted to the lake environment so that even the vegetable fields float on the lake's surface. The Inthas are famous for propelling their flat-bottomed boats by standing at the stern on one leg and wrapping the other leg around the oar.

This afternoon, board your long-tail boat to discover the life and traditions of the Intha people as you travel from one floating village to the next. The industrious villagers inhabiting the lake region support themselves by growing a wide variety of flowers, vegetables and fruits year round.



Most of the crops are cultivated on floating islands, where marsh, soil, and water hyacinth have combined to form incredibly fertile solid masses that are staked at the lake bottom with bamboo poles. It is fascinating to watch the local fishermen and villagers maneuver their way through the small canals.

We recommend lunch at the Cat Restaurant. Their traditional Shan food is delicious!

**Accommodations:** [Inle Princess Hotel](#)

## Day 5 | Inle Lake

Your boat will be waiting to take you to the five day market. Each village along the lake holds a colorful market every five days where the local Pa-O villagers come from the hillside to sell their goods and buy from the fishermen. (this excursion will depend on the market schedule).

Next, travel along one of the river tributaries to the Pagoda Forest, a small Angkor-like temple complex situated on the slopes of the mountain where the ruins are partly covered by vegetation and tree roots.

After lunch at the Kite Restaurant, you will set out to visit Nga Hpe Kyaung, also known as the famous Cat Monastery. This is one of the few wooden temples on Inle Lake that houses several exquisite Buddha statues.

Final stop for the day is at the weaving village. This is the production source of the delicate lotus silk which is derived from the stem of the lotus flowers. You can follow the entire production process from the beginning to the end.

**Accommodations:** Inle Princess Hotel

## Day 6 | Inle Lake

Return to Jetty Town and transfer to the train station in time to catch an old colonial train, once used by the British, that will slowly wind its way up the Western rim of the Shan plateau to the hill tribe town of Kalaw. Once a pleasant summer getaway for the British during the colonial era, Kalaw is made up of a mixture of Shan, Palaung, Myanmar, and Indian people. The train ride will take about 2 hours. This is a very traditional old train that moves at about 7km/h. It literally has not been changed since the colonial days!

Lunch awaits in the rose garden of the Amara Hotel, a small tudor style building, followed by some local sightseeing.

Return to Inle Lake by car following an afternoon tour of Kalaw.

Alternatively, you may chose an excursion to the Pindaya Caves which house several thousand Buddha statues. This is one of the main pilgrimage sites in the Shan State. The drive to the caves will take about 1 ½ hours each way.

**Accommodations:** Inle Princess Hotel

*“One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.”*

*- Henry Miller*

## Day 7 | Pagan

A short early morning flight takes you to Pagan, where, stretching across 25 square miles back from the Irrawaddy River, stand hundreds of pagodas and temples.

Everywhere you look there are ruins of all sizes – huge and glorious temples like the Ananda soar towards the sky and graceful small pagodas stand alone in the fields. In its zenith during the 11<sup>th</sup> century there were over 10,000 temples. The temples were built by king and merchant alike to find a more Elysian level of existence in the next life. The extraordinary religious fervor

that resulted in this unique collection of buildings lasted barely two centuries. Unfortunately, due to nature and neglect, only about 2,000 temples remain today. It is a truly unforgettable and breathtaking site.

In the afternoon, explore the surrounding area including a stop at Tayoke Pyay Temple dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. An easy climb up a flight of stairs allows for one of the most beautiful and panoramic views of the countryside dotted with temples everywhere you look.

**Accommodations:** Aureum Palace Hotel



## Day 8 | Pagan

A stroll through the local morning market provides an opportunity to catch a glimpse of village life and activity before you make your way to the great gold-leaf gilded Shwezigon Pagoda. It is one of the earliest sites in Pagan dating back to 1102 AD.

Return to the hotel for lunch and some rest and resume sightseeing again after the temperature cools down in the afternoon.

In the early evening, away from the tourists, a small row boat will take you to a large sandbank in the middle of the river. The cook and staff from the Green Elephant Restaurant will be waiting for you and will prepare a delicious dinner, cooked on an open fire as the sun sets over the river shores. A small table will be set up on the sand bank, wine will be served and a bonfire will be lit to make for the perfect atmosphere. It is a wonderfully enchanting evening!

