

Myanmar (Republic of the Union of Myanmar)



Location: Asia

Status: UN Member Country

Capital City: Yangon

Main Cities: Yangon, Mandalay, Naypyidaw, Mawlamyaing,

Taunggyi, Patheingyi, Bago, Pyaw, Monywa, Sittwe

Population: 61, 120, 000

Area: 676, 578 km²

Currency: Kyat

Languages: National: Burmese

Religions: Buddhism 80%

Calling code: +95

Drive on the right side of the road

Traveling to Myanmar – What You Need To Know

The pure and untainted air, an environment that is free of pollution, a hospitable people and miles and miles of green lands. A romantic getaway on Inle Lake, amazing, mouthwatering cuisine and so many other things ... there is something for every sort of traveler to Myanmar. A land of many names, a land of many intrigues and a land that has been the target of so many conquerors for many years, a land of many religions and many people, there are more than 1001 reasons to travel to Myanmar. Be warned however that one, two or even three visits will not be enough.

Myanmar is unique and interesting. Rare red diamonds, Golden beaches of Ngapali, Shan States Hills, Bagan ruins, Resorts at Inle Lake and Pindaya caves are just some of the points of interests that would arouse your eyebrows. Yangon is one city you must not miss to visit it hosts some of the best attractions in Myanmar. This country sizzles in history.

Best Time to Travel to Myanmar

There is no set time for one to visit this country. During the rainy season, showers are brief, vegetation is lush and a great time to visit. The dry season is November to May. It is the peak period for tourism in Myanmar. High temperatures are experienced across the land as governed by altitude. Light showers intercept the sunny durations occasionally. In March and April, the temperature range goes all the way to 40⁰C. Although, some sites can be wet during summer but the country is vast and you can choose to visit other places instead. Winter is the coldest season around, particularly in the hills.

General Travel Information

Climate

Myanmar's climate is not even. Different areas feature varying climatic conditions. They vary depending on the altitude of the areas above sea level. The country is sandwiched between the Tropic of Cancer and Equator. Hence, the climate is a blend of the two regions. Coastal areas experience high rainfall with maximum temperature of 32⁰C whereas dry zones located at the heart of the country receive minimal rainfall and a characteristic hot-dry climate. Northern regions are the coolest with an average temperature of 21⁰C.

Entry Regulations

The government of Myanmar monitors foreigners who come to this country for business or vacation. Therefore, you will require a valid passport and visa to gain entry in this country. You must carry them with you, to every place such as in airports, hotels and train terminals. Roadblocks are placed on roads, domestic air flights and immigration checkpoints. Make a few copies of the two documents, as you might need them while crossing some of the areas. Tourist visa is valid for 28 days, which can be applied at Myanmar Embassies in your homeland before travel.

Citizens from select countries are not required to apply for visas when they visit Myanmar. For example, Vietnamese and Filipinos do not require visas to enter the country as of October and December 2013 respectively.

Baggage Allowance

For domestic flights, always limit your luggage as much as it would be tempting to carry all your paraphernalia to a week trip in the coastal side. You are restricted to 20kg regardless of the travel package you use for checked baggage while for carryon luggage the plane staff will not raise eyebrows if it does not exceed 7kgs.

Official Currency in Myanmar

Myanmar kyat denoted by MMK is the official currency of Myanmar. One dollar can fetch you 7 Kyats. If you are traveling to this country, you may have to come with enough dollars to take you through the stay since ATM machines are sparsely distributed. Accepted logos are mainly Visa and Master Card. You will have to change a few of the dollars into Kyat for making payments in for your transport system and for shopping. Be sure not to fall into the hands of unscrupulous moneychangers, instead use the accredited banks found in the airports. Also, make sure you bring dollar notes that are in good condition since old notes are unacceptable.

Moving around when in Myanmar

Getting around in Myanmar mostly involve a ride on a bus or a flight in a plane. However, other modes of transport are used too, depending on the journey that you are taking and your budget. Buses are the cheapest means of transport but some areas are only accessible by air. When you want to enjoy the scenic sites of Myanmar, a boat ride and a trip by train, will be more convenient. In addition, there are taxis, which are relatively cheap and are found at every corner of the city. If you are looking for comfort, rental cars are also available for hire. For short distances, you can walk or cycle to the site as long as you know your way around.

