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Spirit of Burma (Myanmar)
Art, Culture, Buddhist Heritage and Ethnic Minorities
February 4-15, 2010 and October 16-27, 2010 (includes pagoda festival at Inle lake)
Post-Tour Extension Sittwee, Mrauk U (tribal villages) or to Angkor Wat

Discover hidden treasures on this insider's journey exploring Burmese art, architecture and the gentle graciousness of its culture. Many people travel to Burma to see the stunning Buddhist monasteries and temples. In addition, we will get to know the people of Burma. We will encounter men wearing skirt-like *longyi*, women smothered in *thanaka* (traditional make-up) and betel-chewing grannies with blood red juices dripping from their mouths. The locals are gentle, humorous, engaging, considerate and inquisitive.

Turn back the clock with a trip to this isolated country where travel with honest cultural immersion still exists. Burma fuels your emotions, stimulates your senses and stays in your soul. This is the authentic Asia!

Day 1 Arrival in Yangon SQ5012 920 am. Transfer to Savoy hotel.

After check-in, drive downtown for walking tour and orientation. Closer to the waterfront, downtown Yangon is a warren of historic streets concealing some of the best British colonial-era architecture in the region. Vibrant and dynamic, Yangon is a fascinating introduction to Myanmar. It's diverse too – home to Burmese, Shan, Mon, Chinese, Indians and Western expats. Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest here in her home on University Ave.

Sunset visit the stunning Shwedagon Pagoda, most sacred site in the country. You will see locals performing devotional rituals.

The Shwedagon Pagoda, the most notable building in Yangon is a great cone-shaped Buddhist monument that crowns a hill about one mile north of the Cantonment. The pagoda itself is a solid brick stupa (Buddhist reliquary) that is completely covered with gold. It rises 326 feet (99 m) on a hill 168 feet (51 m) above the city.

The perimeter of the base of the Pagoda is 1,420 feet and its height 326 feet above the platform. The base is surrounded by 64 small pagodas with four larger, one in the center of each side. There also are 4 sphinxes, one at each corner with 6 leogryphs, 3 on each side of them. Projecting beyond the base of the Pagoda, one on the center of each side are Tazaungs in which are images of the Buddha and where offerings are made.

There are also figures of elephants crouching and men kneeling, and pedestals for offerings all around the base. In front of the 72 shrines surrounding the base of the Pagoda, you will find in several places images of lions, serpents, ogres, yogis, spirits, or Wathundari. On the wall below the first terrace of the Pagoda at the West-Southern Ward and West-Northern Ward corners, you will see embossed figures. The former represents King Okkalapa who first built the Pagoda. The latter is a pair of figures; the one above represents Sakka who assisted in foundation of the Pagoda, and the one below, Me Lamu, consort of Sakka and mother of Okkalapa.

Tunnels of Shwedagon

There are 4 entrances leading into the base of this great Shwedagon Pagoda. No one is sure what is inside. According to some legendary tales, there are flying and turning swords that never stop, which protect the pagoda from intruders; some says there are even underground tunnels that leads to Bagan and Thailand.



Day 2 Full Day Tour of Yangon

We will visit several art galleries, Bogyoke Aung San Market (locally known as Scott Market), a glass factory, the National Museum and a few pagodas of significance which may include: Sule Pagoda, Botataung Pagoda.

The Bogyoke Aung San Market is the most popular market and a great tourist destination in Yangon. It is in one of the precious colonial buildings in Yangon. The market was first built on the present premises in 1926. It was named Scott Market after Mr. C. Scott, the then Municipal Commissioner. Nowadays, it is called Bogyoke Aung San Market in honor of Burma's national leader General Aung San who was assassinated in 1947. There are 1,641 shops selling luxury items, handicrafts, foodstuffs, clothing, jewelry, fashion and consumer goods. There are also traditional, Myanmar and Chinese food stalls in the market.

