

Classic Journeys *A passion for travel*

T: 07858 410677 E: journeys@classicjourneys.co.uk Web: www.classicjourneys.co.uk



ESSENTIAL MYANMAR PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR

Immortalized by the likes of Kipling, Masters and Orwell, the mystical land of Myanmar, (formally known as Burma) offers the traveller and photographer a kaleidoscope of colours and culture that will remain with you for a lifetime.

Join us as we explore and photograph perhaps the least discovered country in Southeast Asia. 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 coastline. 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.



Our itinerary includes Yangon's Schwedagon Pagoda which dominates the urban skyline, the ancient city of Bagan where thousands of gilded temple spires fill the valley, Inle Lake, where we will photograph local fishermen, bustling local markets and lakeside life seemingly unchanged for centuries. In Mandalay we will photograph monks crossing U Bein bridge, the longest teak bridge in the world. Each location provides a wide variety of photographic opportunities including early morning hill-tribe markets, street photography, fabulous landscapes, portraits and still life.

Myanmar, is a country of incredible diversity and our journey will be full of "authentic" travel experiences. We have chosen to run this tour a few weeks before the main tourist season begins, to avoid the crowds. Temperatures are likely to remain in the high 20's and even low 30's°C. We may encounter a few short sharp rain showers which are usually followed by clear weather. This will produce dramatic landscapes, vibrant colours and fewer tourists.

Outline Itinerary

Day 01: Depart your home country.

Day 02: Arrive Yangon

Arrive Yangon Airport (formerly known as Rangoon), once the capital of Myanmar. This city is also called "Garden City of the East" because of its many parks and beautiful lakes. On arrival we will be met at Yangon International airport and transferred to our hotel.

Late afternoon we will visit the amazing Shwedagon Pagoda. This is one of the most spectacular religious monuments in the world and it is a spectacular work of Burmese temple architecture, glowing in gold and adorned with diamonds and is the holiest Buddhist shrine in Myanmar. The world famous stupa is 98 metres high, covered in gold and is absolutely stunning at sunset. Overnight hotel (D)

Day 03: Yangon sightseeing

After breakfast we enjoy a walk through the bustling streets of downtown Yangon. The grand buildings of the downtown area and the old mansions in the diplomatic quarter are clear testament to the former British presence. We then head into one of the many market areas to capture the diversity of this intriguing city. The markets are bursting with a mind blowing array of colour and aromas of freshly milled spices and freshly cooked snacks. Our plan now is to head to a local monastery to see the late morning ritual as monks and novice monks prepare for their lunch time meal.

After lunch we will visit the 70 metres long Reclining Buddha Chaukhtatkyi and return to the Shwedagon Pagoda for sunset photography. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 04: Yangon to Bagan

Morning transfer to the airport for the flight to Bagan. On arrival we are transferred to our hotel and there will be time to download images, a photo tutorial from Simon and possibly time to relax before lunch.

After lunch we will begin our temple sightseeing and photography ending with a visit to Shwesandaw Pagoda where we photograph the vast pagoda-filled horizon at sunset. Bagan is one of the most significant ancient religious cities in Southeast Asia with fantastic temple ruins, making this one of the most amazing sights in Myanmar. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 05: Bagan

This morning we are up early for sunrise photography at the temples. After our early morning photography in the good morning light, we return to our hotel for breakfast. After breakfast we will visit a lacquer workshop, Kyaukpataung City market, Chauk City Market and Minnanthu village.

Late afternoon we will again return to the amazing temples for sunset photography and also try to capture the scene as cows and goats are herded to be taken back to their villages for the night. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 06: Bagan - Mt. Popa - Bagan

After breakfast we have a day tour, through rural villages to Mt. Popa, a place of pilgrimage for Burmese of all walks of life. The mountain is an extinct volcano and according to legend, is the home of the 'Nats', or spirits. On our journey we will stop at a village where we can see and photograph the palm sugar and oil cottage industries, which are in operation. We will also stop whenever we find good photographic opportunities. Lunch will be at the stunning Mt. Popa resort. After lunch we will continue to the foot of Mt. Popa and climb the 777 steps if you wish with the local pilgrims. Return to Bagan. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 07: Bagan sightseeing

Another early start for sunrise photography. We return to our hotel for breakfast. After breakfast visit busy Nyaung Oo Market.

