

## MYANMAR - GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION



**Myanmar** is the largest country in Southeast Asia, bordering Bangladesh, India, Tibet, China, Laos and Thailand and is "right in the heart" of Asia.

Mysterious, untouched and unique it has preserved its 2,500 year old civilization, found nowhere more so, with echoes of long-forgotten battles and distinct impressions of holy places and devotional temples in the light of the setting sun. The former British colony is distinguished by its protracted isolation from other Southeast Asian travel destinations making it, the sparkling jewel, hidden from foreign eyes throughout a great part of the 20th Century. There has been little opportunity to admire its beauty, or to appreciate its magic.

Myanmar is regarded as a world centre of Buddhism. The winning-friendliness, warm hospitality and the peaceful attitude of the Burmese are often attributed to their Buddhist heritage. It is said that Burmese follow Buddha's teachings with reverence.

What appears to the visitor as a trip into the past, for the Burmese, is harsh reality as Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in the world. Still the memories of a trip to Myanmar will be cherished forever.

### Language

The language belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese language family. Although 80% of the Burmese speak the language, a distinction of far more than 100 dialects can be made. Burmese is a tonal language, with the effect that the same word can be expressed in different tones each time with a complete different meaning. For foreigners who wish to learn this language, this can lead into much confusion.

Here are some useful words for tuning into this fascinating country:

<i>Hello:</i>	<i>"mingalarbar"</i>	<i>(at any time of day)</i>
<i>How are you?:</i>	<i>"ne kaung lar?"</i>	
<i>I am fine:</i>	<i>"ne kaung ba de"</i>	
<i>How much is it?</i>	<i>"be lau le"</i>	
<i>Thank you:</i>	<i>"je su tin ba de"</i>	
<i>Good bye:</i>	<i>"tha tha"</i>	

## RELIGION

Officially there is religious freedom in Myanmar. Although almost only inhabited by Buddhists, also Hinduism and Islam are represented.

Myanmar is still a very traditional country. Please pay respect in pagodas and temples and wear clothes which cover your shoulders and legs. And remember that you can enter pagodas and temples only barefoot (without shoes and socks). The people of Myanmar are very friendly and will thank you with appropriate respect and a smile.

## FOOD

Myanmar is an agricultural country and the economy primarily depends on rice cultivation. Peanuts, potatoes, tea, tobacco and cotton are the other main products. Myanmar is also the world's largest exporter of teak wood. Of the more than 50 million inhabitants, 67% are working in agriculture, but only 13% in the industry.

Burma's cuisine is simple but very tasty. In the whole country you can also find Chinese, Indian and European food. Curries and fish dishes can sometimes be quite spicy. Basically in Myanmar fried dishes are referred to as curry, even if they involve no actual curry spice, but even more oil.

For fruit you should better choose the ones that need to be peeled, like oranges, bananas and mangoes. Like every other third world country running water should always be boiled, but bottled drinking water and chilled drinks can be found everywhere.

## TIME DIFFERENCE

Burma Standard time is 6 hours and 30 minutes ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. If you come from Bangkok, you have to set your watch back half-an-hour upon arrival in Yangon.

## CLIMATE

Myanmar has a tropical climate with only three seasons: The cool season from October to February, is dry, with temperatures between 21 degrees and 28 degrees Celsius. The hot season is from March to May with average temperatures above 30 degrees, sometimes even up to 40 degrees Celsius. The rainy season is from late May to early October, with frequent downpours and high humidity.

## VACCINATION AND HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

When entering Myanmar from Europe vaccination is not mandatory. Recommended are vaccinations against hepatitis, polio, diphtheria, tetanus and typhoid. Please check this with your doctor or a Tropical Medicine Institute.

**Mosquitoes:** After sunset long-sleeved clothing and an insect repellent (please bring it with you as they are locally very difficult to obtain) are good protection against mosquito bites. Perfume and perfumed soap should not be used.

**Malaria prophylaxis:** The cities on the classical tours are free of malaria; there is a slight risk at the Inle Lake. Normally it is sufficient to have a stand-by-medication against malaria with you. In the more remote trekking areas, you should definitely pay attention to appropriate mosquito repellent and be prepared accordingly.

You should drink only bottled water and be cautious when eating from small local restaurants.

## VISA REQUIREMENTS

For the entry into Myanmar foreign visitors require a visa. The regular tourist visa is valid for 28 days and can be applied for before departure at a diplomatic representation of Myanmar. Please contact us for more information!

## ENTRY & CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

It is necessary to declare upon arrival all valuables such as cameras, electronic equipment, jewelry etc. For jewelry or diamond stones that were acquired in the country, you may need an export license. Proof of purchase – invoices, must always be kept as they are many times requested by the customs upon departure.

