



Burma & The Irrawaddy

Classic Tour | 14 Days | Moderate

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

Discover unspoilt landscapes and cultural riches on this unforgettable journey through Burma, combining your explorations with a peaceful cruise along the breathtaking Irrawaddy River.

- Discover the historical sights of Yangon
- Watch the sunset from the U Bein Bridge
- Take a relaxing 2-night cruise on the Irrawaddy River
- Tour the temples of astounding Bagan
- Gain an insight into local life in Inle Lake



Burma & 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 UK and EU passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, 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.

Moderate Tours:

'Burma and The Irrawaddy' is a **moderate** tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

- 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.

Itinerary – Burma & The Irrawaddy

Days 1-2: Yangon

Fly to Burma 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, Burma'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 3: 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 Burma.

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 4: Yangon – Mandalay

This morning, fly 1 hour and a half to Mandalay. On arrival transfer to the jetty where you will board your boat to Mingun. Your boat ride will last 1 hour, providing glimpses of local life, and on arrival you will visit Mingun Pagoda and the 90 ton Mingun Bell. Next visit Mya Thein Tan Pagoda before returning to Mandalay. Continue on to Sagaing to visit Kaunmudaw Pagoda, Sagaing Hill, Thakya Dita Nunnery and the Silversmith workshops. 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.

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

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 5: Mandalay

This morning, drive to Amarapura where you will visit Mahagandayon monastery, one of Burma's largest teaching monasteries. Considered the epicentre of Burma 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 Burma. 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 6: 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.



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.

Day 7: Irrawaddy Cruise

Take a walk round the pottery village at Yandabo and see the Pandaw School. Have an evening tour of Pakokku by trishaw.

Day 8: 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 Burma'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 9: 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 Burma 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 10: 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 11: 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 Burma 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 12: 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 13: Inle Lake – Yangon

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



Day 14: Depart Yangon

Fly home to the UK, arriving the same or following day.

Burma Explorer Travel Information

Visas

A visa is required for entry into Burma. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. We will require your passport, 2 completed visa application forms per person and 2 passport photos taken within the last 6 months, to process your visa. We will require all this information 8 weeks prior to departure. As per our standard visa processing service, passports will usually be returned within 4 weeks of your tours scheduled departure. Any passports and visa applications that require an express 2 week service, or that are received in our office less than 6 weeks prior to departure will incur a £60 per passport express fee. In rare cases, you may be required to provide further information or documentation to the embassy. If this is the case we will notify you as soon as possible.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your local guide should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Eating in Southeast 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. Burma, 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 Burma 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 the UK 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.

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. Roads in Southeast 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.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

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 the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the UK; 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.

Burma 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 13th – 21st April. Burmese New Year Holiday is between 13th – 16th April 2018.

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 20 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

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Southeast Asia is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your National Escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the National Escort.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

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 tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Climate

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

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 weeks prior to 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 whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Last updated: September 2017