Time now to download images, have a photo tutorial from Simon and possibly enjoy a swim in the hotel pool. For those who wish we will return to Bagan temples for more sunset photography. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 08: Bagan to Mandalay

After breakfast we fly to Mandalay, the economic centre of Burma and the country's 19th century capital. On the way to our hotel we may visit one of the many gold workshops in the city. Here we can see how the gold-leaf that worshippers piously place onto sacred Buddha images are laboriously hand-pounded into one-inch-square gold leaf sheets.

In the afternoon we visit the City Palace and the Kuthodaw Pagoda at the foot of Mandalay Hill to see the world's largest 'book', an entire Buddhist canon recorded on 729 stone tablets!

Mandalay hill is known for its abundance of pagodas and monasteries, and has been a major pilgrimage site for Burmese Buddhists for nearly two centuries. The view from the top makes it worth the climb up the stairs or take the escalator! Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 09: Drive to Sagaing. Return to Mandalay

Early start driving to Sagaing, a religious sanctuary with the town at the foot of the hills and hundreds of pagodas, monasteries and nunneries tucked into the surrounding valleys and hills. It's a photographer's paradise. The famous Sagaing Hill provides breath-taking views across the entire region and the clusters of pagodas that dot the surrounding hills. Sagaing, is a popular retreat for Buddhist devotees and the area is also famous for its silverware workshops. Late afternoon we visit and photograph monks and other people at sunset, crossing the U Bein Bridge, the world's longest teak bridge. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 10: Visit Mingun. Return to Mandalay

Early start as we transfer across the city to Mandalay port where we will board our private boat for our 45 minute cruise along the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River as far as the 18th century royal capital of Mingun, home to the world's largest ringing bell, weighing in at 87 tons. Mingun is also home to the unfinished Mingun Pagoda, which was built between 1790 and 1797 by King Bodawpaya. We return to Mandalay. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 11: Mandalay to Heho to Inle Lake

Fly to Heho. Arrival at Heho airport and drive to Nyaung Shwe. We will enjoy a guided walking tour of Nyaung Shwe town including the many monasteries, pagodas and the local market before boarding a small boat and setting out onto Inle Lake. The narrow channels widen as we approach the lake proper, and you'll soon be crossing the broad and (usually) tranquil waters, with hills and mountains in every direction. The panorama is simply breathtaking. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 12: Inle Lake sightseeing

After breakfast we board our private boats to visit and photograph different lakeside markets where the hill tribes come to buy, sell and exchange all types of goods, including fish, produce, farm implements and handicrafts. The region is home to at least eight different tribes, who live both on and beside the lake. We will photograph the floating markets, floating vegetable gardens and visit several minority villages, including Inpawkhone, a floating village famed for its weaving. There will be time to visit the Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda, with its famous five golden statues and the old teak Ngaphechaung monastery. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 13: Indain sightseeing

Morning visit to the 5 days market (if today coincides with Inle market day) and continue our Inle Lake photography with a visit to Indain and its enchanting 17th century pagodas. To reach Indain and the nearby village we will take our boat up a small scenic creek that runs into Inle lake. We will visit and photograph the silk and lotus weaving industry, cheroot making and Shan traditional papermaking. If we are lucky we have a chance to see the "Padaung" (long neck) women who wear neck rings to stretch their necks. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 14: Heho to Yangon

After breakfast, transfer to Heho airport for the flight to Yangon. On arrival transfer to our hotel. The afternoon is free to relax, explore, shop and possibly one last visit to Shwedagon Pagoda for sunset. Overnight hotel (BLD)

Day 15: Departure transfer

Transfer to airport for your departure flight. (B)

The day-to-day schedule should be taken only as a general guide. A variety of factors, including adverse weather conditions, difficulty with transportation and politics can lead to enforced changes. Because of this it is not possible to guarantee that any of our holidays will run exactly according to the planned itinerary. The trip leader will make any changes, which are necessary.

Meal key: B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner

INCLUDED IN THE COST

- Accommodation on a twin share basis (unless single occupancy has been requested) for the nights listed in the itinerary.
- All meals from dinner on day 2 (arrival day in Yangon) to breakfast on day 15 (departure day from Yangon).
- Airport – Hotel – Airport Transfers.
- All internal transport as the itinerary.
- Domestic flight tickets (Yangon/Bagan/Mandalay/Heho/Yangon)
- Professional English speaking Myanmar guide
- Boat rides, entrance fees at tourist sites
- Tour leader – Simon Watkinson who will provide photographic tuition and tutoring throughout the trip

NOT INCLUDED IN THE COST

- International flights
- Airport taxes
- Visa fees
- Travel Insurance
- Medical examination (if required) & vaccination costs
- Personal expenditure, bar bills, laundry, telephone calls, etc
- Porters, guides & other tips
- Meals not specified
- Personal clothing & equipment
- Optional trips
- Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond Classic Journeys control
- Anything not specified in the Cost Includes section

GROUP SIZE

Minimum 4, Maximum 10

This holiday will operate once the minimum group size has been reached.

