

Escape2Burma – The Land of the Golden Pagodas with Steve Webster

10 day exploration of Myanmar + optional 4-day beach extension



Steve Webster is organizing a wonderful trip to Myanmar (Burma) in January 2010. Steve will be personally escorting this tour which will take us to remote villages and through stunning scenery in this fascinating country.

Tour Details

Date: 09-18 January 2010 (10 days/9 nights) 2010
US\$2800 per person on a sharing basis (single supplement US\$ 500)

optional beach extension 18-21 January (4 days/3 nights) 2010
US\$ 900 per person on a sharing basis (single supplement US\$ 350)

includes all meals and internal flights

Some walking involved: easy to moderate with an average of 2-3 hours of walking per day

Immortalized by the likes of Kipling, Masters and Orwell, the mystical land of Myanmar, (formally known as Burma) offers the traveler a kaleidoscope of colors and culture that will remain with you for a lifetime. Until recently closed to western tourism, Myanmar stands as one of the world's newest destinations. Myanmar is known as the Golden Land not only for its glittering Buddhist monuments and rich cultural heritage, but also for the phenomenal natural beauty found in its forests, rivers, green valleys and seacoast. However, it is the inhabitants that give Myanmar its characteristic charm. They have often been described as the most friendly, open-hearted people in the world. Unlike other tours in Myanmar, our guides will take you on foot to places not visited by other travelers, allowing you to experience all that this unique country has to offer. Nobel Prize laureate Ang San Suu Kyi calls Myanmar home, and in the company of local guides familiar to the country's hidden treasures, a singular sense of peace is sure to pervade our journey as well.

Our accommodations in Myanmar make the most of the regions' unique geography. From lakeside chalets to deluxe hotels designed to evoke an exotic charm. Our guests will experience to the fullest what, for so long, had been a well kept secret. The secret is revealed in traditional style matched with contemporary comfort at every locale on this extraordinary adventure.

Tour Highlights:

- *Walks through stunning landscapes of river valleys, jungles, Buddhist temples and villages*
- *Old Bagan - home to hundreds of golden pagodas and ancient temples*
- *Inle Lake dotted with floating gardens and stilted villages*
- *Mandalay - the cultural and religious heart of the country*
- *Sunset cruises on Inle Lake and the Ayeyarwaddy River*
- *Optional balloon ride over Bagan and 4-day Beach Extension*
- *Deluxe lakeside chalets and modern city hotels surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens*

DAY 1

Arrival Day. Aung San Museum, Shwedagon Pagoda; 1 hour, easy walking.



After arriving at Yangon International Airport and transferring to our lovely hotel, we get acquainted and unwind over lunch. We then set out on foot to explore the colonial heritage of one of Southeast Asia's most impressive capitals, basking in its unique spiritual atmosphere. With its broad, tree lined avenues, bustling waterfront and teeming markets, Yangon is a treat to explore. We start with a visit to the Bogyoke Aung San Museum, the former home of General Aung San, father of Nobel Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. The colonial home, dating back to 1920, contains fascinating artifacts of another era.

From the museum, we continue on foot, reaching the top of the Shwedagon Pagoda to enjoy the sunset. Rudyard Kipling called Shwedagon "a Golden mystery...a beautiful twinkling wonder." The 2,500-year-old Shwedagon Pagoda is said to be the world's richest golden *stupa*, or Buddhist spiritual monument. Also considered the most sacred of all Buddhist sites in Myanmar, the golden dome rises 323 feet above its base and is covered with

60 tons of pure gold. As the last rays of the setting sun cast a brilliant light on the domes we observe local pilgrims and monks offering their devotions.

We'll enjoy dinner at a local restaurant featuring Myanmar cuisine.

Sedona Hotel, Yangon

DAY 2

Dallah Village; 1.5 hours, easy walking. Gem Museum and Optional late afternoon walk to Inya Lake; 1-2 hours, easy walking

After breakfast, we drive through the colonial heart of the city to the foot-passenger ferry terminal. From there, we catch our 10-minute ferry across the swiftly flowing Yangon River to the peaceful, rural area known as Dallah. In Dallah we walk through Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim villages where communities live together in harmony.



Returning to the city by ferry, we have the opportunity to stop and admire the colonial architecture. After lunch at a local restaurant, we choose between a visit to the Gem Museum or an optional walk. The Gem Museum is meant to impress —and does! It is home to the world's largest sapphire, the world's largest natural pearl, the world's largest rough ruby, and much more. The museum also contains three floors of licensed gem stalls selling both precious and semiprecious jewelry and loose stones as well as souvenir pieces. The optional walk leaves skirts the shores of the nearby Inya Lake, a popular relaxation spot for locals.