The immigration procedure is rapid, but sometimes you must wait a little longer for the luggage.

## AIRPORT TAX

Upon departure abroad currently US\$ 10, - airport tax per person must be paid in cash.

## DOMESTIC AIRLINES AND FLIGHTS

Air Mandalay or Air Bagan fly to almost all destinations in Myanmar. There is a luggage restriction of 20 kg per person. A smaller piece of baggage per person may be brought on board the plane. Therefore it is advisable to leave luggage pieces which are not required during the trip through the country in Yangon and to collect them on the way back.

## CURRENCY

The local currency is the Kyat (pronounced Tshat). Import and export of Kyats is prohibited.

**IMPORTANT: You must be aware that traveler's checks or credit cards are limitedly accepted in Myanmar. We recommend taking sufficient amounts of US\$ in cash. Please ensure that you do not carry any old, dirty or torn dollar bills with you, because these will not be accepted. The same goes for old bills with "small heads" and for US\$ bills whose registration number starts with "CB"! Should you fail to follow these instructions you could expect losses and financial difficulties, while staying in Myanmar!**

In most of the hotels, shops and department stores with exchange licenses US \$ can be exchanged to Kyats. And unused Kyats can be changed back again. The tour guides will give you tips and hints.

## TIPPING

The Burmese generally are very helpful and supportive to foreign tourists without expecting anything in return. But obviously who has been helpful and friendly to you, will be very happy, over a little gift or grateful gesture.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Basically, you can take pictures in Myanmar of everything - except military installations and airports. The residents and monks raise no objection to being photographed but out of politeness it is always better to first ask for permission. When photographing religious ceremonies, one should exercise restraint.

## ELECTRICITY

The standard electrical current is 220Volt.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Leave your SIM-Cards at home: they will not work in Myanmar. In some large hotels in Yangon, you can buy telephone cards at a reasonable price, and in some hotels you can also rent mobile phones for about US\$50/day or \$300/week plus phone charges and fees. Internet access is available in some hotels and in Internet cafes. Certain e-mail accounts (for example Yahoo and Hotmail) are not available in Myanmar. You can make international phone calls from the hotel reception desks and most rooms, but they are very expensive (about US\$ 5, - per minute) and not recommended. Usually the connection is already calculated. This means that you have to pay anyway, even if the phone rings at home, but nobody picks up. In any case you should check the fees before you make a phone call.

## SHOPPING

Typical Myanmar products are: silver items, lacquer-ware, silk, wood carvings, embroidery. The export of antiques and archaeological finds, older than 75 years, is forbidden, as is the export of Buddha statues. Bagan has a thriving production of lacquer-ware. All other souvenirs and articles can also be found in Yangon at the Scott Market (now officially called "Bogyoke Aung San Market").

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

Please always remember that like everywhere else, visitors are always guests in a country and therefore should adapt to the local customs and habits, as strange and special these may seem.

Please make sure that when sitting to never point with your feet at other people or a Buddha statue. Enter houses, temples, monasteries, etc., always without shoes and socks.

Theravada Buddhists have a strong "anti-flesh" attitude. So be aware of appropriate clothing, especially in temples and monasteries. It would be better to avoid wearing mini-skirts, shorts and beach wardrobes.

Especially in the cities and among the most visited tourist attractions, it is possible that children will try to sell you souvenirs and postcards. Please do not buy anything, no matter how cheap it seems or how your feelings towards children are. Children should be at home or in school, but not on the road!

## IMPORTANT NOTE

In comparison to other countries Myanmar's tourism is less developed than in other countries. But that is exactly where the attraction is. Because of its weak infrastructure there can be bottlenecks in travel which can lead to a change of itinerary, transport and accommodation. Transportation and hotels do not always meet European standards. Also the quality of the tour guides can be different. - Improvisation, flexibility and understanding of another culture is a prerequisite for a trip to Myanmar.

For more information about Myanmar, please visit UNITEAM TOURS & TRAVEL ([www.uniteam-travel-myanmar.com](http://www.uniteam-travel-myanmar.com) )

## WE ARE COMMITTED!

As in many Asian countries there is great poverty in Myanmar and many people are in need. We are committed in particular for the welfare of children - their healthy diet and education. That is why we support the non-profit organization Myanmar Development Aid (MDA). Amongst its various projects we want to especially help to raise funds for an orphanage, where 150 children will find a new home and a hopeful future.

It should be emphasized that the structure of the MDA organization allows fast and efficient help to reach those in need without lengthy bureaucratic delays. There are no administrative fees or spending whatsoever, as all members of MDA and all helpful hands in Myanmar are volunteers. **100% of your donation reaches its destination in full!** ([www.mda-ev.org](http://www.mda-ev.org))