**Accommodations:** Aureum Palace Hotel

## Day 9 | Pagan

After breakfast, make your way to the shores of the Irrawaddy River where a private boat will take you on a 2 hour river trip. Life on the river is exciting as you pass fishing boats and huge barges carrying tree trunks to Mandalay.

Upon your return to Pagan and after lunch, visit some of the town's main lacquerware shops. Pagan is known around the world for its lacquerware production and offers you a chance to see how the process is done from beginning to end.

At around 5 p.m. your guide will take you to Thu Htay Kan Village, located just a few minutes outside of Pagan. Visiting this village, one is transported back in time! As the day ends, the villagers return from the fields with their ox carts and their flocks of sheep and cattle. Young girls carry water from a well to their homes and families gather to cook outside their houses. It offers a glimpse of the reality of rural life in Myanmar. There will be no other tourists here!

**Note:** Alternatively, we can arrange for an excursion to Mt. Popa another one of Myanmar's most important pilgrimage sites and home to the famous "nat" shrine. Like Mt. Olympus, Mt. Popa is a premier worshipping site for those who come to pay their respect to the nats, the pre-Buddhist spirits. The mountain itself is an extinct volcano covered in lush forests protected within the Popa Mountain Park. From the temple there are mammoth views back towards the Myingyan Plain and beyond.

**Accommodations:** Aureum Palace Hotel

*"We travel not to escape life, but for life  
not to escape us."*

## Day 10 | Sittwe

*- Anonymous*

A morning flight takes you to Sittwe located in a part of Myanmar that is off the beaten path. It is situated on an estuarial island at the confluence of the Kaladan River, Myu River, and Lemyo River.

Originally a small fishing village, Sittwe became an important seat of maritime commerce, especially as a port for the export of rice after the British occupation of Arakan following the First Anglo-Burmese War. In 1826, the seat of government was transferred from the old Arakan capital of Myohaung to Sittwe on the seacoast. During the first 40 years of British rule it increased from a village to a town of 15,536 inhabitants, and by 1901 it was the third largest port city in Myanmar.

**Accommodations:** Sittwe Hotel

## Day 11 | Mrauk-Oo

This morning board a private boat for your journey to Mrauk-Oo. This will take about 4 hours. Arriving at the harbor in Mrauk-Oo is a journey back in time. The ruins of Mrauk-Oo, once the capital of a flourishing Rhakine Kingdom, date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Mrauk Oo was once known as the Golden City by foreign travelers due to its strategic location on the costal region of the Bay of Bengal and being a focus of trade. The early 17th century was the Rakhine Golden Age thanks to successful trading with western countries such as the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Southern India. In its heyday, Mrauk-Oo was one of the richest cities in all of Asia.

The old city and its surroundings are dotted with hundreds of pagodas and Buddha images. Although many are in ruins, some are still being used as places of worship today and some are now being restored to their original splendor.

**Accommodations:** Mrauk-Oo Princess Hotel



## Day 12 | Mrauk-Oo

Full day sightseeing and excursion to the ruins.

**Accommodations:** Mrauk-Oo Princess Resort Hotel

## Day 13 | Rangoon

Return by boat to Sittwe and catch a flight back to Rangoon for a free afternoon or additional sightseeing if you wish. Your guide/driver are available at your leisure.

**Accommodations:** Governor's Residence

## Day 14 | Departure

You will be transferred to the airport for your flight out of Myanmar.

**End of services.**

*The above is a sample itinerary which covers the highlights and also takes you off the beaten path. We would be happy to discuss your individual travel preferences and amend the itinerary accordingly.*

*Pricing is dependent on your choice of accommodations, time of the year that you will be traveling, the final itinerary, and the number of people in your group.*

*Should you wish to discuss your individual travel plans to Myanmar please do feel free to reach to us via e-mail at [info@authenticasia.net](mailto:info@authenticasia.net) or by phone at 1. 888.586.9958.*



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