After freshening up at the hotel, we'll enjoy dinner at a Japanese restaurant on the shores of Kandawgyi Lakes, which translates as Royal Lake. Kandawgyi is a natural body of water in the city center. We'll enjoy the reflection of Swedagon in the lake. ***Sedona Hotel, Yangon***

DAY 3

Transfer to Heho. Inle Lake Hot Springs; 1 hour, easy walking

After breakfast, we fly to Heho (approximate 1 hour, 15 minute flight), our gateway to Inle Lake. Known as the most beautiful lake in Myanmar, Inle Lake's calm waters are surrounded by high hills and dotted with floating gardens and stilted villages. From Heho we board a coach for a stunning drive (approximately 1 hour drive) which winds through heavily forested hills where we see a variety of trees including banyan, jacaranda, acacia, and rubber trees. Monasteries, *stupa*, and small lakes dot the hills. We descend to the flat plateau where most of the county's rice is grown along with a variety of fruits and vegetables and sugarcane. We stop at a local hotel for lunch before proceeding to a small jetty where we pick up



our private boat for a 30-minute ride to our hotel, located on the shores of the lake.

En route we may pass local Intha fishermen, known as “leg rowers” and famous for propelling flat-bottomed boats by standing on one leg and wrapping the other around the oar. After checking in at our beautiful lakeside hotel, we set off for a walk to the nearby hot springs. Our route takes us through small villages, creating an opportunity to visit a local home. Continuing through a bamboo forest, we reach the hot springs, where we are likely to meet local women relaxing by the warm waters.

We return to the hotel in time to take a sunset boat ride out on the lake. Dinner is at the hotel.

Inle Princess Resort, Inle Lake

DAY 4

Inle Lake to Forest Monastery; 2 hours, easy to moderate walking. Inle Lake boat tour.

After breakfast we set off by boat to the village of Maing Thauk (a 20-minute trip) where we walk to the Forest Monastery along a trail shaded with tamarind trees, passing mango and sugarcane plantations. As we ascend into the jungle (approximate 750 ft ascent), our trail saddles a deep gorge with a stream running below. Bird calls punctuate our journey, and we may spot monkeys swinging in the trees. We arrive at the Monastery in time to see the Buddhist monks gathering for their mid-morning lunch. Further along the trail from the monastery is a *stupa*, where we enjoy stunning views of Inle Lake and the surrounding hills. On the way back from the monastery, we have a chance to visit the village of Maing Thauk, including an orphanage for preschoolers and a sugarcane farm where fudge and syrup are produced.



We board our long tail boats for the 45-minute crossing to the southern end of the lake. The journey takes us through floating gardens of multicolored lotus flowers and hyacinths. The lake is also home to abundant waterfowl, including egrets and cormorants. We eat lunch at a local restaurant perched on tall stilts offering excellent lake views.

After lunch, we board our boats for a leisurely return trip through the villages and vegetable gardens. We stop to learn about some of the traditional cottage industries, including lotus flower weaving, pottery, cigar making, and blacksmithing.

We then enjoy the sunset as we return to the hotel by boat.

Inle Princess Resort, Inle Lake

DAY 5

Transfer to Mandalay. Mandalay Hill; 1 hour, easy to moderate walking. Traditional marionette show

Early risers are given an opportunity to greet the new day by enjoying the sunrise over the lake. After breakfast, we take our last boat ride on the lake, returning to the jetty. We then transfer to the Heho Airport for a 30-minute flight to Mandalay.

Once the capital of Myanmar, Mandalay is still considered the cultural and religious heart of the country and is home to some of the most spectacular *pagodas* and temples. Upon arrival, we transfer (approximately 1 hour) to our hotel at the foot of Mandalay Hill. We enjoy lunch at the hotel before setting off on our hike to the top of Mandalay Hill (approximate 750 ft ascent), the site of fierce fighting in World War II when the British retook the hill from the Japanese in 1945. The summit offers a panoramic view over the palace and the *pagoda*-studded countryside.



After returning back down, we return to the hotel to freshen up before walking to the Marionette Theatre, just across the street from our hotel. We are treated to a one hour performance of this ancient art dating back several centuries. The Myanmar puppet shows the original Myanmar tradition as it includes all the artistic works such as dancing, music, wood carving, sequin embroidery and painting.

After the puppet show, we'll enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Sedona Hotel, Mandalay

DAY 6

Mandalay optional pre-breakfast walk; 1 hour, easy. Inwa Village; 2 hours, easy. Sunset boat trip on the Ayeyarwaddy River



This morning we can enjoy an optional pre breakfast walk along the palace mote (located just in front of our hotel). Each side of the mote (and palace wall) is just over a mile long and this time of the day we join the locals as they walk, jog or practice Thai Chi.

