

## Yangon

When King Alaungpaya conquered the small town of Dagon in 1755, he renamed it Yangon , meaning 'the end of strife.' The city was annexed by the British in 1851, and changed its name to Rangoon . A pleasant mix of colonial buildings and tree-shaded streets, with its Buddhist temples, open-air markets, shady parks and beautiful lakes, Yangon has been called the "Garden City of the East." It now covers an area of about 500 square kilometres with a population close to five million.

● **Shwedagon Pagoda** - Reputedly over 2500 years old, legend has it that the original stupa was constructed to enshrine eight hairs of the Buddha. Over the years it has been rebuilt many times until it now towers 98 metres over the city. One of the most spectacular Buddhist shrines in Asia , it is plated with over 30 tons of gold. Kipling aptly described the pagoda as "a beautiful winking wonder." The base is surrounded by a fascinating assortment of temples, shrines, statues and pavilions.



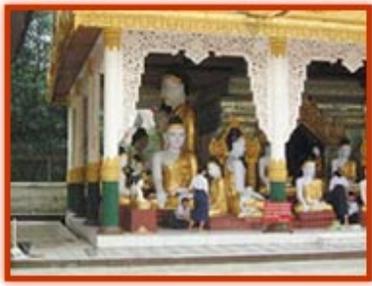
● **People's Square and People's Park** - Set in over 130 acres of land between Shwedagon Pagoda and the parliament building of Pyithu Hluttaw (Parliament). The park also contains a museum with life-size models of different national races in national dress.



● **Sule Pagoda** - An octagonal pagoda 46 metres high in the centre of Yangon , said to date back over 2000 years and enshrine a hair of Buddha. Surrounded by an assortment of small shops, astrologists and palmists.

● **Mahavijaya Pagoda** - The symbolic memorial of the First Successful Congregation of the Sangha of All Orders held in 1980, this elegant Mahavijaya Pagoda is a unique blend of traditional patterns and the modern styles. The sanctuary contains the Buddha image and the reliquary donated by the King and Queen of Nepal .

● **Bogyoke Aung San Park** - With a lovely view of Kandawgyi Lake , city-dwellers enjoy their leisure time in the playgrounds and picnic areas.



● **Botahtaung Pagoda** - Its golden pagoda spire rising to 40 metres, this pagoda is named after the thousand military leaders ('bo', leader and 'tahtaung', thousand) who escorted relics of the Buddha brought from India over two thousand years ago. The hollow inside the spire has been turned into a museum.

● **Chauk Htat Gyi Pagoda** - A short distance beyond the Shwedagon Pagoda, this pagoda houses one of the largest reclining Buddhas in Myanmar. The pagoda dates back to 1907 but was restored in 1966.

● **Mai-Lamu Pagoda** - Contains giant images depicting the previous lives of Buddha. About 20 minutes from the city in North Okkalapa.

● **Kaba Aye Pagoda** - 34 metre high and 34 metres around its base, the pagoda was built in 1952 for the Sixth Buddhist Synod in 1954 - 1956. Its name means "World Peace." Located 11 km north of the city beyond the Inya Lake Hotel.

● **Martyrs' Mausoleum** - On a hill overlooking the city, close to the Shwedagon, this memorial is dedicated to Bogyoke Aung San - who played a key role in securing independence from the British. He was assassinated along with fellow cabinet members in 1947.

● **National Museum** - Exhibits include the Lion Throne of King Thibaw, the country's last monarch, 19th century Royal Regalia, a collection of gem studded arms, swords, jewellery, paintings, and musical instruments.



● **Zoological Garden** - Opened in 1906 it houses a variety of wild animals. On weekends or public holidays there are snake shows and elephant performances.



● **Hlawga Wildlife Park** - Home to over 70 kinds of herbivorous animals and 90 species of birds, the park covers 1,650 acres. Flocks of migratory birds also frequently visit the park. About 45 minutes from the city, the Park also offers elephant rides, boating and fishing.

● **Allied War Memorial Cemetery** - 27,000 graves of Commonwealth and Allied soldiers who died in the Myanmar Campaign during WW2 are spread throughout the beautifully maintained grounds at Htaukkyant, about 32 km from Yangon.

Once the glittering capital of lower Myanmar during the Mon dynasty, Bago was destroyed by the Myanmar in 1757, but partially restored in the early 19th century. Its life as an important seaport was also denied when the Bago River changed its course, cutting the city off from the sea.

● **Shwemawdaw Pagoda** - Reminiscent of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, this temple dates back 1,000 years, although parts were added in 1952 and in 1954.

