

Myanmar: Beyond Yangon (9 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.

Often criticised for its politics and always praised for its beauty, Myanmar never fails to delight those who make an effort to visit. Our 9-day trip of this special nation has been specifically designed for students wishing to gain insight into a culture relatively untouched by globalisation.

The trip entails visiting several of the country's most significant places of interest including Inle Lake, the temple city of Bagan and the Kalaw region in the country's *Shan State*. Travel will be by air, bus, river vessel as well as speedboat, journeying to the country's mainstream as well as less travelled regions.

As this trip is intended to raise awareness of developmental issues, the itinerary also includes a service-learning component. We will be working with local students to renovate a school with too many students and too few resources.

Most importantly, this tour is designed to be highly enjoyable and intended to foster students' awareness of this often-unnoticed country and its gracious people.



David Eales
Asia Manager

Day 1

Arrive Yangon, transfer for internal flight to Heho (Inle Lake)

Upon arrival, we arrive in Yangon today and be welcomed by our tour leader. Following this, we will transit directly to the airport's domestic terminal for our sixty-minute flight to Heho in the country's interior. Shortly after, we will transfer to our central hotel. There will be a time to relax before a short group meeting to talk about the program and answer any questions.

Over the coming days, we will enjoy a thorough exploration of Inle Lake – one of Myanmar's most magical places, located 900 meters above sea level and surrounded by mountains of the Shan plateau. This region of Myanmar is home to the Inthar minority tribe and was off limits to foreigners for several years. We will check into our centrally located hotel this afternoon before venturing out for our first taste of Burmese cuisine. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Flight details to be advised

Day 2

Inle Lake (community project)



Once the 'pariah state' of Southeast Asia, Myanmar has only recently been permitted to fully join the international community and gain access to the development funding, foreign investment and trade opportunities that other countries have long enjoyed. As such, Myanmar today is still one of the poorest country in Asia, only slightly ahead of Bangladesh in terms of development. It is with this in mind 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 or renovate a classroom for a school on the outskirts of the city. This will take the form of practical

building and some labouring tasks, as we construct a brick wall for the school working alongside local children. Breaking into groups, there will be a variety of to undertake including bricklaying, cement mixing, frame construction and the transporting of materials. Local tradesmen and our tour leader will be supervising and assisting throughout the project, often identifying students with particular skills to perform the more difficult or skill orientated tasks. Groups will be rotated throughout the project. During our time 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. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 3

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 be stopping en route to visit cottage industries, including weaving collectives set amongst water communities living a very different way of life. From the comfort of our boats, we can enjoy such sights as fisherman rowing one-legged style characteristic of Inle Lake boatmen and the Gardens of Grass and Earth floating on the surface of this shallow lake. If by chance our visit coincides with the market day, we will visit the regional market, held on a 5-day rotation in different areas of the Lake.

In preparation for this trip, we have been invited to visit monks and novices at an Inle Monastery. It is here that we will engage in a foundational understanding of Buddhism, followed by a quiet meditation.

Later we will also visit the Phaungdawoo Pagoda – famous for its richly gilded five small Buddha images and Ngaphechaung (jumping cat) monastery. The pagoda was built more than one and a half centuries ago and features a number of other interesting Buddha images. 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 4

Inle Lake Kalaw

This morning after breakfast we will head for the hills as we travel deeper into the fabled region of 'Shan'.

En route today we will visit a remote village and forest region in the hinterland surrounding the township of Kalaw. This is a land of many communities, including the Palaung, Danu and Pa-O, as well as Indians and Nepalese who moved here during the British rule (which may explain why the chai is so



good!).

We will stop for lunch at a local village before continuing our journey to the impressive U Bein Bridge. At over a kilometre long, U Bein is the world's longest teak bridge. There will be ample time spent here to enjoy the interaction with some friendly local people before we continue to Kalaw. This afternoon we will go for a short orientation walk to get a feel for this beautiful spot, once a former British hill station. Afterwards, we will head out to dinner at a quaint local restaurant. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 5

Kalaw  Mandalay



This morning we will travel by boat up the famous Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River to visit Mingun, a world-class archaeological site. The main temple here was never finished, supposedly because an astrologer thought the king would die otherwise – a telling insight into Myanmar's cultural obsession with astrology indeed!