After breakfast, we drive out of the city through open farmland, reaching the narrow river crossing point to Inwa, known as Ava (a 45-minute drive). We cross to the other side by boat and board horse-drawn buggies for a short ride to the old city wall. Here, we pass through the ancient gate and walk through serene countryside, visiting historic sites along the way. There are virtually no cars in Inwa, and the farmland consists of fields of soybeans, rice, and sunflowers. The highlights of Inwa include an ancient monastery made entirely out of teak —and is supported by enormous teak posts, and a crumbling *pagoda* with large stone statues of Buddha dating back to the 15th century. We return by horse and buggy to a local restaurant located on a quiet spot, where we enjoy lunch.

After lunch, we ride in our horse and buggies again to the local jetty, where we board local river cruisers for our return to Mandalay. We'll cruise for about 2 1/2 hours up the mighty Ayeyarwaddy the major river that bisects the country (formally known as the Irawaddy) arriving in Mandalay as the sun sets.

Dinner this evening is at another colorful local restaurant.

Sedona Hotel, Mandalay

DAY 7

Transfer to Bagan. Ancient Temples; 2 hours, easy walking. Visits to cottage industries

After breakfast, we fly to Bagan (a short 20 minute flight) considered one of the greatest sights of Asia! Located on the lush delta plain, Bagan was once a great royal city with over 13,000 temples. Although the majority of the temples have been destroyed, ancient temples still dot the landscape as far as the eye can see. Hundreds of temples and *pagodas*, from simple to magnificent, spread over 40 square kilometers.

We start our exploration of Bagan by visiting the small 13th-century Gubyaukgi *Stupa*, which is known for its fine frescoes. We then stop at the Ananda Temple, one of the largest, best reserved, and most revered temples in Bagan. We also visit a local lacquer ware workshop, where we watch men and women ply their craft using traditional methods.



Midday we check into our hotel and enjoy lunch by the pool, before venturing out again for our afternoon walk. We start at the Shwesansaw Paya. We then zig zag our way along quiet trails, visiting the Dammayangyi Pahto and Sulamani Pagoda. Along the way, we are likely to see cows drinking at watering holes and farmers harvesting sesame seeds. We end our walk by climbing to the top of the Pyathada Pagoda for stirring sunset views.

Dinner this evening is in the garden at our beautiful hotel.

Thazin Garden Hotel, Bagan

DAY 8

Optional balloon flight over Bagan. Paya-thone-zuTemples; 1.5 hours, easy walking. Visit to the archaeological museum. Old Bagan; 1.5 hours, easy walking.



Guests who book the balloon flight are picked up early in the morning to enjoy a spectacular sunrise over Bagan and the Ayeyarwaddy River. Gentle winds not exceeding 15 miles per hour guide the balloon, allowing passengers a serene, bird's-eye view of ancient temples drifting by. On average the flight lasts between 45 minutes to 1 hour. (The cost of \$260 USD per person for this flight option is not included in the tour price and must be pre-paid).

We reunite at the hotel for breakfast before embarking on a walk through the Paya-thone-zu group of temples (a short ride to the east of our hotel). Midday we enjoy lunch at a local restaurant situated on the banks of the Ayeyarwaddy River before a visit to the archaeological museum, home to a collection of world-class Buddha images from the Bagan region.

After our visit to the museum, we start our hike through Old Bagan, walking by the oldest *stupa* and the tallest temple. We admire frescos at the Thamyia Temple and climb to the top of the Swegugyi Temple. Our walk concludes at Bagan's ninth-century gateway, which is guarded by brother and sister spirits

Late afternoon we take a short ride to the jetty and set out for a sunset cruise on the lower Ayarwaddy River before returning to our hotel for dinner.

Thazin Garden Hotel, Bagan

DAY 9

Transfer to Yangon; 1 hour easy walks, Bogyoke Market

Today we return to Yangon (approximate 1.5 hour flight). Before lunch, we'll have the option of exploring the local residential area of Yangon, including the food stall along the shores of Inya Lake. We'll then enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. This afternoon we explore the city's vibrant Bogyoke Market (formally known as Scott's Market); a fascinating covered market where we find reasonably priced handicrafts, jewels, antiques, and traditional artwork from all over Myanmar.

Or, choose to walk to the famous Strand Hotel for a cold drink at their stunning bar.

We enjoy a farewell dinner in Yangon tonight.