● **Shwethalyaung Buddha** - After the destruction of Bago in 1757, this historic reclining Buddha was swallowed up the jungle, not to be rediscovered until the British era during construction of the railway line from Yangon to Bago. The 55 metre long and 16 metre high Buddha image dates back to 994AD, and is one of the most revered statues in the country.

### Around Mandalay

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The modern centre of Buddhism and Myanmar arts, the old royal city of Mandalay, 670 km north of Yangon, is also the home of traditional artisans - including wood and stone carvers, silversmiths and weavers - and for the production of gold leaf. The former capital, prior to British rule, and the second largest city in the country, it takes its name from the nearby 240-metre Mandalay Hill, and is rich in monasteries and pagodas.

**Shwe Nandaw Kyaung Temple Grounds** - Within the grounds is the sole remaining building of the once sumptuous moated palace. King Mindun's former apartment, built mainly of teak, is decorated with beautifully carved panels and a photograph of the Atumashi Kyaung Monastery, destroyed by fire in 1890.



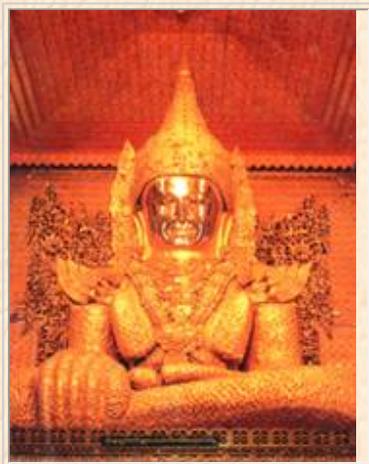
**Mahamuni Pagoda** - The 'Great Pagoda' houses the revered Mahamuni image. The image was brought from Rakhine in 1784, and is thickly covered in gold leaf from years of worship by devout Buddhists.

**Eindawya Pagoda** - Built in 1847 and covered in gold leaf.

**Shwekyimyint Pagoda** - Contains the original Buddha image consecrated by Prince Minshinzaw during the Bagan period.

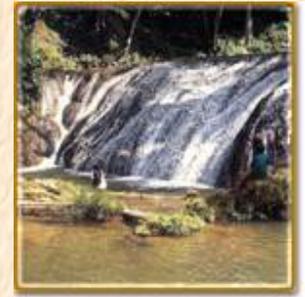
**Mandalay Hill** - Stairways lead up to temples and a panoramic views.

**Shweyattaw Buddha** - Close to the hill, the statue's outstretched finger points towards the city.



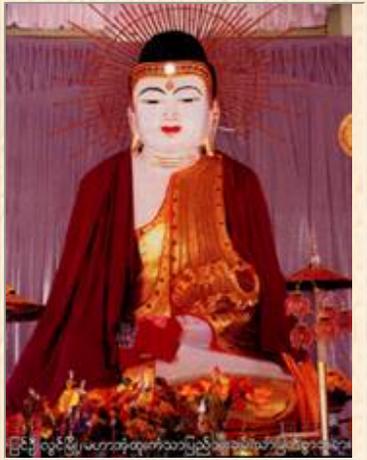
**Pyin Oo Lwin** - The former British hill station of Maymyo, 67 kilometres east of Mandalay,

stands about 1,000 meters above sea level. Though the town was damaged during World War II, several of the old English houses were spared. This is also the centre for Myanmar's small but burgeoning new coffee industry.



There are several abandoned former capitals around Mandalay .

**Amarapura** - Some 11 km south of Mandalay is the town of Amarapura. It was the capital of Konbaung Dynasty during the reign of King Bodawpaya when he moved its capital to Amarapura in 1783. Places of interest are Pahtodawgyi Pagoda, U Bein Bridge across the Taungthaman Lake, Kyauktawgyi Pagoda, Nagayon Pagoda, Mahagandayone Monastery and cotton and silkweaving cottage industry.

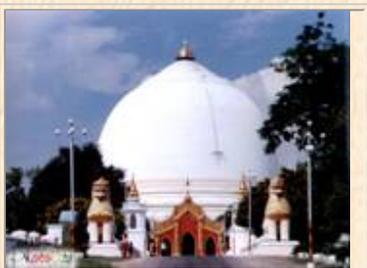


**Inwa (Ava)**- Inwa is another ancient capital, known as the Kingdom of Inwa during the Second Myanmar Empire.

Today it is a small town south of Amarapura. The sights to see in In-wa include Nanmyint Watch Tower, Maha Aungmye Bonzan Monastery, Bagaya Monastery, Lacquerware factory and Inwa Bridge spanning the Ayeyarwaddy River.