The Botahtaung Pagoda is located downtown beside the Yangon River overlooking the pleasant water front of the river. The Botahtaung Pagoda was named after the thousand military leaders who escorted relics of the Buddha brought from India over two thousand years ago. The meaning of Bo is "leader" and tahtaung is "a thousand." It was built almost in the same time as Sule Pagoda and Shwedagon Pagoda over, 2500 years ago. The name of the pagoda was originally Kyaik-de-att, which was a Mon name, or Sandaw Shin as it is enshrined with the sacred hair of the Lord Buddha. The Botahtaung Pagoda is hollow inside and you can walk through it. It's a sort of mirrored maze inside the pagoda with glass showcases containing many of the ancient relics and artifacts which were sealed inside the earlier pagoda. Above this interesting interior, the golden pagoda spire rises to 40 metres (132 feet) on the circular base and especially its umbrella at the top of the spire is quite different from the conventional design.

Sule Pagoda is located in the center of Yangon. This 48 meter (152 feet) high golden dome was used by the British as the nucleus of their grid pattern for the city when it was rebuilt in the 1880s. The pagoda's peculiarity is its octagonal-shaped pagoda, which retains its shape as it tapers to the spire. It is said to be over 2,000 years old. The golden pagoda is unusual in that its octagonal shape continues right up to the bell and inverted bowl. Sule Pagoda is the only central piece of the capital, like the Arc de Triumph in Paris, a landmark of artistic beauty. It can be reached through four entrances of the four stairways facing four cardinal directions or by two overhead bridges. The pagoda is surrounded by small shops and all the familiar non-religious services such as of astrologists, palmists, etc. It is believed that Sule Pagoda is enshrined with the sacred hair of the Lord Buddha as well.



The National Museum of Myanmar was founded in 1952 with its premises at what was once the Jubilee Hall. The present National Museum is located in a splendid five-story building. Priceless ancient artifacts, works of art and historic memorabilia are on display in 14 halls on four stories. Three halls on the ground floor hold exhibits on the evolution of the Myanmar script and alphabet, the Lion Throne Room and Yatanabon Period pieces. There is also an interesting stone funerary urn of the period AD1 - AD 9 with Pyu writings on it in this hall. In the throne room you will see miniature models of the eight kinds of thrones of ancient Myanmar kings and the magnificent Royal Lion Throne of our last monarch King Thibaw in all its original majesty. This great throne is made of smooth-grained "Yamanay" timber adorned with lions at its base. The whole throne is heavily gilded. This throne is always placed in the "Hluttaw" Hall, (the Hall of the Council of Ministers). The king uses this throne when deliberating with his ministers on state affairs or delivering judgments on important issues. In the 19th century Yadanabon Period Exhibit hall one can see clothing fashions, furniture and other household articles of the time. There is also a palanquin used by king Thibaw's Chief monk which has a gilded roof with three spires.

Day 3 Excursion to Twante / Savoy Hotel

Hundreds of ancient kilns were discovered here. In the delta region outside Yangon is the town of Twante where the "Oh-Bo pottery" is located. Early morning transfer to boat dock for a two hour cruise on the R.V Mahaythi cruise ship. The boat trip provides a view of life along the canal. Twante provides interest as a centre of pottery and hand-woven cotton cloth. The streets of Twante are littered with so many beautiful pots of different sizes & shapes. Visit the Twante Market and pottery villages. Lunch on board during return.

Day 4 Early morning flight to Bagan (Pagan), the country's Angkor Wat. Transfer to Thande Hotel (overlooking the Irrawaddy) in the old city//deluxe river front cottages.

Bagan, capital of the first Myanmar Empire, is situated on the eastern bank of the Ayerawady (Irrawaddy) River. Rivaling the temples of Angkor for the crown of Southeast Asia's most memorable sight, the 4400 temples here date from around the same period, the 11th-13th century. Angkor's individual temples may be more spectacular, but Bagan's brilliance is in the wonderful collective views of stupa upon stupa dotting the plain. Across 40 sq km (15.5 sq miles) of country, stretching back from the Ayerawady River, stand thousands of stupas (also called pagodas, zedis or payas, buddhist monuments that have a solid interior) and pathos (temples, which one can enter). In every direction you will see ruins of all sizes--huge, glorious temples such as Ananda Pahto and small, graceful zedis (stupas) standing in the fields next to a residents thatched homes. Some contain elegant mural paintings. Among these pagodas, four are considered to be embodied with special features as follows: Ananda (the most sculptural), Dhammayangyi (the thickest), Thatbyinnyu (the Omniscient), Shwezigon (the most powerful).