Sedona Hotel, Yangon

DAY 10

Departure from Yangon

After a plentiful breakfast, we transfer to the airport where we bid farewell and begin our journey home or on to other exciting destinations.

Important Note: Depending on the number of persons taking the Ngapali Beach extension, the itinerary might be slightly amended so that the majority of the group flies directly to Ngapali from Bagan and then returns from there to Yangon.

Hotel Itinerary

NIGHTS ONE & TWO: Sedona Hotel

Yangon

Myanmar

Tel 011 95 1 666 900

Fax 011 95 1 666 911

Email bc@sedona.com.mm

Sitting regally on eight acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, the Sedona Hotel Yangon is just a 15-minute drive from the international airport and city center and within close proximity to the Shwedagon Pagoda. Its "Myanmar-style" architecture gives the hotel character while spacious, modern rooms offer contemporary comfort.

NIGHTS THREE & FOUR: Inle Princess Resort

Inle Lake

Myanmar

Tel 011 95 81 29055 or 29364 or 29365

Fax 011 95 81 293 63

Email inleprincess@yangon.net.mm

The Inle Princess Resort lies within the Blue Mountain Range on the eastern bank of Inle Lake and is surrounded by rice fields. The architecture was drawn from the tradition and culture of the Shan and Intha people. The rooms are individual chalets, beautifully designed and decorated with terraced lake-side views.

NIGHTS FIVE & SIX: Sedona Hotel

Mandalay

Myanmar

Tel 011 95 2 36488

Fax 011 95 2 36499

Email sales.shm@sedona.com.mm

A sanctuary of sorts amidst four acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, the Sedona Mandalay sits right in the heart of the city and faces spectacular sights — magnificent Mandalay Hill and the majestic Royal Palace. The rooms are graciously designed to blend contemporary elegance with touches of exotic charm.

NIGHTS SEVEN & EIGHT: Thazin Garden Hotel

Bagan

Myanmar

Tel 011 95 61 60052

Fax 011 95 61 60302

Email ngwesae@baganmail.net.mm

The hotel's perch atop a high plain reveals panoramic views of serene surroundings. Constructed mainly of teak in traditional regional style, the Thazin Garden Hotel has its own Stupa Pagoda. The spacious rooms have private verandas or terraces overlooking tranquil gardens.

NIGHT NINE: Sedona Hotel

Yangon

Myanmar

Tel 011 95 1 666 900

Fax 011 95 1 666 911

Email bc@sedona.com.mm

Please see nights one & two for hotel description.

We reserve the right to amend the above hotels depending on the final numbers in the group.

Ngapoli Beach

Post-Tour Extension

The pristine beaches of Ngapoli invite guests to extend their Myanmar adventure in repose and relaxation. Just a 50-minute flight from Yangon leads to a 2-mile stretch of sandy coast fringing clear, azure waters. Sea, sand and sun are the only distractions. No buildings are taller than palm-tree level and loud jet skis, souvenir vendors, and beachside bars are blissfully absent.

Opportunities abound to engage with the uniquely charming local culture. Watch fishermen drawing their nets and women carrying baskets of fish to the resort, or simply make the acquaintance of people renowned for their friendliness. Outstanding seafood, a fabulous swimming and snorkeling beach, and a laid-back atmosphere make this an idyllic destination for capping off an unforgettable Myanmar adventure by unwinding in peaceful surroundings.

This unescorted extension includes 3 nights at the lovely Bayview Beach Resort, breakfast and dinner on most days, a half-day snorkeling trip by boat and bicycles available free of charge. The resort's stunning location - right on the beach and surrounded by swaying palm trees -- enhances a sense of serenity. The fiery sunsets, for which the Bay of Bengal is renowned, can be watched right from the doorsteps of your beachside lodgings.

DAY 1

We start our day with a morning flight to Ngapoli Beach, where we transfer to the hotel. Free afternoon. Dinner included.

Bayview Beach Resort, Ngapoli Beach



DAY 2

Today you can relax, collect shells, stroll to the nearby fishing village, go for a bicycle ride, or take a half-day boat trip for snorkeling. Breakfast and dinner included.

Bayview Beach Resort, Ngapoli Beach



DAY 3

You enjoy another relaxing day at Ngapoli Beach with another opportunity for bicycling or snorkeling. Breakfast and dinner included.

Bayview Beach Resort, Ngapoli Beach

DAY 4

After breakfast, you fly back to Yangon, where you are met by a tour guide who facilitates the transfer to the Airport Hotel.

PRICE:

\$900 per person; Single Supplement \$350



INCLUSIONS:

3 nights hotel, 3 breakfasts, 3 dinners, round-trip flight (Yangon to Thandwe/Ngapoli Beach), airport transfers, bike hire, half-day boat/snorkeling excursion, use of day room at the Yangon Airport Hotel.

