

# myanmar

*Be enchanted*

BAGAN



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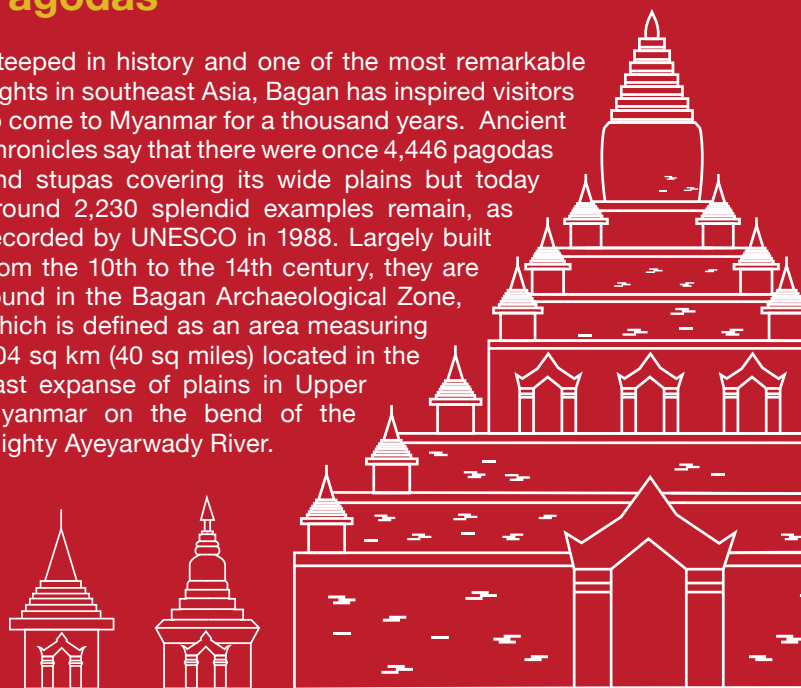
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# HIGHLIGHTS

**Experience a magical world, be transported back in time**

## Pagodas

Steeped in history and one of the most remarkable sights in southeast Asia, Bagan has inspired visitors to come to Myanmar for a thousand years. Ancient chronicles say that there were once 4,446 pagodas and stupas covering its wide plains but today around 2,230 splendid examples remain, as recorded by UNESCO in 1988. Largely built from the 10th to the 14th century, they are found in the Bagan Archaeological Zone, which is defined as an area measuring 104 sq km (40 sq miles) located in the vast expanse of plains in Upper Myanmar on the bend of the mighty Ayeyarwady River.



## River

Being located in the dry central zone of the country, in the region of Mandalay, means that Bagan is not subject to the monsoon season like many other parts of Myanmar. This imbues the river with even greater importance for the inhabitants of the area. While most visitors arrive in Bagan by air or by road, some take a leisurely (and often luxury) river cruise from Yangon or Mandalay to absorb the beauty and history of Bagan. For those who don't, it is highly recommended to experience a memorable boat excursion in the early evening to capture glimpses of local riverine life and watch the sunset.

## Environs

On a clear day Mount Popa is visible from the Ayeyarwady River, as far away as 60km. A 1-hour drive from Bagan, this extinct volcano is just one of a number of interesting places to visit in the vicinity of Bagan. Mount Popa is a popular site for pilgrimages and affords fabulous views of the area. Salay, an ancient capital, is 45 minutes by road from Mount Popa and is an important centre of Buddhism with many active monasteries. Also near Bagan, about 26km away, is Nga Tha York Village which is famous for its wooden sandals, earthenware pottery and soya bean paste.





# WELCOME TO BAGAN

## Boundless blue skies, limitless lands and a history stretching back many centuries

When you behold the vast expanse of open lands studded with stupas, pagodas and temples of various eras and different colours against the mountain backdrop, it is hard not to be completely and utterly enchanted by this fairyland. Bagan is considered a key tourism highlight and gives you the opportunity to experience an authentic, rural life from a bygone age. Breathtakingly picturesque, Bagan was the capital of the Kingdom of Pagan from the 9th to the 13th century, and a visit to the museum offers deeper insight into its history.