After lunch, we will visit the delightful teak monastery Shwe In Bin Kyaung. Our adventure today also includes a stop at some cottage industries, including a place that makes gold leaf (the sacred Buddha image of Mahamuni Paya is covered in six inches of it – and is known to be over 2000 years old). We will also enjoy a tour

of this fabled city today on local transport and stop at a famous monastery to meet local monks. Here, we will engage in a special activity to learn more about Myanmar's *Theravada* Buddhism, as well as take part in a challenging session of yoga. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 6

Mandalay  Bagan



We will set off early after breakfast today to catch the river ferry for a cruise down to Bagan. En route we can enjoy the wonderful world of local life streaming by the famous Ayeyarwady River. Depending on the daily schedule and ever-changing river levels, we will arrive around the late afternoon and then transfer to our hotel. Later we will set out to visit one of the area's tallest temples that we will climb this evening to enjoy a beautiful sunset as one is likely to experience anywhere. This will be followed by a visit to learn of the ancient Burmese art of Lacquer production. Dinner will be at a quaint local eatery.

Please note: The ferry may be cancelled due to changing water levels on the Ayeyarwady River (usually February to May) and when there are fewer tourists travelling in low season (April to September). Cancellations may take place without warning. If this happens, the group will go by road from Bagan to Mandalay (approx. 5 hours). (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 7

Bagan



Bagan is one of Asia's most significant archaeological sites which until now has remained relatively unknown to outsiders. Like its contemporary, the Angkor Temples in Cambodia, the site is inspired by religion and a marvel of Asian civilisation. The countryside surrounding Bagan abounds in 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.

Today we will enjoy a thorough exploration of these amazing temples. Bagan is arguably as visually impressive as the Temples of Angkor yet receiving just a fraction of foreign visitors annually. In the late afternoon, we will visit a local school to learn more about the educational system in Myanmar. This will be followed by a by horse and cart ride (or bicycle) to the banks of the Ayeyarwady for dinner. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 8

Bagan  Yangon

We will depart the central region of Bagan this morning for our day-long bus trip to Yangon (approximately seven hours). There will be 2 drivers on board, and multiple rest breaks on the way. En route we will stop in the country's new capital; city of Naypyidaw before arriving in bustling Yangon in the late afternoon. Later today we will enjoy a Burmese -style cyclo ride around the city's water front, amidst crumbling, yet delightful British architecture and streetscapes unique in Asia.



This afternoon we will visit one of the most famous sites in all of Asia – the Shwedagon Pagoda. The Pagoda is Myanmar’s most iconic building, and revered religious site. Believed to contain relics of the four previous Buddhas of the present kalpa, including the staff of Kakusandha, a piece of the robe of Kassapa, and eight strands of hair from the head of Gautama. Our final dinner this evening will be a feast of Burmese delicacies on the Yangon waterfront. Following this we will enjoy a short stroll around the city’s China town before returning to our hotel. (breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 9

Depart Yangon 🏠 Home



Today is departure day. Depending on our flight time today, this morning we will visit the Yangon Bake House. We will learn of the success of this enterprise in rescuing local children from the street and providing a safe future for them through vocational training.

As we say our goodbyes and begin our travel home, we can prepare to share with our family and friends the immensity of our discoveries as we consider what has most impacted us on this physical and spiritual journey. Our group leader will take care of your onward travel arrangements and bid us farewell. (breakfast, lunch, dinner) **Flight details to be advised:**

Summary

Grading

Moderate; 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 have 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, speed boat.

Group Size

Minimum group size 20 students & 2 staff members travelling *ree 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 and at times, most foreign of regions.

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 described in the itinerary
- *Student Educational Adventures* tour leader throughout the trip & additional specialist guides
- **Internal flight Yangon to Heho (Inle Lake)**
- 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