Important Note: This unescorted tour normally begins on the final day (day ten) of your Myanmar tour. However, depending on the number of persons taking the Ngapoli Beach extension, the itinerary might be slightly amended so that the majority of the group flies directly to Ngapoli from Bagan and then returns from there to Yangon for a final night before departure the next day.

LODGING:

Bay View Beach Resort

Ngapali Beach

Myanmar

Tel 011 95 1 504471

Fax 011 95 1 526292

Email hotel@bayview.com.mm

Website www.bayview-myanmar.com

The Bay View Beach Resort is a boutique style hotel, tucked away between coconut palms on a wide, unspoiled beach skirting the Bay of Bengal. Only 15 minutes from the airport, the hotel creates a sense of calm with deluxe bungalow-style rooms. Amenities include a freshwater swimming pool, a spa and restaurant.

GRATUITIES: Should you wish to tip your local boat/snorkeling guide or your transfer drivers, this gratuity is entirely at your discretion.

Tour Facts at a Glance:

Itinerary Changes

This itinerary is meant as a guideline only and that the actual walks and sites visited may vary due to season, special events or weather. Changes in domestic airline flight schedules may also alter the order of walks and visits. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance, and unforeseen circumstances that mandate change may arise. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

Myanmar Politics

It is important to note that Myanmar (formerly Burma) is a country run by an authoritarian military junta. Myanmar has just recently opened its doors to international travelers and travel is restricted to certain areas. Some travelers may have concerns about the current political regime; however, the people of Myanmar welcome tourists with open arms. Tourists provide much needed jobs and income to the local people. By visiting and experiencing Myanmar we are supporting the people. We are also assisting the people by utilizing a local operator, local guides, and independent, privately run hotels and restaurants.

INCLUSIONS: All meals, internal flights and boat tours included. Beverages are not included.

MEETING POINT: Yangon, Myanmar (formerly Rangoon, Burma) 12:00 noon

DEPARTURE POINT: Yangon, Myanmar

RATING & TERRAIN: Easy walking with some uneven terrain, Average of 2 hours daily

ACCOMMODATIONS: Deluxe lake-side chalets and modern city hotels surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens. All private baths.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS: International airfare is not included in the price of your trip.

GRATUITIES: Gratuities for all hotels, meals and services which are included in your tour price will be paid by your tour leaders. Should you wish to tip your tour leaders, this gratuity is entirely at your discretion. The standard in the industry ranges from \$8 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day, and may be paid in US Dollars.

Please note that **ONLY USD cash** can be used in Myanmar for incidentals and souvenir shopping. Credit cards are allowed in some hotels but there is a 7% surcharge. Travelers checks are not accepted. ATMs are not available.

Traveling to and from Your Tour

TRAVEL TO YANGON, MYANMAR

International airfare is not included in the price of your trip. We encourage you to contact your local travel agent or the airline(s) directly for any air arrangement you may need.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT:

Yangon International Airport (RGN), Yangon, Myanmar
(Formerly Rangoon, Burma)

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME: 12:00 noon at the Sedona Hotel, Yangon.

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT:

Most flights into Yangon, Myanmar include a lay-over in Bangkok, Thailand and then departing for Yangon the following morning. When purchasing international airfare, you may choose to book a round trip flight directly to Yangon, or, book two round trip flights (one round trip flight from your point of departure to Yangon plus one round trip flight from Bangkok, Thailand to Yangon, Myanmar). We recommend researching both options for the best rates and schedules.

You will be met at the Yangon Airport upon the arrival of your flight from Bangkok. A complimentary transfer from the Yangon Airport to your hotel is provided (regardless of when you arrive in Yangon) as long as we

receive your Arrival/Departure information at least 30 days prior to the start of the tour. A representative holding a signboard with your name will meet you as you exit the baggage claim area. The hotel is approximately 20 minutes from the airport.

The group will meet at 12:00 noon in the lobby of the Sedona Hotel, Yangon allowing you the morning to rest. Please be dressed for casual city walking as we will enjoy lunch at the hotel and a short orientation meeting before embarking on a museum visit and walk.

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND: The following hotel is most convenient for the night immediately preceding the tour, as it is located 10 minutes from the hotel and offers a free shuttle bus.: **The Novotel Airport Hotel**, Bangkok, Thailand. Room rates range from \$150-260 USD.