GUIDE / TOUR LEADERS

On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Professional photographer, Simon Watkinson (ABIPP) will escort this trip along with our professional, English speaking Myanmar guide. Simon will provide photography tuition and help you improve your photography.

TOUR GRADE

EASY CULTURAL TOURING: Most of this tour involves overland travel in comfortable vehicles. Some of the roads are poorly maintained and sections will have potholes. Be prepared for some early mornings.

HEALTH & FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

The pace is considered easy and should enable anyone in good health to participate. While there are no specific physical requirements, it is important that travellers are in good health, have a positive attitude, a sense of humour and a spirit of adventure. Tours can consist of early starts, some long days or climbing into vehicles. Be prepared for some lengthy journeys, bumpy dirt roads or the occasional delay. The amount of walking involved in this trip varies.

Most of the sightseeing and exploring the cities will be on foot in order to take photographs. When sightseeing at pagodas and religious sights we have to take off our shoes and socks. We carry a basic first aid kit but recommend that each person carry their own personal first aid kit including any prescription medication required. A suggested contents list will be provided on booking in the country information dossier. We also provide details of the recommended vaccinations needed.

ACCOMMODATION

Comfortable hotels throughout.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS

If you are a single person booking this holiday you do not have to pay single supplements if you are happy to share. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another single client of the same gender. However your booking is accepted only on the understanding that if no roommate is available then you accept a single supplement will be levied. Single supplements are payable if you specifically request to have a room to yourself. If you have requested single accommodation we will do our best to secure this although this may not always be possible.

FOOD

All meals included as specified.

WEATHER

We have chosen to run this tour a few weeks before the main tourist season begins to avoid the tourist crowds. Temperatures are likely to remain in the high 20's and even low 30's°C. We may encounter a few short sharp rain showers which are usually followed by clear weather. This will produce dramatic landscapes, vibrant colours and possibly no other tourists.

SUGGESTED PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT

You will need a DSLR, Digital SLR with lenses offering a focal length from wide (24mm or wider) to telephoto (70 - 200mm or longer). A laptop computer loaded with Adobe Lightroom would be useful if you want to process images while on tour. Additionally we strongly recommend a back-up device such as an external hard drive.

Simon advises all group members to take the following photography equipment. If you would like to discuss equipment or have any photography related queries, please do not hesitate to contact Simon by email: (office@world-infocus.co.uk) or telephone during office hours (9am to 5pm): 07526 018081 or 07511 075739. You can also contact Ann at Classic Journeys by email (journeys@classicjourneys.co.uk) or telephone: 07858 410677.

- **Suggested Camera Body:** A 35mm SLR camera system with interchangeable lens will allow you to get the best shots in most conditions.
- **Suggested Lenses:** A wide angle (16 – 35 mm or 24 – 105 mm or similar) and a telephoto (70 – 200mm or 100-300mm or similar) are very useful. Skylight / UV filters protect your lens.
- **Filters:** A polarising filter is useful for landscapes. Optional ND filters x 4 and x 8.
- **Batteries, Memory & Storage:** Bring spare batteries (2 or 3), battery charger, travel adapter, sufficient memory cards and digital storage device.
- **Camera bag:** Preferably a backpack type.
- **Lightweight tripod:** of a professional quality.
- **Miscellaneous:** A brush for cleaning your lens and air blower are important and your camera and lens need to be in protective cases. A shutter release cable.
- **Laptop Computer** preferably loaded with Adobe Lightroom if you wish to process images on tour.

CLOTHING

Casual clothing is the order of the day. Hard wearing, easy to wash travel clothes are ideal. You may wish to pack one set of slightly smarter clothes to wear at the hotels. Laundry service will be available at all the places we stay. During the day you will need a wide brimmed sun hat and sunglasses. Lightweight, comfortable walking shoes are advised for throughout the holiday and for sightseeing.

PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS

Entry Requirements:

Entry into Myanmar requires a passport and a Tourist Visa. Your passport should be valid for at least six months beyond your travel date. 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. Visa requirements to visit Myanmar change on a regular basis and it's best to check with the Burmese embassy in your country before making your travel plans.

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. Passports should have at least two blank pages on arrival to Myanmar.

Citizens of 67 countries (including the UK) can now obtain tourist e-Visas for entry by air through Yangon using an online application form: visit evisa.moip.gov.mm (<http://evisa.moip.gov.mm>).

You will be sent an eVisa Approval Letter, valid for 90 days, to present at immigration. If you are planning to cross into Myanmar overland from Thailand you must apply for a traditional visa in advance. This costs £14 direct from the [Myanmar Embassy in London](http://aung-thiha.magix.net/website#/Tourist%20Visa) (020 7499 4340) (<http://aung-thiha.magix.net/website#/Tourist%20Visa>). Make postal orders payable to Myanmar Embassy. Postal processing takes around 10 days or you can apply in person at the Embassy (19a Charles Street, London W1J 5DX) 10am-noon weekdays.

VISA AGENCY

If you prefer to have the help of a visa agency in obtaining your Myanmar visa, [Travcour UK](http://www.travcour.com) have proved to be very helpful and efficient: <http://www.travcour.com>

INSURANCE

Insurance is essential and is a condition of booking that you have adequate travel insurance cover. It is very important that you obtain insurance cover against the usual risks associated with travel, from the time of booking your holiday until the time you return home. Please ensure that your insurance provides adequate protection against the two major concerns: medical/repatriation expenses while abroad and cancellation/curtailment charges in the event that you, a travelling companion or a close relative fall ill either before or during the tour. For trekking holidays your travel insurance must contain evidence of satisfactory cover for repatriation and helicopter rescue.

Classic Journeys do not provide any advice on travel insurance. Classic Journeys is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd. who are Authorised and Regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Campbell Irvine is a specialist travel insurance broker. The comprehensive policy they issue provides 24-hour medical emergency assistance and covers altitude and all adventurous activities undertaken on our holidays. For single-trip policies, the insurance provides cover for both UK and worldwide residents at very competitive rates. In addition an annual policy is available to United Kingdom residents.

To obtain insurance cover visit the [Campbell Irvine Ltd. website](http://www.campbellirvinedirect.com/classicjourneys_home.htm). (http://www.campbellirvinedirect.com/classicjourneys_home.htm)

We require confirmation of your insurance, the policy number and 24-hour emergency telephone number who ever you take insurance with.

SUGGESTED READING

River of Lost Footsteps by Thant Myint U (Faber), a readable history;
From the Land of Green Ghosts by Pascal Khoo Thwe (Flamingo Books), a revealing autobiography of a student rebel who finds his way to Cambridge;
The Trouser People by Andrew Marshall (Penguin), an account of Burma before the recent reforms, which was updated at the end of 2012.
Aung San Suu Kyi's Letters from Burma (Penguin).

Good novels include: The Glass Palace by Amitav Ghosh, The Piano Tuner by Daniel Mason, Elephant Moon by John Sweeney and Burmese Days by George Orwell, a shocking portrait of British colonial life.

Guidebooks

Myanmar (Lonely Planet), published in July 2014, remains the best practical guide.
Myanmar: Burma in Style by Caroline Courtauld (Odyssey Guides) is good on cultural background and the main sites. Nelles publishes the best map of the country.

On the web

Burma's leading independent weekly newspaper, the Myanmar Times, is available online:
<http://www.mmtimes.com>

Films

The Lady, a biopic of the life of Aung San Suu Kyi, directed by Luc Besson, and Beyond Rangoon, the story of the 1988 student uprising based on real accounts, directed by John Boorman.

BOOKS & MAPS AVAILABLE FROM:

Stanfords (www.stanfords.co.uk)
Cicerone (www.cicerone.co.uk)
Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk)
Cordee (www.cordee.co.uk)

*If you have any questions or would like to know more about any aspect of this tour,
please do not hesitate to contact the Classic Journeys office.*

All World In Focus clients will be required to complete a Classic Journeys Booking Form and booking will be subject to acceptance of the Classic Journeys Booking Conditions, which will be provided, and supersedes any information presented on the World In Focus web site or other World In Focus promotional literature. In addition, in the unlikely event that Simon Watkinson is unable to escort the tour, Classic Journeys reserve the right to send a suitable replacement if available. In such circumstances, the tour will not be cancelled and no compensation will be paid.

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