

NICHE WOMEN'S TOURS



Experience Essential Myanmar

With Cathy Scott

Nov 17 to 28, 2014

Join Cathy to uncover the mystique of Myanmar with this in-depth excursion into the country's cultural and natural wonders. With the tourist ban recently lifted it is an exciting time to visit this land so new to tourism. We will explore the diversity of Myanmar's regions, cuisine and heritage, as we venture through remote floating villages, parks, waterways cities and hills. We will view spellbinding pagodas and temples and awe-inspiring landscapes and even spend time with a local family as who will teach us about their delicious cuisine and unique culture. We will explore lake villages by boat, shop the local markets, and sample local wines. A highlight of our tour will be our visit and elephant ride at the well-respected Green Hill Valley Elephant Camp.

Your package includes:

- Meals as shown on itinerary
- Private transportation throughout in air conditioned vehicle
- Private tours and entrance fees and activities as shown on itinerary
- Group transfer from airport in Yangon
- All accommodations as per itinerary



Price per person land only US \$ 3,899 based on two sharing and minimum of 10 passengers. Limited to a maximum of 12) Not included: Entrance visa, domestic flights (currently US \$395.00. Price may increase as we get closer to departure) personal expenses, international airfare and taxes, meals not specified, tipping, departure tax (currently US \$10). Single supplement \$1,550 *Private transfers are available at an additional cost for those not arriving at the same time as the group. Hold your space with a US \$1,000 non-refundable deposit.

To book contact your Travel Advisor or call:

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BOUTIQUE TOURS THAT INSPIRE

NICHE TRAVEL

Day 1 MON 17-Nov-14 Arrive Yangon (D)

Upon arrival, you will be greeted and transferred to the hotel. Overnight in Yangon

Day 2 TUE 18-Nov-14 Yangon (B,L,D)

Today we explore the city center with its fabulous mix of architecture and sites. The streets are filled with historical buildings, many of which have a faded colonial charm not seen elsewhere in Asia. We will start at the post office - a lovely historic building- and walk to Sule Paya in the middle of downtown, passing by Strand Hotel, Mahabandoola Garden and Independence Monument along the way. Then we visit Little India and Chinatown, a colorful cacophony of restaurants, temples and markets. We reach Bogyoke Market, formerly known as Scott's Market, where there is time to browse through the dozens of stalls and shops. This is Yangon's best market for handicrafts and other goods.



After lunch we'll visit Kyaukhtatgyi Pagoda, home to a 70-meter long reclining Buddha. We visit Kandawagyi Park, one of central Yangon's greenest spots where local families come to relax in the fresh air. From here, we continue to Shwedagon Pagoda the most revered Buddhist temple in Myanmar. Although the origins of the pagoda are unclear, the local legend states that the original structure was built 2500 years ago then renovated several times until taking its current shape in the 15th century. Overnight in Yangon.



Day 3 WED 19-Nov-14 Yangon - Heho - Pindaya - Kalaw (B,L,D)

After breakfast, transfer to Airport for a flight to Heho

On arrival Heho, enjoy a scenic drive to Pindaya through the picturesque countryside of Shan State. We visit Pindaya's limestone caves where hundreds and thousands of Buddha images in various size and shape are installed since the 11th century. Its maze of chambers displaying more than 8,000 Buddha statues and local handicraft workshops producing Shan Paper made from mulberry bark and traditional umbrellas. Late in the afternoon, we enjoy a scenic drive to Kalaw, a hill station town in Southern Shan State. Overnight in Kalaw



Day 4 THU 20-Nov-14 Kalaw - Elephant Camp - Kalaw (B,L,D)

Today we head to the Green Hill Valley Elephant Camp! We spend the morning trekking through the Shan Hills, passing through farms, forests and villages inhabited by the Pa-O and Palaung people until we will arrive at the camp. We enjoy a picnic lunch along the way. We then take an elephant ride through the forest where we will likely see wild orchids, butterflies and other indigenous flora and fauna.



Overnight in Kalaw

Day 5 FRI 21-Nov-14 Kalaw - Inle Lake (B,L,D)

After breakfast we visit local market in Kalaw.

Then we take a scenic drive to Nyaung Shwe, the gateway village to Inle Lake with a stop at the wooden Shwe Yan Pyay Monastery on the way. We will enjoy a private boat ride on Inle Lake, one of Myanmar's most spectacular sights. We pass villages built on stilts over the lake, which are mostly inhabited by Intha people, the leg-rowing fishermen of the lake. We will also see the floating gardens built up from strips of water hyacinth and mud and anchored to the bottom with bamboo poles.



We then proceed to a traditional Inthar House at Tharlay village where we will spend time preparing dishes with the family. It's a unique opportunity to spend time with the locals and learn about their cuisine and culture. Together we'll prepare and enjoy local delights including Inle Style Tomato Salad and other Inthar dishes.



We will also enjoy visits to the Nga Hpe Chaung Monastery and its Shan Buddhas and Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda, the lake's main sanctuary. Then, visit one of the souvenir shops where we can see the Padaung (long necked) women. We also visit the weaving village of Inpawkhone, a cheroot factory where the typical Burmese cigars are made by hand. Overnight Inle Lake

Day 6 SAT 22-Nov-14 Inle Lake - excursion Indein (B,L,D)

After breakfast, we visit the lake's morning market. The market rotates its location around the lake's villages in a 5 day rhythm and is visited by lake inhabitants and surrounding hill tribes who come to sell and trade their wares. This is an amazing experience!



