

Myanmar in Detail (13 days)



Departs anytime (2018-19)



Please note: This itinerary can be modified in any way to best suit your school's particular aims, learning objectives and budget.

Please contact us detailing any changes you'd like to make.

In the last 100 years, over half of the world's countries have been renamed. Myanmar is no exception. Since 1989, Burma has become Myanmar and its former capital city Rangoon has become Yangon. The country's new capital city is Naypyidaw.

Whilst it seems the only constant in Myanmar these days is change, student travelling of this definitive 13-day trip of Myanmar will learn how this it is reshaping this final Asian frontier for better and for worse.

This trip entails visits to the country's most noteworthy places of interest including mesmerizing Inle Lake, the temple city of Bagan, Mandalay, and Yangon. It will further include travel to the far-flung northern and eastern regions of Hsipaw. We will also journey to Lashio, where hilltribe villages experienced little lifestyle changes over the course of 400 years.

As the trip is designed to be of a service nature, it also includes interaction with Burmese students. We will be working alongside them in a solidarity effort to build a classroom for an under-resourced school.

Most importantly, this tour is designed to be highly enjoyable. We aim to foster students' awareness of an enigmatic country still struggling to find a place in the 21st century.



David Eales
Asia Manager

Day 1

Arrive Yangon

Today we will arrive in Myanmar's largest city, Yangon. It is a delightful city, once the centerpiece of a colonial empire stretching right across west and Southeast Asia. For this, Yangon owes itself to strong Indian and Thai influences. We will get to know more about this city in the upcoming days.

Upon arrival, we will be welcomed by our tour leader. There will be a time to relax before a short group meeting to talk about the program and answer any questions. Following this, we will set out for an orientation tour of this multicultural city. This evening we will enjoy our first taste of Burmese food at a popular local eatery. (lunch, dinner) **Flight details to be advised**

Day 2

Yangon day tour (Circle train)



Since the country's recent opening to the world, Yangon most aptly reflects the rapid changes that have taken place. We will head out this morning for our first full day in Myanmar, beginning with an exploration of the bustling city.

Later we will visit Chaukhtatgyi to learn of Myanmar's rich Buddhist heritage. Then, we will continue to the most famous site in all of Myanmar – the Shwedagon Pagoda; an awe-inspiring golden stupa.

An exciting journey awaits us as we board the city's 'circle train'. Train travel is a popular means of transport in Myanmar and a great way to interact with the local people and glean an understanding of their daily lives.

After disembarking our train at Insein Station, we will set off to a vibrant local market.

To facilitate fun urban exploration and to enhance our knowledge of this historic city, we will participate in a Great Race activity around Yangon. During this activity students will navigate assigned routes, collecting information that will increase their understanding of Myanmar's history and culture.

Later in the day, we will visit the Yangon Bake House, an enterprising NGO established to teach underprivileged local children trade skills as bakers. Here we learn of the success of this enterprise that provides a secure future for the children through vocational training. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 3 & 4

Yangon (School building project)



Myanmar until quite recently was described as a 'pariah state' and not long ago suffered crippling sanctions resulting from the international community's refusal to acknowledge the ruling junta. Only in recent times has Myanmar been able to gain access to development funding, foreign investment and trade opportunities that other developing countries have long enjoyed. As such, Myanmar is still one of the poorest countries in Asia, only slightly ahead of Laos and Bangladesh. It is here that we will undertake our community – service project designed to assist a local school in building classrooms.

Arriving early, we will begin our two-day project to help build a classroom for a school on the outskirts of the city. This will take the form of practical building as we construct brick walls for the school working alongside local children. Our tasks include bricklaying, cement mixing, frame construction and the transporting of materials. Local tradesmen and our tour leader will be supervising and assisting throughout the project. The local school will provide us with meals, whilst our assistance and interaction in this task will be greatly appreciated. The days will be long and the results rewarding as we see our school project develop.

On our final day of building we will farewell our fellow students whom we have worked alongside. During these two days in Yangon, we will head out each evening to enjoy the hustle and bustling of this English inspired city with its crumbling facades and wide boulevards.

Whilst in Yangon we will also visit the intriguing Bogyoke Market (formerly Scott Market), where we can browse a great range of antiques and curios from the country's colonial days, and go for a walk through the city's Chinatown. (2 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners)

Day 5

Yangon ✈️ Bagan

A short flight will take us to Myanmar's vast interior, arriving in the township of Bagan. Bagan is only a short distance from India and Bangladesh which heavily influences the population of this region. Arriving about midday, we will check-in to our hotel before venturing out to see one of Asia's most popular archaeological destinations and one out of two most pre-eminent religious old cities in South East Asia. En route we will enjoy a stroll around one of the region's unique markets and try some local fare to this remote State.