After check-in, full day tour. Highlights include: Temples in Old Bagan including Ananda Temple contains Gothic Arches and stone sculptures of exquisite workmanship. Ananda Okyaung is a brick monastery with 18th century mural paintings. Thatbyinnyu Temple, magnificence in all white high on the hill towering above the other monuments of Bagan.

We will then venture to Myinkaba Village and see Manuha Temple which contains some gigantic Buddha images that are a representation of physical discomfort and mental distress of the captive King of Thaton; Abeyadana temple, located next to the royal palace of King Kyanzittha, where the king's wife waited for him when he fled during a conflict. The treasures here are the fine mural paintings on Mahayana Buddhism. Nagayon, an 11th century Mon style temple similar to the Indian temples in Orissa and Myingaba Gubyaukkyi with excellent mural paintings.

Sunset at Mingalazedi Pagoda; the last stupa built before the Mongols invasion.

Day 5 Salay and Mt. Popa / Thande Hotel

Morning drive to Salay; where you will see one of the oldest monasteries famous for its fine wood carvings, a huge lacquered Buddha made of bamboo strips and some small temples with interesting mural paintings dating from Bagan Era.

Continue to nearby Mt. Popa about 60km (38 miles) southeast of Bagan; an extinct volcano and a lot of shrines dedicated to animistic spirits known as 'Nats.'

We'll stop at Minnanthu Village and the palm tree plantations producing jaggery (palm sugar candy) as well as see the 13th century temples Sulamani and Damayangyi, the most massive structure with a similar architectural plan as Ananda.

Transfer to the Popa Mountain Resort. Mt. Popa Resort is perched on the hillside of Popa Mountain in a beautiful, isolated natural setting with spectacular views over the plains and to the nearby volcanic outcrop and nat shrine.

Lunch at the resort and after lunch a pleasant walk to the summit of Mount Popa or through the wooded slopes. You can climb Mt. Popa by a covered walkway to reach the complex of pagodas at the summit, 1520 m. and visit the Mahagiri Nat Shrine. It is about a 30 minute walk from the resort to the nat shrine. The path has a railing and steps; some of the way is uphill but not difficult.

Evening, a one hour drive to return to Bagan for dinner and overnight.

Possible Sunset at Bupaya Pagoda, which stands on the banks of the Ayeyarwady River.

Day 6 Full day Tour of Bagan/ Thande Hotel

We will mix a combination of pagodas, museum, markets, and local lifestyle experiences in the villages.

Highlights include: Nandamanya, Thambula and Laymyetha, noted for their fine mural paintings; Payathonzu with mural paintings of Mahayanists character; a visit to the East and West Petleik Pagodas, with interesting terra-cotta plaques and Lawkananda; and a Pyu-style stupa on the bank of Ayeyarwaddy River.

In and near Wetkyi-in and Nyaung villages: Shwezigon Pagoda is one of the most remarkable of the buildings of Bagan with a solid cylindrical structure that forms the prototype of Myanmar Stupas; Kyansittha Umin is a tunnel with an interesting feature of mural paintings; Gubaukkyi Temple with fine mural paintings of Jataka scenes, Hitlominlo Temple is a double storied structure known for its frieze and pilaster molding.

Dhammayazika is located in Pwasaw region, in the southern part of Bagan. This temple was built by King Narapati Sithu. The name of the pagoda means "Pertaining the King of Law" in Pali. The structure of Dhammayazika Pagoda has pentagonal terraces instead of the usual Bagan pagodas, the square base. There are three receding terraces, ornamented with glazed Jataka plaques. On each side of the pagoda, there is a small temple housing an image of Buddha. The usual practice in most temples was to have four images facing the cardinal points, representing the four Buddhas of the present world cycle who have already attained Enlightenment. In this pagoda the fifth temple is placed with the future becoming Buddha. All the five names of the Buddha are Kakusandha, Konagamana, Kassapa, Gotama and Metteyya. The inscription records say that in 1197 King Narapatisithu received four holy relics from the King of Sri Lanka and that he built the pagoda in 1198 to enshrine the relics.

Additionally a visit to the Archaeological Museum and lacquerware cottage industries.

