



Myanmar & The Irrawaddy Dossier

Classic Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 2

Yangon - Mandalay - Irrawaddy River Cruise - Bagan - Inle Lake

As well as taking in Myanmar's best sights in Yangon, Bagan, Mandalay and Inle Lake, on this tour you'll spend 2-nights cruising on the Irrawaddy River, where you'll be able to catch a glimpse of everyday life in rural Myanmar.

- Admire Shwedagon pagoda
- Wander majestic Mandalay
- Cruise on the Irrawaddy
- Glimpse riverside life
- Be inspired by Bagan's beauty
- Ascend stunning Mt. Popa
- Explore scenic Inle by sampan



Myanmar & The Irrawaddy tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Visa fees for Australian passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of South East Asia on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts or local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

Physical Level 2:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Myanmar and The Irrawaddy' is rated as a **physical level 2** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- On several days, there will be sightseeing on foot for extended periods of time.
- At some of the sights visited there are a large number of steps to climb
- You will be required to get on and off varying sizes of boats often without assistance.

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Country Profile: Myanmar

Myanmar is a spiritual country, largely unexplored by tourists until recently. It is known as the 'Golden Land' because of the countless number of pagodas and temples that dominate the landscape. In Myanmar, 89% of the population is devoutly Buddhist, which is reflected in their gentle and welcoming nature.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 14 days in duration including international flights. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on Day 1 in Yangon and end the tour on Day 13 in Yangon. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Itinerary – Myanmar & The Irrawaddy

Day 1: Yangon

Fly to Myanmar and together with those arriving at a similar time you will be met by your guide or driver in the arrivals hall at Yangon airport to travel to your hotel for check in.



Destination Information

Yangon - With a population of over 5 million, Myanmar's former capital possesses a peaceful atmosphere with colonial boulevards and tranquil lakes. This charming city thrives by night with bustling streets filled with stalls selling everything from locally made handicrafts to fruit and cigars.

Day 2: Yangon

Visit the downtown district of Yangon seeing some of Yangon's most impressive colonial architecture. Visit the Independence Monument in Mahabandoola Gardens. Visit the National Museum, home to priceless ancient artefacts and the Bogyoke Market. After lunch head to Kandawgyi Lake and the magnificent Shwedagon Pagoda located on top of Singuttara Hill, where many locals and Buddhists come to worship.



Destination Information

National Museum – Housing works of art and historic memorabilia. Here you will learn the history and tradition of Myanmar.

Bogyoke (Scott) Markets – A vast covered marketplace selling an array of handicrafts, food, jewellery and clothing.

Shwedagon Pagoda - Located on top of Singuttara Hill, where many locals and Buddhists come to worship. Shwedagon Pagoda is thought to have been built between the 6th and 10th centuries; however it has been rebuilt many times. It is here that eight strands of Buddha's hair are said to be kept. The pagoda is covered in gold and contains diamonds, rubies and emeralds.

Day 3: Yangon – Mandalay

This morning, fly 1 hour and a half to Mandalay. Journey to the former royal city of Ava, located on an island between the Irrawaddy and the Myitnge Rivers. Ride on horse and carriage through ancient city walls, getting a glimpse of local life and visit the brick and stucco monastery of Maha Aungmye Bonzan, the Oak Kyaung. Next, you will be shown up to the top of the Nanmyin Watchtower to take in the gorgeous views over the river. In the late afternoon, visit the U Bein Bridge and enjoy the sunset.



Destination Information

Mandalay - Is the second largest city and the last royal capital of the Burmese Kingdom. Located along the Irrawaddy River and centred around the Royal Palace, Mandalay is within easy distance to former colonial hill stations and ancient cities.

U Bein Bridge - This teak wood bridge built 200 years ago spans 1.2km across the Taung Thaman Lake and is the longest teak bridge in the world.

Day 4: Mandalay

This morning, drive back to Amarapura where you will visit Mahagandayon monastery, one of Myanmar's largest teaching monasteries. Considered the epicentre of Myanmar culture, Mandalay's sites reflect this; take a tour of the city this afternoon and visit the Mahamuni Pagoda, Shwenandaw Monastery and Kuthodaw Pagoda.



Destination Information

Mahamuni Pagoda - Enshrining the Mahamuni Buddha - a highly revered image in Myanmar. It is covered in thick layers of gold leaf applied by male devotees. As a result, this has started to distort its shape.

Shwenandaw Monastery - Once part of the royal complex of King Mindon, this building was dismantled and reassembled outside the palace walls in 1880. As luck would have this move ensured that it survived the WWII bombing campaign in Mandalay, where many other royal buildings perished.