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS IN YANGON, MYANMAR: If you wish to extend your stay in Yangon, we recommend staying at our first hotel, the Sedona Hotel and would be happy to assist you in making a reservation. Room rates are \$100 USD per room (single or double), per night, which includes tax and breakfast.

DELAYS/LATE ARRIVALS: *If you are delayed while traveling, or for any reason miss the scheduled group meeting (as outlined on your Arrival and Departure form), please call the Sedona Hotel and leave a message for your guide(s) regarding your estimated time of arrival*

About Myanmar

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS:

Entry into Myanmar requires a passport and a Tourist Visa. As noted below, visas are valid for 3 months from the date of issue so it is extremely important that you apply for your tourist visa at the appropriate time.

Passport:

Obtaining a passport can take up to four weeks and your passport should be valid for at least six months beyond your travel date.

Tourist Visa:

You must have your valid passport before you can apply for a visa as the actual visa will be stamped into your passport. To apply for a visa you must fill out a Tourist Visa Application which can be found on The Embassy of the Union of Myanmar Website: www.mewashingtondc.com Once in the website click on the Passports & Visas link and then on the Tourist Visa Form link. You may call (202) 332 3344 or (202) 332 4350 for additional information. The visa process normally requires that you send 2 copies of the application form both with a passport size photo, one copy of the "Report of Arrival Form" with a passport size photo, a pre-paid self-addressed envelope, your passport (valid for at least 6 months) and payment of \$20 USD payable by money order to the Embassy of Myanmar. We strongly recommend using a secure express mail service. The Tourist Visa is valid for a stay of exactly 4 weeks and not extendable. **Visas are valid for 3 months from the date of issue, which cannot be renewed or refunded. The visa processing time is approximately 5 business days but you should leave plenty of extra time. Please refer to the Myanmar Embassy Website listed above for the most up to date requirements.**

Note that you do not need to apply for your visa until around early November and only after we have sent you a letter of confirmation from our tour operator in Myanmar.

You can also check for the nearest Myanmar Embassy on the following website
<http://www.embassiesabroad.com/embassies-of/Myanmar>

FOREIGN CURRENCY:

The unit of currency in Myanmar is the kyat (MMK). As of March, 2006 one U.S. dollar is equal to 6.7 kyat. Your local representative will help you change money on arrival, as the unofficial rate is equal to approximately 1200 kyat for 1 USD.

Cash:

As of March, 2006 credit cards and travelers checks are not allowed in Myanmar. Only cash can be used for incidentals and souvenir shopping. Recently hotels have started accepting credit cards with a 7% surcharge. USD cash is always accepted for exchange. Make sure the bills are not torn or dirty as these will not accept these and you will find your cash to be useless. **Bringing in and taking out Myanmar currency is not allowed.**

ELECTRICITY:

Electric current in Myanmar carries 230 volts at 50 cycles. Myanmar uses sockets that resemble the British sockets. Hotels provide plug size adapters on request

COMMUNICATION:

Internet interactive service is currently not available in Myanmar, however, email will be available at some hotels and there are internet cafes in Yangon. This means that you can use the hotel email addresses to send or receive emails but you will not have access to your own email accounts.

Overseas calls can be made through International direct dial phones available at telephone offices and hotels. At present the local GSM network does not support global network therefore using your global mobile phone is not possible in Myanmar.

Myanmar is 12.5 hours ahead of (later than) Eastern Daylight Time. Bangkok is 11 hours ahead of EDT.

WEATHER:

The best time to visit Myanmar is between November and February which is considered the "cool" season and the driest time of the year. Midday temperatures can still be quite warm reaching the high 80s to low 90s in some areas. Temperatures in Heho (Inle Lake) are cooler and average in the 70s dipping to the 40s at night. You may obtain more detailed weather information by visiting www.weatherbase.com.

Yangon Dec Feb

High 88 94

Low 67 67

Heho (Inle Lake) Dec Feb

High 71 76

Low 47 47

Mandalay Dec Feb

High 81 88

Low 59 60

IMMUNIZATIONS & HEALTH CONCERNS:

Inoculations: We recommend that you consult a travel clinic, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, and/or your personal physician for the most up-to-date inoculation recommendations. Gamma globulin (for hepatitis), tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella vaccinations are generally recommended for all travelers. You should consult the Centers for Disease Control or your physician for the most current information regarding the threat of malaria. Please plan ahead for immunizations since they may need to be administered one to two months prior to departure. The Center for Disease Control, (877) 394-8747, provides the most current medical requirements and recommendations. The same information is also available from the CDC's website: www.cdc.gov/travel.