This evening, we will visit a temple from where we can enjoy views over the surrounding hinterland from a stunning temple. As it is a 'working temple' (as distinct from those in Cambodia, for example, that are no longer used extensively as sites of worship), they are quickly being restored by local people who routinely pay their visits. (breakfast, lunch, dinner) **Morning flight: YANGON – BAGAN**

Day 6

Bagan



After breakfast we head out for a half day bicycle tour around famous temples. We begin our journey to the famous Ananda Temple – reputed to be one of the masterpieces of Bagan.

The countryside surrounding Bagan is home to literally thousands of stupas and temples. In every direction we will see ruins of all sizes, some soaring into the sky and others standing quaintly at a corner, with the beauty of the meandering Irrawaddy River completing the scene. This ancient city is one of Asia's most significant archaeological sites which, until now, has remained relatively unknown to outsiders. Like the Angkor Temples in Cambodia, it is a

pre-eminent religious inspired city and a marvel of Asian civilisation.

Later we will view some of Bagan's ancient mural paintings as well as stop by the massive Sulamani Temple. To end our day, we will board our boat along the Ayeyarwady (formerly the Irrawaddy) River and learn of its importance in Burmese history. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 7

Student-Initiated Activity Day

Prior to travelling to Myanmar a Student Educational Adventures staff member will talk to you and your students about specific activities that student might like to add to their itinerary. These activities might be based on students' prior knowledge of the country based on their interests or passions for any aspect of the culture. Alternatively, we can offer students a choice of highly enjoyable, student-centric activities such as those described below:



OPTION 1: Tattooed face - The distinctive Chin tribe is best known of the intricate ink details covering their entire face. This tradition started generations ago, when several tribes in the Chin province of Myanmar began to tattoo the face of each single young woman.

What is the reason behind this? Like in many other feudal countries in Asia, it used to be the case that the members of the royal family could marry whoever and whenever they wanted. Often, it meant there wouldn't be any willingness involved. A neighbouring prince could eventually show up and take his next wife on a whim, without any notice from neither the girl nor her family in advance.

For the Chin tribe, having their daughters stolen away by strange marauders was an unfortunate yet common affair. Nobody would be able to successfully fight against this injustice. As a result, the Chin parents began to get creative: they started tattooing on their child's face.

Over the years, what was originally intended to make the women undesirable began to have another opposite effect. The full facial tattoos became signs of beauty for every Chin woman. Nowadays, younger generations do not favor this practice. However, it remains a unique feature of this very fascinating culture, whose village we will visit today.

OPTION 2: Day trip to Mt Popa - We will travel south to visit intriguing Mt. Popa, an extinct volcano located south-east of Bagan. Mt. Popa lies in the heart of one of Burma's designated national park, featuring unique preserved forests in this hot, dry plateau region. The significance of Mt. Popa itself is believed by the Burmese to

be the abode of spirits, or “nats”. Today, we will climb the Taungkalat, a part of the main volcano, to see panoramic views of its landscape.

We will continue our journey from Mt. Popa across the country gateway to the Shan State and Inle Lake. Inle Lake is one of Myanmar’s most magical places. It is located 900 meters above sea level and surrounded by mountains of the Shan plateau. This region of Myanmar was off limits to foreigners for several years as is home to the Inthar minority tribe. We will check into our centrally located hotel this afternoon before venturing out for a pizza.



OPTION 3: Mediations with Monks - This morning we will travel to the surrounding hinterland to begin a vigorous walk. We will journey through villages amongst the foothills, visiting local communities on the way. Later we will visit a friendly monastery to learn of Theravada Buddhism, practised by an estimated 89% of Burmese. Here we will have the opportunity to talk to the local monks about their lives and commitment to their way of life, as well as join them in an uplifting meditation session. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 8 Inle Lake



After breakfast we will enjoy a true trip highlight as we board fast boats that will take us to explore this unique region of Myanmar. We will stop en route to visit cottage industries, including weaving collectives set amongst water communities where we will witness a very different way of life. From the comfort of our boats, we can enjoy such sights as fisherman rowing one-legged style, and the Gardens of Grass and Earth floating on the river’s surface.

In preparation for this trip, we have been invited to visit the monks and novices at an Inle Monastery. They invite us to learn of Buddhism’s practices, followed by a quiet and mindful meditation.

Later we will also visit the Phaungdawoo Pagoda – famous for its richly gilded five small Buddha images. Following this, we will continue to Ngaphechaung (jumping cat) monastery, built more than one and a half centuries ago. In the afternoon we will make our way to our lakeside hotel, where we can relax and take a stroll along the banks of the lake. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 9 Heho (Inle Lake) ✈️ Mandalay



A late start this morning we allow us ample time to enjoy the sunrise over this beautiful region of Myanmar. A new adventure awaits as we will fly to the fabled city of Mandalay, residing in the country’s north.

Arriving just before midday, we will enjoy a quick local lunch before setting out to visit some of the city’s most impressive sites including the Mingun Bell, said to be the largest hung bell in the world. In the afternoon we visit the former royal capital of Amarapura and the U Bein Bridge. The bridge is more than two centuries old, and at over a kilometre, it is the world’s longest teakwood span.