Day 7 Morning flight to Mandalay / Sedona Hotel across from Manadalay Palace

Mandalay was the first capital of Burma, before the British took over, and remains an important cultural center. It is the second largest Burmese city and its Buddhist monasteries are among the most important. Mandalay has the Royal Palace of the last Konbaung Dynasty and inherits much cultural heritage from the ancient Myanmar Kingdoms. Surrounding Mandalay are several interesting villages which offer us an opportunity to observe traditional rural lifestyles as well as visit interesting cultural sites.

First, a visit to the impressive Mahamuni Pagoda, with its traditional handicraft workshops such as gold leaf hammering, marble and wood carvings. Next we proceed to Shwenandaw Monastery, which contains fine specimens of Myanmar wood-carving. Next we go

to Kuthodaw Pagoda, which contains what is known as the world's Biggest Book, as well as the world's heaviest Book for its marble slabs of Buddhist scriptures. Next is Kyauktawgyi Pagoda, a large Buddha image carved out of a single block of marble. Enjoy sunset on Mandalay Hill.

Day 8 Mingun Pagoda / Sedona Hotel

A morning boat excursion to visit Mingun Pagoda, across the river from Mandalay. Mingun, located about 11 km (6 miles) upriver, is accessible only by river, giving you a short but pleasant insight into river life culture. The village is very friendly and worth exploring. Thousands of slaves labored to build the massive stupa beginning in 1790. An earthquake spilt the monument in 1838 and reduced it to partial rubble. The base of this projected stupa, badly cracked by the earthquake, stands 50m (165 feet) high, overlooking the river. Each side of the enormous base measures 72m (235 feet) and the lowest terrace measures 140m (460 feet). Had the stupa been completed it would have stood 150m high (492 feet). Climb the zedi on the crumbled corner and from the top you have an incredible view of the Hsinbyume Pagoda, Mingun village and the river.

In 1808, Bodawpaya had a gigantic bell constructed to go with his gigantic zedi. Weighing 90 tons, it is claimed to be the largest hung, uncracked bell in the world. The bell is 13 feet high and 17 feet in diameter at the lip. You can scramble under and right inside it. The same earthquake that shook the stupa base, also destroyed the bell supports, so it is now hung in a new place, close to the riverboat landing.

Afternoon visit craft centers.

Day 9 Full day excursion to Sagaing, Ava and Amarapura / Sedona Hotel

Sagaing, on the west bank, is an ancient walled-city, which was one of the Burmese capitals before Mandalay was established in 1857. It became the spiritual capital of Burma following the fall of the Pagan dynasty and boasts hundreds of temples and monasteries, with spectacular views of the Irrawaddy River and Mandalay. Crossing the old British Raj Ava Bridge, Ava (locally called by its ancient name Inwa) is reached by a short boat ride. In Ava are old wooden monasteries, ornamented in intricate wooden carving.

In intriguing Amarapura, a capital established in 1783, we visit the famous Kyauktawgyi Pagoda, 1850, boasting the finest 19th century Buddhist mural painting, combining European and Burmese pictorial conventions.

Day 10 Inle Lake / Inle lake / Princess Resort, garden view rooms

Morning flt to Heho W9 011 dep 09:25--arr 09:55 and drive 1.5hrs to Inle Lake, where we board a motor boat for the one hour cruise to our hotel, a charming floating structure of individual cottages in the midst of the lake.

Inle is a vast lake located in the heart of Shan State which shares borders with Thai & Laos. It climbs up to over 900 metres above sea level and is outrageously beautiful. More than 30 hill tribes live here.

Inle Lake is famous for its unique leg-rowers, diverse tribal groups, and scenic beauty. After check-in and lunch visit wonderful floating gardens, a floating market, and Phaungdaw Oo Pagoda—an amazing floating pagoda-- just before sunset.

Day 11 Full day touring in Inle Lake by boat. Visit crafts people, market place, weaving villages; observe unusual method of fishing and ways of life on the lake.

Day 12 Fly to Yangon

Morning visit Khaung Daing Market and Indian Market. Fly Heho/Yangon, W9 011 dep 10:20 - arr 11:15. Remain at airport for flt home. If continuing on the post tour to Angkor Wat: Bangkok Airways PG 0702 dep 240 pm, arr Bangkok 435 pm, dep 545 pm, arr Siem Reap 655 pm.