Kuthodaw Pagoda - Famous for housing the world's largest book; separated into 15 volumes each page is inscribed in marble and housed in its own stupa.

Day 5: Mandalay – Irrawaddy Cruise

Today join your cruise on the Irrawaddy. Transfer to the jetty where you will say goodbye to your National Guide and be welcomed on board your cruise by your English-speaking guide. Your first stop will be at Mingun and on arrival you will see the 90 ton Mingun Bell before visiting Mya Thein Tan Pagoda.



Destination Information

Irrawaddy River – At 2,170km the Irrawaddy is the 55th longest river in the world. The river begins at the meeting of two rivers, the N'mai (Nam Gio) and Mali Rivers, and discharges into the Andaman sea.

Mingun – A riverside village home to many unique pagodas and the world's largest ringing bell, weighing over 87 tonnes.

Day 6: Irrawaddy Cruise

Admire the natural beauty of the river as you cruise downstream before you visit Sagaing. Later, take a walk around the pottery village at Yandabo and see the local monastery.

Day 7: Irrawaddy Cruise – Bagan

Continue cruising towards Bagan, seeing the sun rise early this morning, before disembarking at Aye Yar Jetty. In Bagan visit some of the most distinctive pagodas including Shwezigon, Wetkyi-in-Gubyaukgyi and Htilominlo Temple. This afternoon, visit Dhammayangyi Temple with the finest brickwork in Bagan, and Thatbyinnyu Temple which towers above the other monuments. As the sun goes down, you will be at Aureum Bagan Viewing Tower to enjoy the stunning views.



Destination Information

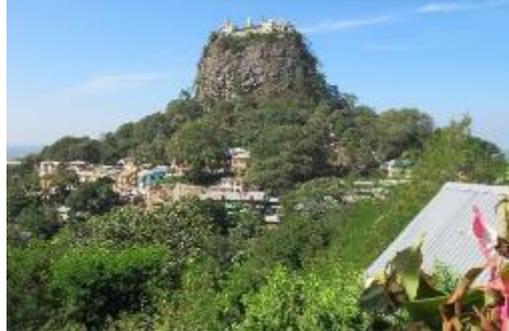
Bagan - It is believed as many as 13,000 temples and stupas once stood in the area around Bagan; however, invasions, war and natural disasters have reduced most of these to rubble. Despite this, Bagan is home to more than 2,200 standing ancient temples and is Myanmar's greatest architectural site.

Shwezigon Pagoda - This beautiful pagoda was built by King Anawrahta in the 11th century to enshrine one of the four replicas of the Buddha's tooth found in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Today it is considered Bagan's main religious site rising from the earth in three separate terraces.

Htilominlo Pagoda –This pagoda built in 1218, marks the spot where King Nantaungmya was chosen to be the crown prince. Today it still has some of the original plaster and carved reliefs on display.

Day 8: Bagan

This morning, see bustling Nyaung Oo local market for an insight into local life. Then drive 2 hours to Mt. Popa and climb more than 750 steps to the nearby temple of Taung Kalat, set atop an extinct volcano and said to contain 37 spirits, also known as 'nats'. This afternoon, return to Bagan.



Destination Information

Mt Popa - Formed by a volcano almost 250,000 years ago and a revered spiritual residence of the 37 'nats,' worshipped in Myanmar in unison with Buddhism. There are a number of statues and shrines that represent these spirits located along the mountain. Once you reach the top, the temple of Taung Kalat affords sweeping views of Myingyan Plain below.

Day 9: Bagan

Take a 30-minute boat ride to Kyun Thiri Island in the middle of the Ayerwaddy River, to visit a typical farming village and observe the locals going about their everyday lives. Enjoy some traditional snacks at a monastery, before returning to Bagan for an afternoon at leisure.

Day 10: Bagan – Inle Lake

This morning, board your 30-minute flight to Heho, where you will continue to Inle Lake. Begin your visit by long tailed boat to Innpawkhone Village, where you can see lotus and silk weaving industries. Next, visit Nanpan to see the traditional boat making and cheroot (Burmese cigar) making factory. After lunch, continue to Phaungdaw U Pagoda with its five famous Buddha images, Nga Phae Chaung Monastery and the floating gardens.



**Please be aware there is no shade on the boat trip on Inle Lake, so please bring a hat and wear sun protection.*

Destination Information

Inle Lake - Located 900m above sea level and approximately 22km long and 11km wide, this water paradise is inhabited by over 200 villages constructed on stilts. The lake is most famous for the extraordinary lives of the people who live on and around it, known as the 'Intha'.