**Sagaing** - Once an ancient capital, Sagaing lies 21 km south west of the Ayeyarwaddy River. The Sagaing Hills are dotted with pagodas and there are over 500 monasteries, a retreat for some 6000 monks and nuns. Soon U Ponya Shin Pagoda, Kaung Hmudaw Pagoda (a copy of the Mahaceti Pagoda in Srilanka), and Ywahtaung village (home of the silversmiths' guild) are places worth visiting.



**Mingun** - A delightful river trip from Mandalay is required to get to this marvelous unfinished temple. Famous for the 90-ton Mingun Bell, supposedly the largest hung bell in the world, it was cast in 1790 on the orders of King Bodawpaya, who wished for it to be installed at the top of his planned giant 150 metre-high pagoda. Due to the king's death in 1819, the pagoda was never completed.



## **Around Bagan**

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As yet unspoiled by mass tourism, the small town of Bagan close to the archaeological site is destined to develop rapidly as tourism increases. In fact the town is already well supplied with numerous small hotels and guest houses, and a few top class hotels. Package tour itineraries usually feature only a one-night stay, but this vast site can be explored intricately for more than a week. A map is essential and transport available includes hired bicycles and horse-drawn carts, and hot air balloon trips are planned over the site. The local village boasts a museum, market, temple, several lacquerware



workshops and a golf course.

At its height, in the early 11th century, Bagan was the world centre of Theravada Buddhism with more than 13,000 pagodas covering the plains bordered by two sides of the Ayeyarwady River . But the city fell to the invasion of Kublai Khan's hordes in 1287 and was abandoned,



leaving only 3000 pagodas remaining in the midst of the Mongol destruction. Covering an area of more than 40

sq. km this is one of the world's richest archaeological sights, with no two of the red baked brick monuments the same. Below is a list of the most beautiful and unusual.

## ❄️ **Ananda Temple** -

Built in 1091 by Kyanzittha, the temple is said to represent the endless wisdom of the Buddha. The central square has sides of 53 metres, and rises in terraces to a height of 51 metres. Having suffered considerable damage in the earthquake of 1975, the temple, one of the finest, largest and best preserved, was reconstructed in 1979.



❄️ **Bupaya Pagoda** - Thought to be the oldest in Bagan, dating from the 3rd century, this riverbank pagoda was completely destroyed when it collapsed into the river in the 1975 earthquake, and has been totally rebuilt.



❄️ **Dhammayangyi Temple** - Built by King Narathu (1160- 65) and similar to the Ananda, this later temple is generally considered to possess the finest brickwork of Bagan.

❄️ **Gawdawpalin Temple** - Built during the reign of Narapatisithu (1174-1211), this is one of the largest and most imposing of the Bagan temples - cube shaped with Buddha images on the four sides of the ground floor. The top terrace affords excellent views of sunset over the Ayeyarwady. The Gawdawpalin was badly damaged by the earthquake in 1975, and reconstruction started in 1979.



❄️ **Lawkahteikpan Temple** - This small temple has frescoes and inscriptions in both Myanmar and Mon scripts.



❄️ **Mahabodhi Pagoda** - Built during the reign of Nantaungmya (1211-1234), it is modelled after Indian style temples, and is unique in Myanmar . The pyramid shaped spire is covered in niches, each enclosing a seated Buddha figure.

❄️ **Mingalazedi Pagoda** - Built three years before the invasion by Kublai Khan's horsemen, in 1284, this pagoda is considered the most beautifully proportioned of all Bagan's monuments.

❄️ **Nathlaung Kyaung** - Built in 931 by King Taungthugyi, about a century before the southern school of Buddhism came to Bagan, this is the only remaining Hindu temple, dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu. A central brick pillar supports the dome and crumbled sikhara, which originally had figures of Vishnu on each of the four sides.

❄️ **Pahtothamaya Temple** - The interior of this single story structure is dimly lit with the small, perforated stone windows that typify this early type of Mon-influenced temple. It was probably built during the reign of Kyanzittha (1084-1113).



✿ **Pitakat Taik** - King Anawrahta built this library in 1058 to house the 30 elephant loads of Buddhist scriptures with which he returned from the sacking of Thaton, It was repaired in 1738. The architecture of the square building is notable for the perforated stone windows, and the plaster carvings on the roof.

✿ **Shinbintalyaung** - This long, brick structure houses an impressive 11th century, 18 metre reclining Buddha and is situated beside the Shwesandaw.