PRICE: \$2950 per person based on min 4 people, single room supplement \$650.

Includes: accommodation, all meals, domestic airfares within Burma, all transfers and transports, entrance fees, local professional guides, main tour escorted by Daw Khin Myo Lwin (Rosie).

Does Not Include: international flight, visa fee, travel insurance, tips to driver or escort, any drinks, laundry, phone calls.

Our Escort: Daw Khin Myo Lwin (we call her Rosie) has been escorting American and European groups for over 20 years including museum and expedition tours. She speaks fluent English and French as well as her native Burmese, of course. A truly delightful woman, Rosie enriches your experience with up-close insights into the traditional Burmese culture yet with a modern twist--she is an unmarried woman and co-owner of her own tour company.

NOTE: The sequencing of the sightseeing activities may be changed though rest assured we will visit all the sites. An upgrade to lake view cottage at Inle lake is possible based on availability.

Extension Sittwee, Mrauk U (tribal villages)

Day 12 Transfer to Savoy Hotel for overnight.

Day 13 Fly Yangon/Sittwe by Air Mandalay, dep 11:45 am, arr 1:40 pm. A six-hour boat trip to Mrauk U (pronounced Myauk Oo). Transfer to Nawarat Hotel, situated in archaeological zone.

Day 14 Morning drive 6 miles north of Mrauk U to the remains of Wethali. Wethali was founded in 327 AD and archaeologists believe the kingdom lasted until the 8th century. Here we see the great 16-foot Image of Hsu Taung Pre (Pye), a huge sitting Buddha, from 327 AD, made out of one piece of sandstone, swathed in red cloth and attended by monks and nuns. Pilgrims are gilding the images with gold-leaf squares. It is set in the remaining ruins of the palace site.

Continue, approx 2 hr drive, to Danyawaddy (also known as Kyauk Taw) to see the Mahamuni Pagoda built during the period of the Dhanyawaddy Dynasty. Afternoon visit to very simple village, Lay Mya Nar Temple, Shittauing Temple, a shrine of 80,000 Buddha images, the adjacent Andaw Thein ordination Hall, Syikyana Manaung Pagoda and Htukkan Thein Archeological Museum and the palace site, dating to the 16th century. Sunset at Shwe Gou Taung Temple. Overnight accommodations at Nawarat Hotel.

Day 15 After an early breakfast, we start a scenic 2.5 hr journey by car on a rather rugged, bumpy road. Visit the tattoo villages of the Laytoo Chin minority (if permitted). In the afternoon, you will explore a typical village of the Shakama (Thet) minority to see the rural way of life. Enjoy a short canoe trip on the river through the beautiful landscape, followed by further explorations of temples.

Day 16 Visit a local market and transfer to the jetty for the boat journey back to Sittwe. Sunset at a vista point. Sittwe is a port city at the mouth of the Kaladan River in Rakhaing State. Inhabitants of Rakhaing are said to have mixed Burmese-Indian blood. Overnight accommodations at the Noble Hotel.

Day 17 Visit the main market of Sittwe, where fisherman, town and rural people come to buy and sell fish and general supplies. Time permitting, we visit the 100 year-old Buddha with a golden face at the Payagyi Temple and Cultural Museum. Transfer to the airport for a flight to Yangon, arriving at 5:15 pm. Remain at airport for flight home.

PRICE: \$1045 based on 6 people; \$1185 per person based on 4 people, \$1305 based on 2 people
Single Room Supplement \$200

Includes: accommodation, all meals, domestic airfares, all transfers and land transport, travel in Myauk Oo area by non ac minivan or car depending on number of people, entrance fees, escorted by Daw Khin Myo Lwin (Rosie).

Does Not Include: international flight, flights to/from Yangon, tips, expenses of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, phone calls, Airport Hotel in Bangkok.