CUISINE:

The cuisine of Myanmar is known as Burmese and represents an eclectic blend of Indian, Chinese and European flavors and influences. Rice is the staple of any Burmese meal and is usually served with a choice of curry dishes. Traditional curry dishes usually consist of vegetables, chicken, fish and seafood. Curries in Myanmar are the mildest in Asia as chilies are often replaced with a simple mixture of ginger, turmeric, garlic, salt and onions. Light, spicy salads made with vegetables or fresh fruit tossed with lime juice, onions, peanuts and other spices are also a highlight. The Myanmar style of food is served as a large assortment of dishes from which you can pick and choose. Lighter noodle dishes, salads and soups are popular mid-day meals. Breakfasts on tour will consist of full Western buffets with plenty of fresh fruit. Myanmar has a wide variety of tropical fruits including strawberries, bananas, tangerines, watermelon, papayas and pineapples. European and Western cuisine is also available at most hotels.

Water: Never drink water from a tap. Bottled water will be provided throughout your tour.

LAUNDRY: Same day laundry service is offered at most hotels.

GENERAL CULTURAL INFORMATION:

Myanmar is a developing country. Infrastructure, including modern roads, is fairly good, but poverty is apparent in much of the country. The quest for modernization has been an important theme in recent history, but traditional values continue to play a significant role in understanding contemporary Myanmar. The country's greatest resource is often considered its people, and for many travelers, encounters with the locals form the most enduring memories of their visit. This tour exploration has been designed to maximize exposure to the country's diversity, its land, people and culture, both on foot and during the travel days. The most important tools that a traveler can bring to Myanmar are a sense of humor, flexibility and an open mind to cultural differences. While this itinerary has been established with the assistance of local, expert guides and operators, each experience is unique and requires patience on the part of the traveler.

DRESS

Please note that wearing shorts is not recommended for our walks and when visiting temples, they are not allowed. We recommend wearing hiking pants with zip-off legs or ¾ length pants. If possible dress modestly at all times. When visiting Buddhist sites, one should not wear shorts, short skirts or have exposed shoulders. Shoes and socks are also not allowed in any Buddhist sites. When we visit pagodas, temples and monasteries all shoes and socks must be removed and left outside the building. For this reason we may recommend walking sandals on some days.

ETIQUETTE & SOCIAL CONDUCT:

The Burmese people in general have a very easy going and open nature. The social conduct of the people, no matter what tribe they come from, is termed "Burmese-ness." This includes the Buddhist values of respect for elders, dressing modestly, showing discretion in behavior towards the opposite gender, and most importantly, exhibiting modes of expression that value quiet, subtle and indirect communication rather than loud, obvious and direct.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR WOMEN:

Please note that tampons are not widely available in Myanmar.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

It is recommended that you always ask before taking a person's photograph (a hand signal is fine).

DONATIONS:

We recommend that you do not give in to the temptation of rewarding children who beg for sweets, pencils, or spare change. As difficult as this may be, you will make a more positive impact by giving donations of school supplies or books to our guide, who will assure that they reach one of the villages visited on our tour.

Basic Burmese Phrases

The national language of Myanmar is Burmese, the language of the Bamar majority. Approximately 80% of the Myanmar population speaks this language or related dialects. Making up another 10% of the population are speakers of Thai languages which include the Shan, Khun and Tai Lu. Some estimate that there are 107 languages spoken in Myanmar. Our guides speak English fluently. Basic English is widely spoken in urban areas. Although knowledge of Burmese is by no means essential for this tour, you may want to learn a few common words and phrases before you depart. Local residents will appreciate your efforts to learn even simple greetings. We hope the following Burmese phrases will help make your trip more enjoyable.

English Burmese

Hello	mingalabar
Thank you	jesubey
Yes	houq-keh
Good Bye	ta-ta
Water	yeh
Purified Water	yeh Tain
Bottled Water	than-ye
No thank you	Ma weh tey boo (to street sellers)
Good	cown tey (as in the food tastes good)
How much does it cost?	Bey lau ley
How are you?	Ne-kaun yeh la?
I am well	Ne-kaun-ba-deh

Vowel Pronunciation: Consonant Pronunciation:

a as in 'father' th as in 'thin'

aw as in 'law' dh as in 'the'

e as the 'bay' ny as in the beginning of the British 'new'

i as in 'be' hm, hn, hng, hl

(made with a puff of air just before the nasal or l sound)

o as in 'go' ng as the 'ng' in hang

u as in 'too'

What to Pack

BOOTS AND FOOT CARE:

Sturdy sneakers are sufficient. Hiking Boots are not required. Walking sandals: As you will need to take your shoes on and off every time we enter a Buddhist site, we recommend good walking sandals (such as Merrill or Teva) for some days. Synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended while walking as they will quickly cause blisters) Johnson & Johnson Cushions for Feet Blister Block" or similar blister remedy. Small scrub brush and foot cream as your feet can get quite dirty and dry when walking barefoot in and around temples and on bare stones. A rich foot cream will help prevent cracked heels.