From the middle of the lake, we will continue down a small canal leading to the Pa-oh village of Indein. We will stroll around the village, visiting a local school, and wander through the beautiful Alaung Sithou area. Here we can climb the covered stairway to the top of a hill which is covered with picturesque ancient stupas and has magnificent views of the lake below.

After enjoying our visit to Indein, we return to our boat and continue along the lake for additional sightseeing before returning to our hotel. Overnight Inle Lake.

Day 7 SUN 23-Nov-14 Inle Lake - Nyaung Shwe - Heho - Mandalay (B,L,D)

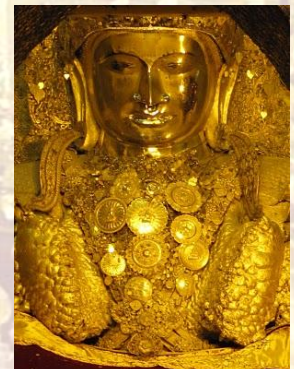
After breakfast and a leisurely morning we head to the Red Mountain Estate Vineyards for a wine tasting of Myanmar's own wines made from locally grown grapes. We then enjoy a lovely lunch at a waterfront restaurant before transferring to Heho Airport for our flight to Mandalay. Overnight in Mandalay.

Day 8 MON 24-Nov-14 Mandalay - Mingun - Mandalay (B,L,D)

After breakfast we board a private local boat for a cruise on the Irrawaddy River to Mingun where we visit the main sites of Mingun beginning with the famous Mingun Pahtodawqyi. This huge brick structure was left unfinished after an astrologer predicted the King would die should the temple be completed. Next we visit the beautiful white Hsinbyume Pagoda whose distinctive style is meant to resemble the mythical Mount Meru, and see the Mingun Bell which weighs 90 tons and is considered the world's largest un-cracked ringing bell. We return to Mandalay by boat, enjoying lunch on board as we make our way back to the city.



Next we visit the Mahamuni Pagoda which is home to one of the country's most revered Buddha images that over the years has been covered with gold leaf giving it an almost 'lumpy' texture. Mandalay is well known for its skilled craftsmen and as we tour traditional workshops, we will learn more about the city's cottage industries. We will observe the production of wood carvings, kalaga tapestries, and gold-leafing where the techniques remained unchanged from those used centuries ago to craft items for the Royal Court. We will also visit the Kuthodaw Pagoda, whose 729 marble stone slabs of Buddhist scriptures have earned it the title 'World's Biggest Book' and then continue to Shwenandaw Monastery, the only remaining building from the 19th century Royal Palace. This grand teak building is known for its exquisite woodcarving.



For those who wish we can head to the top of Mandalay Hill to watch the sunset. Overnight in Mandalay.

Day 9 TUE 25-Nov-14 Mandalay - Bagan (By Boat) (B,L,D)

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the jetty for a boat trip to Mandalay on the local public ferry boat. As it sails southwards, the riverboat passes many remote villages offering picturesque scenes and a glimpse into the way of life along the Irrawaddy River. We will enjoy lunch onboard and arrive in Bagan late in the afternoon. Overnight in Bagan.

Day 10 WED 26-Nov-14 Bagan (B,L,D)

After breakfast at our hotel, your journey begins with a visit an elevated temple from where we will have a panoramic view of the magnificent plains of Bagan. Continue with a visit to the golden stupa of Shwezigon Pagoda for an introduction in to Bagan's rich history. Then, visit to nearby Wetkyi-In Gubyaukgyi, a cave temple with exquisite *jataka* mural paintings and the elegant Htilominlo Temple noted for its fine plaster carvings and glazed sandstone decorations.

After lunch we begin with a visit to a traditional lacquer ware workshop where we will observe the production of one of Myanmar's best-known handicrafts. Continue to Ananda Temple, an architectural masterpiece and one of Bagan's most beautiful temples. Next we travel by horse cart for a tour passing Thatbyinnyu, the highest temple in Bagan, massive Dhammayangyi Temple, noted for its remarkable brickwork, and Sulamani Temple.

Enjoy an unforgettable sunset over the plains from the upper terrace of one of the temples. Overnight in Bagan.



Day 11 THU 27-Nov-14 Bagan (local color tour in Bagan) - Cooking Class (B,L,D)

After breakfast we will first visit the Nyaung U market, a busy morning market where locals gather from surrounding villages to buy and sell produce, crafts, spices and other goods. We will stop for a cup of tea in a local teahouse, a key part of daily life in Myanmar and a great place from which to observe the busy morning activities.

We then continue to the neighboring villages where we will learn about their traditional livelihood. We will learn the interesting process of creating "Poneyay" (pea powder paste) and see how local plum jam is made and packed. We will visit workshops of two of the region's best known products: handmade lacquer ware and wooden handicrafts and observe about how Cartwrights make traditional bullock carts, still used by farmers and locals throughout the country. The craftsmen love to share their techniques with visitors and the curious kids from the village are usually happy to come and meet you. Next is a Cooking Class and lunch at Flavours of Myanmar Cooking Class.

Monk Blessing: We will go to the Monastery where we will participate in a special traditional Buddhist ceremony and receive a special blessing from the monks to ensure good luck and happiness. Overnight in Bagan

Day 12 FRI 28-Nov-14 Bagan - Yangon departure (B)

After breakfast at our hotel we will transfer to the Airport for a flight to Yangon. Upon arrival, transfer to International airport for your onward flight.