Phaungdaw Oo Pagoda – One of the most sacred shrines in Myanmar dating back to the 18th Century. Inside the tiered pagoda, devotees await an opportunity to place gold leaf on one of four ancient Buddha statues housed here.

Day 11: Insein

This morning, depending on its rotating location, you may get to visit the 5-Day Market. Continue by boat ride up a small scenic creek to visit Insein with its enchanting 17th century pagodas. Return to Inle Lake for an afternoon at leisure.

Please note: The 5-Day Market is a rotating market; the site is determined by the full moon calendar and isn't always accessible to tour groups.



Destination Information

Insein Pagoda Complex – One of the amazing historical sites in Inle Lake, where hundreds of small stupas decorated in sculptures of mythological animals and beings lay overgrown by moss and vegetation.

Day 12: Inle Lake – Yangon

Fly 1 hour and 10 minutes back to Yangon this morning, the rest of the day is free time at leisure.



Days 13-14: Depart Yangon

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Australia arriving home the following day; any time before your flight is at leisure.

Late check-out is not included in our South East Asia group tours. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

Myanmar Explorer Travel Information

Visas

Visa Requirements - Entry visas are required by all visitors to Myanmar and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. We will supply you with all paperwork and submit the visa application on your behalf. Visas for Myanmar are valid for 90 days from the date of issue and allow you to stay in the country for up to 28 Days. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are **due in our office 90 days prior to departure**; if received after this, urgent visa processing fees will apply. Also, please note we do not accept passports and visa applications within 70 days prior to departure. Passports will be returned with your Final Documentation four weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15AUD courier fee will apply.

Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Eating in South East Asia

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Myanmar, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – such as the iconic tea leaf salad, and most Burmese dishes are a result of many regional influences, particularly from neighbouring China and India.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your groups' arrival until breakfast on your day of departure. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Myanmar and some other countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoon are used, but chopsticks and Chinese-style spoons are usually provided to eat noodles and noodle salads. Typically, the Burmese eat most rice based dishes with their right hand and sit on a bamboo mat at a low table.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Southeast Asian cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Southeast Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note that double bed requests can be made at time of booking but can't be guaranteed.

Solo travellers: If you are a solo traveller and willing to share a room, you will not have to pay a single supplement for any hotel rooms. During the overnight Mekong/ Irrawaddy cruise section of this tour, if we cannot find another solo traveller for you to share with, you will be required to pay a supplement - this payment will be taken when settling your final balance of the holiday. Willing to share single travellers booking within 75 days of the first day of a group tour will be subject to availability. If no suitable match is available at time of booking you will be required to pay all single supplements.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. **However, mini buses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers).**

Roads in South East Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

Seatbelts: Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in South East Asia and therefore the local people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason, some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

Air: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on international and internal flight sectors.

Cruise: On this tour, you will spend 2 nights aboard a Pandaw Cruise. All cabins have private bathrooms with shower and toiletries, air conditioning, an in-room safe and amenities such as hairdryer and slippers. The cabins do not have minibars, televisions or phones, encouraging you to enjoy the river views from the deck. All cabins have direct access to the promenade deck.

Development in Southeast Asia

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escorts.

Myanmar public holidays

If you are travelling within the below Burmese Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open, but may be crowded. Water Festival is celebrated between 12th – 16st April. Burmese New Year Holiday is between 17th – 20th April.

Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a national escort. There will usually be no more than 28 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only

Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

Packing list and Climate

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

Exchanging Cash

The Central Bank of Myanmar has withdrawn all foreign currency exchange licenses for businesses including Hotels, Restaurants, Airlines and Souvenir Shops. Starting from 1st November 2015, institutions such as the ones named will not be allowed to accept payments in US dollars. Tourist can bring US-Dollars and change it into local Kyats or withdraw local currency at any ATM with their credit card.

US Dollars are the preferred currency in Myanmar. ATM's are limited in Myanmar, so we suggest that you bring enough US Dollars in cash to last the duration of your stay. It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside major cities in Myanmar. For your convenience, please ensure that US Dollars should be from the new series from the year 2003 onwards and in good condition to avoid any difficulties exchange money during your trip. Old series notes can be difficult to exchange.

We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of \$250AUD per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Cultural Difference

Myanmar is predominantly Buddhist; however, it is a nation with many cultures and histories. Please be considerate of the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration.

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their

Appropriate Dress

daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

Religious sites and homes throughout South East Asia – for Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off and carry a pair of thick socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Last updated 29/03/19