CLOTHING:

Wash and wear, light weight, long pants (zip off pants and/or 3/4 length pants are ideal). Shorts are **NOT** appropriate for visiting temples. Long-sleeved and short-sleeved, wash and wear shirts, T-shirts. Dinner attire: Dress in Myanmar is casual. A different outfit for each evening is unnecessary, and will only weigh down your luggage. Light sweater or polar fleece jacket for evenings. Optional: a skirt or wrap around sarong (both men and women wear sarongs in Myanmar); these can be purchased on tour. Optional: bathing suit for hotel swimming pools.

OUTERWEAR

Waterproof rain gear: jacket or poncho

Hat with a broad brim or visor for sun protection

EQUIPMENT:

Day Pack: large enough to carry water, camera, extra clothing

Sun block and lip balm with SPF

Sunglasses

"Toilet Kit" for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues and moist towelettes which can be disposed of upon your return to the hotel

ESSENTIAL PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT:

Band-Aids

Small scissors, tweezers, needle

Aspirin (acetaminophen if you cannot tolerate aspirin)

Cold remedies

Motion sickness medication, if you are susceptible to car, plane or boat sickness

A mild laxative

Pepto Bismol (or similar)

Anti-diarrhea medicine

Insect repellent

Tampons (please note that tampons cannot be purchased in Myanmar)

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS:

Consult your physician regarding the need for Antibiotic for gastrointestinal infections. You should also bring an ample supply of any other prescription medications you ordinarily take.

Any prescription medications you require should be in their original containers

OPTIONAL:

Binoculars

Camera with extra batteries

Ziplock bags (to keep camera & valuables dry)

Small notebook and pen

Field guides (see enclosed reading list)

Bandana

Wash cloth

Travel alarm clock and watch

Personal toiletries

Second pair of prescription glasses (if worn)

Small flashlight to better see frescoes in some of the darker temples

Hand sanitizer (gel or handy wipes)

PACKING TIPS AND LUGGAGE REQUIREMENTS:

Pack light! The trip is meant to be relaxing. The more you bring, the more you'll have to worry about. Keep in mind there will be times, especially before and after the tour that you may have to carry your own luggage short distances. Due to space constraints we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece and one small carry-on per person. We also ask that you bring soft-sided luggage. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. We recommend packing valuables, prescription medications and your walking shoes in your carry-on luggage. **Please note that individual airlines may have their own luggage restrictions.**

Both the Myanmar domestic airlines and the Thai International Airlines only allow a total of 44 pounds per person (not per bag) with a limit of 2 check-in bags per person. Extra weight on domestic flights is charged at \$1 or more per kg overweight.

Gearing Up!

THE WALKS: Average 2 hours daily. This tour includes a variety of walks ranging from easy city walking to hillside hiking. This tour is considered easy with some uneven terrain, short steep ascents and descents on stairs and temples.

TRAINING: We suggest walking 2 to 3 miles, 4 times per week, for at least 5 weeks before your trip starts. If possible walk on varying terrain. The more you walk or do some form of aerobic exercise before your trip starts, the more you will enjoy your experience in Myanmar.

WALKING: These basic walking tips may help to make your tour more enjoyable. Start and end each day's walk with 5-10 minutes of stretching. While walking, maintain good posture and a steady pace. Be aware of the formation of blisters. The moment you start to feel one forming is the time to apply a "Blister Block" (see "What to Pack"). Most importantly, drink plenty of water throughout the day. Your guide will provide a thorough overview of the terrain to be encountered on each day's walk and the advisability of using a walking stick.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES: Travel in Myanmar is relatively safe. However, as in any country, avoid carrying your money and passport in a waist pack. It's best to carry valuables in a pouch worn inside your shirt or in a money belt around your waist. In addition, you should carry copies of important documents in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying packages, cameras, or backpacks through the streets of a city. You may be asked to give your airplane ticket to the local operator in Myanmar. This is for security reasons and to allow them to confirm your return flight. We recommend leaving valuable jewelry at home and using lockable luggage. To join this trip, you must be in good health and in good physical condition. You should bring an ample supply of any medicine you regularly use. We will exercise reasonable care in assuring a safe and enjoyable trip, but you should be aware that there are certain risks associated with all adventure travel. Be sure to note any physical limitations or conditions, medications being taken, allergies or health problems before traveling to Myanmar.