Posts and Telecommunications

Most main hotels in Myanmar will permit you to send postcards and mail back home in the course of your vacation. You can easily share your encounters using lovely photo shots. You can buy the post cards from Burmese children who intelligently design them at \$1. You can take the card to Yangon General Post Office, which is located on Strand Road. In addition, the desk personnel at your hotel will not mind to post the mail for you.

Culture and Customs

The utmost importance of Myanmar lies in its people. Its distinct history and culture have been shielded from the influences of the rest of world. This is one of the reasons why you will need to be careful while traveling around, especially in the conservative upcountry regions. The locals are charming but only if you can speak to them in Burmese. Just learn a few words and you will strike a great relationship with them.

In addition, try sporting their custom lingerie such as Longyi for women and Pasu for men. These are worn just as skirts and pants in the western world but they are more ventilated. You will get a few smiles along the way if you feature thanaka makeup and when you chew betel nut. The Burmese culture will surprise you. For instance, do not touch a woman's body in public, as that could lead you to a police station. It is also rude to touch people's hair, cheek or head. That is considered rude by the locals. Also, remember to dress modestly when traveling to areas that are yet to open up.

Food and Drinks

Rice is the main staple dish in Burma. This cereal takes 75% of all their meals. It is served with soup, meat, fish, vegetables and salads. If you just enter in any restaurant, the aroma of their dishes will welcome you. Nevertheless, you can still order other cuisines too from French, German to Chinese. However, why don't you try to go the Burmese way? You will certainly like it.

Burma people do not drink wine or water during meals. Therefore, they regard soup as a very important accompaniment. Enjoy spicy meat and vegetable soups, which will really work magic on your appetite. Where soups are lacking a cup of green tea is served instead. Their salads are anything to go by. They are prepared from raw, preserved or boiled vegetables, cooked beef or fish, slices of onions and tamarind juice among other ingredients. You will not miss something to munch while in Myanmar and the prices are very friendly.

Health and Safety

You will need to carry a roll of tissue paper in your travel bag since not all toilets will have one in place. Remember to carry purified bottled water, which will not cost you much. Tap water might look clean but you might be taking in cholera and typhoid causing bacteria. Avoid it. Vaccinations are not mandatory while traveling to Burma. However, it is good to take preventive measures prior to your travel. Try to get a vaccination for hepatitis, diphtheria, tetanus, polio and typhoid fever. Your health consultant can administer this four weeks before you board a flight to Burma.

An insect repellent and sunscreen cream will come in handy too, to prevent you from insect bites and sunburns especially in summer. If you are planning to tour some of the remote areas, you will have no option but to take Malaria preventive medicine before traveling.

Travel insurance (compulsory)

We do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, travel inevitably involves some risk and this should be recognised by holidaymakers. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment should any problems occur such as cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind. Please make sure your travel insurance covers all activities planned on your trip.

Public Holidays in Burma

Many public holidays are celebrated in Burma. Here is a list of the main ones:

Independence Day celebrated on 4th January

Union Day 12th February in remembrance of Panglong Agreement of 1947

Full Moon of Tabaung on 27th March

Peasants Day - 2nd March

Armed Forces Day - 27th March

Thingyan Festival – Celebrated on 13-16th April to usher in the New Year

Burmese New Year- 17th April marks the start of a new year of Burmese calendar

Labour day-1st May

Full Moon of Kason – 24th May

Martyr's Day- 19th July

Start of Buddhist Lent- 22nd July

End of Buddhist Lent - 19th October

Start of Ramadhan- Lasts for 30 days and date depends upon the Islamic calendar

Full Moon of Tazaungmon - 17th November Tazaungdaing festival is held on this day

National Day- 27th November held to commemorate first university students strike, which took place in 1920

Christmas Day - 25th December; Christian holiday to celebrate the birth of Jesus

Comprehensive Travel Preparation List

Visa

Passport

Photocopies of visa and passports

Travel insurance

Immunization Certificates

Right gear depending on the season; heavy clothing for winter and relatively lighter garments for summer

Appropriate footwear and other related wear for hiking, cycling and suchlike

Insect repellants and sun screen creams

Water bottle

A substantial amount of US dollars and ATM access card

Necessary medication

Tickets

International Driving License if you consider a car rental