Hotels: Nawarat Hotel (Superior) in Myauk Oo and Noble Hotel (Std.) in Sittwe

NOTES: We upgraded the car for this extension from an open-air jeep with uncomfortable and cramped seats to a more comfortable vehicle (car for 2, minivan for 4-6 people) which will withstand the bumpy roads; the cost is about \$100 more per person than the jeeps. In both cases the vehicles are old models, 1980-85. This is the best vehicle available in this region of Burma. If only 2 people book, we can use the jeep to save you some cost, as long as you are aware of the difference in comfort and do not mind; though the better cars are highly recommended

Extension Angkor Temples

Day 12 Arrival in Siem Reap. PG 907, 655 pm. Transfer to Khemara Angkor Hotel, 4*

Day 13 Full Day Sightseeing at Angkor Temples

ANGKOR THOM: a fortified Royal City (6 square miles) built by King Jayavarman VII, who ruled from 1181 to 1201. The city has five monumental gates and is encircled by a moat over 300 feet wide. In the center of the walled city are the city's most important monuments including Bayon, Baphuon, the Terrace of Elephants, the Terrace of the Leper King and Phimeanakas with the Royal Enclosure. Enter by the monumental South Gate over a causeway lined on either side by statues of demons and gods, each carrying a giant naga.

TERRACE OF ELEPHANTS: this terrace was used for viewing public ceremonies and was a base for the King's grand audience hall. The famous lines of elephants are at either end of the retaining walls.

TERRACE OF THE LEPER KING: North of the Terrace of Elephants is a platform called Terrace of the Leper King. On the platform is a nude statue – one of Angkor's mysteries.

BAPHUON: the pyramid shape represents the mythical Mount Meru and marks the center of the city that was here before Angkor Thom.

PHIMEANAKAS: near the center of what was once the royal palace within Angkor Thom. Phimeanakas means 'Celestial Palace', though today there is not much left to indicate its former splendor.

FORMER ROYAL PALACE: nothing remains today except two pools that were used by royalty for washing.

BAYON: Jayavarman VII's temple mountain that stands at the center of Angkor Thom. It is one of the most popular of Angkor's monuments and a place of narrow corridors, steep flights of stairs and an amazing collection of towers decorated with over 200 smiling faces.

TA PROHM: one of the most popular attractions of Angkor as much of the jungle has not been cleared and it looks very much as most of the Angkor monuments would have appeared when European explorers first stumbled across them.

BANTEAY SREI: built in the late 10th century, it is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva. The temple is square with entrances on the east and west. Of main interest are the three central towers which are decorated with male and female divinities and beautiful filigree relief work.

PREAH KHAN: a temple built by King Jayavarman VII with towered enclosures and shoulder-hugging corridors in a jungle setting. Preah Khan covers a very large area but the temple itself is enclosed within a rectangular wall of around 2300 by 2600 feet.

Sunset PHNOM BAKHENG: temple ruin on a hill that provides one of the best views of Angkor Wat, especially at sunset. Watch the sun set over the Cambodian countryside from the upper terraces of an ancient Angkorian temple.

Day 14 Full Day Sightseeing at Angkor Temples

ANGKOR WAT: The crowning jewel of Khmer architecture, ANGKOR WAT is the national symbol and the highlight of any visit to Cambodia. Dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu by King Suryavarman II, who reigned between 1131 and 1150, it was constructed over a period of 30 years. The largest, best preserved, and most religiously significant of the Angkor temples, Angkor impresses visitors both by its sheer scale and beautifully proportioned layout, as well as the delicate artistry of its carvings. To approach the temple, we first cross the vast moat, continuing along a broad causeway lined with naga balustrades. As you enter the main building, ascend through a series of galleries and courtyard before reaching the central sanctuary, which offers beautiful views back over the causeway and across the surrounding countryside. On the way, we stop to enjoy the intricate stonecarvings that adorn nearly every surface, with some 1,700 Apsaras, or celestial dancers, sculpted into the walls. Along the outer gallery walls run the longest continuous bas-relief in the world, which narrates stories from Hindu mythology, including the famous Churning of the Ocean of Milk. In 1992, UNESCO declared the monument and the whole city of Angkor a World Heritage Site.

Day 15 Transfer to airport for flight home.

PRICE: \$435 based on 2 people, single room supplement: \$95.

Includes: English-speaking guide, Daily Breakfast- ground transportation in private A/C vehicle (complimentary cold towels and drinking water), admissions fees according to itinerary, accommodation in hotels as mentioned above or equivalent.

Does Not Include: international and domestic airport tax, visa fees, drinks, personal expenses.