✿ **Shwegugyi Temple** - Built by Alaungsithu in 1311, this temple is an early example of a transition in architectural styles, which resulted in airy, lighter buildings. The temple is also notable for its fine stucco carvings and for the stone slabs in the inner walls.

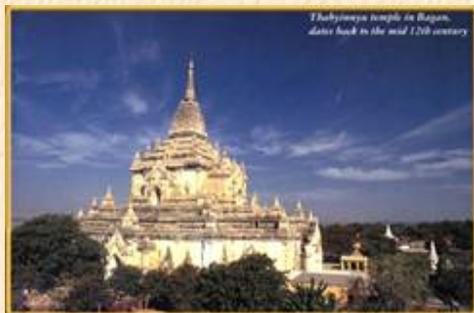


✿ **Shwesandaw Pagoda** - King Anawrahta built this graceful circular pagoda in 1057 following his conquest of Thaton. The five terraces once held terra-cotta plaques showing scenes from the Jataka.

✿ **Shwezigon Pagoda** - Started in the 11th century, the pagoda is one of the first buildings in a unique Myanmar style, while older pagodas were built in Mon style. It is said that the pagoda was built to enshrine the tooth, collar-bone and frontlet relics of the Buddha, and so has become a revered place of pilgrimage. Two great kings, noted for their patronage of the religion, are associated with the Shwezigon: Anawrahta (1044-1077) and Kyansittha (1084-1113).



✿ **Sulamani Temple** - Built in 1181 by Narapatisithu, this is a fine example of later, more sophisticated temple style, with better interior illumination. The interior was once painted with fine frescoes, only traces of which now remain.



✿ **Thatbyinnyu Temple** - Built by Alaungsithu in the mid-12th century, this 61 metre temple is the highest in Bagan. The stone supports which once held the temple's huge bronze bell are now located in a monastery compound southwest of the Thatbyinnyut. To the north-east stands a small "tally pagoda" built using one brick for every 10,000 used in the main temple.

## Trekking

The countryside and mountains; Inlay Lake in Shan State and Putao in Kachin State have many interesting walking tours.



## Sports

Yangon, Mandalay, and Bagan all have golf courses. Ngapali Beach offers a range of watersports.

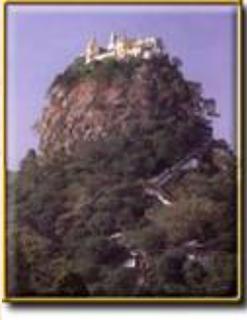


## Entertainment

Myanmar's traditional popular theatre, known as pwe (show) is an excellent example of local folk art. There are regular performances of Nat Pwe, which pays homage to the spirit world, and Yok-Thei Pwe (Marionette Theatre), using puppets up to a metre high. Expert puppeteers are deeply respected.

## **Meditation**

There are several centres for the study and practice of Theravada Buddhism. The most famous of these is the Mahasi Meditation Centre in Yangon , founded in 1947 by Mahasi Sayadaw, one of Myanmar 's greatest meditation teachers. Visitors wishing to participate in Buddhist retreats need to obtain a special, long-stay entry visa, allowing stays of up to 12 weeks. However, it should be noted that the application would require prior arrangement.



## **Wildlife**

A number of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries offer trekking and safaris and Myanmar is eager to encourage ecotourism. Parks worth visiting: Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park located northwest of Monywa; Hlawga National Park , Moeyingyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary near Yangon, which is for birdwatching; Popa Mountain Park - a forested extinct volcano in the desert area of central Myanmar; Lampi Island off Myeik Archipelago, which can be reached by boat from Myeik and Kawthaung; Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary located in Minbu; Kakaborazi National Park in Kachin State.

## **Eating**

Main dishes such as fish, chicken and pork are usually served with vegetables mixed with onion, peppers, ginger and garlic, and are usually hot and spicy. Rice or noodles act as a base and are often complemented with a curried dishes and raw vegetable salad. To enhance flavour, a fermented shrimp paste known as ngapi is added to most meals. Local dishes include the spicy rice salad, lethok son; a fish soup with noodles called mohinga; and oh-no khauk swe, a blend of noodles, chicken and coconut milk.

Outside the hotels, Myanmar food tends to be sold only at roadside stalls, while most restaurants are either Chinese or Indian. There are also teashops serving pastries and cakes.

## **Drinking**

Chinese tea, served at most restaurants, is a safer alternative to 'purified' water. Purified, bottled water is available everywhere.

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