Time permitting, we will visit a local school to learn of the Burmese Education system, the lives of its students and their aspirations for the future. We will enjoy a walking tour of Mandalay this evening followed by dinner. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 10 Pyi Oo Lwin

Another adventure begins as we travel to the remote northeastern region of the country – for years off-limits to foreigners, this region is a short distance from China and is one of Myanmar’s most beautiful places. To our knowledge, no student group has ever visited this region of Myanmar making this a very special experience. We will travel to the delightful town of Pyin Oo Lwin (formerly known as Maymyo), a picturesque small town in the Shan Highlands of central Myanmar. This town began as an outpost of the British military and eventually grew into a permanent post. It is also the summer capital of British Burma, due to its temperate climate from high elevation. Today, Pyin Oo Lwin has a strong Anglo legacy, home to one of the largest Anglo-Burmese populations in the country.

Evidence of British occupation and rule is apparent everywhere, from old colonial homes to the chimes of the town's clock tower, aligning with those of Big Ben in London. In the afternoon we will board horse and carts for a more thorough look around the town, before an early dinner. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 11

Pyi Oo Lwin (Gokteik Viaduct) Hsipaw



Today we will enjoy a journey you will never forget as we embark on a train ride passing above the Gokteik Railway Viaduct ten route to the hill tribe province of Hsipaw, following the ancient route into China.

The Gokteik Viaduct is the highest railway bridge in Myanmar and at its completion in 1901, was the largest bridge in the world. Whilst seldom visited by foreigners, the journey is one of the world's most spectacular train trips. As we travel the line built over large cliff faces, the experience is best enjoyed by hanging slightly out the windows of the slow-moving trains, camera in hand, ready to embrace what's around the next bend!

We will arrive in the town of Hsipaw this afternoon where we will enjoy a visit to a local school for some interaction with our Burmese contemporaries. Dinner tonight will be at a very local eatery. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 12

Hsipaw to Lashio



Today we will enjoy an early morning hike to explore the picturesque hinterland of this region.

Later we will journey further northern-east still to the far-flung town of Lashio. Lashio (pronounced 'lar-show') is a booming and sprawling market town with a significant Chinese population. Once the seat of an important Shan Sao Pha (sky price), Lashio played a pivotal role in the fight against the Japanese in WWII. It served as Burma Road's starting point, supplying food and arms to Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang army.

Tonight we will enjoy our final dinner in Myanmar at a quaint local restaurant, before an evening circuit of this far-flung town. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 13

Lashio Depart Yangon

There will be a short time this morning for an escorted stroll through this quaint town that once played a pivotal role in the fight against the Japanese in WWII as the starting point of the Burma Road, which supplied food and arms to Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang army.

Following this we will transfer to the airport for our flight home. Our group leader will take care of your onward travel arrangements and bid us farewell at Yangon International Airport. (breakfast) **Flight details to be advised**

Summary

Grading

Challenging; Students and teachers should be in good condition to be able to take part in this trip. Students will be expected to work for long days during the service-learning components of the trip. You will also be expected to be able to ride a bike. While the trekking component is not designed to be too challenging, it will require students to be in good health and to having some prior walking experience. Students will be expected to carry their own packs during this section of the trip and their own luggage throughout the trip but only for short distances.

Accommodation

Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels hold a 3-star equivalent rating.

Transport

Modern air-conditioned bus, boat, plane, speedboat.

Group Size

Minimum group size 20 students & 2 staff members travelling *free of charge*.

▲ [Smaller group sizes can be quoted upon application](#)

Your Tour Leader

Your tour leader is probably the person who most influences the success of your trip. Thus, Student Educational Adventures employs our own team of meticulously trained student dedicated, local tour leaders - not foreigners, imported at your students' expense with no language skills or insight into your host culture.

These nationals are not only the best folk to show you their country. They are your teachers, translators and an enthusiastic purveyor of authentic experiences. They are there to facilitate your immersion into new cultures and are the bridge between you and the world of education and new experiences.

Your tour leader is always with your students throughout your trip and is thoroughly versed in safety protocols and duty of care responsibilities. This ranges from assisting in the most basic of health and safety measures to ensuring that teachers & students are always safe during our trips. All have been chosen because of their ability to deal with the needs and unique issues associated with escorting young people through this wonderful region.

Service Learning Program

All service-learning programs initiated by Student Educational Adventures are conducted after careful consultation with the local community and with the local People's Committees.

These projects are initiated based on a model of mutual learning and designed as an immersion experience. An understanding of the importance of an integrated approach to community development is useful to frame what students and teachers might see, learn or experience during a student immersion.

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Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as describe in itinerary
- *Student Educational Adventures* tour leader throughout trip & additional specialist guides
- **2 internal flights Yangon to Bagan, Heho (Inle Lake) to Mandalay**
- Meals (+ drinking water) as listed in the daily itinerary
- Pre-departure support, briefings & planning meetings for students and parents
- 24/7 in-country support
- **Cost of community project**

Exclusions

- International flights to/from Myanmar
- Some meals
- Myanmar Visa (Not required by some nationalities)