It was the first kingdom to unify the area that is now known as Myanmar. The former, majestic power and spiritual draw, of what is now the archaeological zone, is obvious to the eye. Besides being the top attraction for foreign visitors to Myanmar, many of this magical, ancient city's sacred monuments are still highly venerated by the local population, and attract numerous pilgrims and devotees from all over the country, particularly at festival times. Other stupas, pagodas, and temples are in various states of repair, conservation and maintenance.





# PAGODAS

**Fewer places in the country are as steeped in such spiritual history**

With the exception of Tharabar Gate which is (now the only surviving piece of secular architecture) and Nathlaung Kyaung (the only Hindu temple remaining), most of Bagan's cultural and spiritual heritage finds its roots in Buddhism. including Thandawgya Buddha image. The most dominant type of religious edifices are either pagodas or temples.

The latter structures are built around a main central chamber surrounded by shrine rooms and corridors. The ancient mural paintings can be seen in over 300 temples and caves in Bagan. Traditional horse and cart is a popular and enjoyable way of seeing Bagan but visitors can also hire bicycles, e-bikes and taxis to get about.



## Ananda Temple

Constructed in 1091 by King Kyansittha, the structure of Ananda Temple is very artistic and the ground plan is like a perfect Greek cross with pavilions on all four sides. Likely one of the most famous pagodas in Bagan, it is 51m high in total while the entire compound measures 180m from north to south and 182m from east to west. In the centre of the temple are high niches enshrining four colossal standing Buddhas on a throne, each of them nearly 10m tall.



## Bupaya Pagoda

Noted for being one of the earliest monuments on the plains of Bagan, the original pagoda was built in Pyu style, a descendant from the Indian style stupa. Legend has it that Bupaya (Bu meaning “gourd” and relating to the gilded pagoda’s shape) was built by King Pyusawhti who rid the river of this weed and that it dated back to the 3rd century. However, historians place it closer to the 9th or the 11th century (respectively when Bagan city was founded or the city walls were built).

## Dhamayangyi Temple

The largest temple structure in Bagan, Dhammayangyi Temple is a cave pagoda and was built between 1167 and 1170 by King Narathu. It has an intriguing past as the legacy of one of the most bloodthirsty kings in Burmese history. Viewed from a distance, its structure resembles an Egyptian pyramid. The temple is about 1km to the Southeast of the city walls. Although never completed most of the arches and the major portion of the structure are still intact.



## Htilominlo Pagoda

Very close to the road between Nyaung U and Bagan, Htilominlo Pagoda is about 1.5km northeast of Bagan. This large temple was built by King Nantaungmya in 1218. The temple is well known to be the last Myanmar style of temple built in Bagan. The name is a misreading of the Pali word for ‘Blessings of the Three Worlds’. King Nantaungmya erected the temple on this spot because it was here that he was chosen, among five brothers, to be the crown prince.

## Lawkananda Pagoda

Built in 1059 by King Anawrahta during his reign, Lawkananda Pagoda has the Buddha’s tooth relic enshrined. The pagoda was erected on the bank of the Ayeyarwady River. During those days, with the power of Bagan Dynasty, the Mon region, Rakhine and even as far as Sri Lanka would anchor by the Ayeyarwaddy riverside. With its distinctive elongated cylindrical dome, Lawkananda would be the first pagoda to be seen. It is still used as an everyday place of worship.





## Myingaba Gubayaukgyi Temple

An early period temple, Myinkaba Gubayaukgyi is of particular interest for the well-preserved paintings inside, which are thought to date from the original construction of the temple and are therefore the oldest remaining in Bagan. The monument was built in 1113 by King Kyanzittha's son, Rajakumar, upon his father's death. Indian in style, the temple consists of a large shrine room with a smaller antechamber attached to it. The fine stuccowork on its exterior walls is in particularly good condition.

## Shwezigon Pagoda

Shwezigon Pagoda was built as the most important reliquary shrine in Bagan, a centre of prayer and reflection for the new Theravada faith that King Anawrahta had established in Bagan. The pagoda is between the villages of Wetkyi-in and Nyaung U. Initiated by King Anawrahta, this beautiful pagoda was not completed until the reign of King Kyanzittha (1084-1113). The pagoda is a prototype of Burmese stupas consisting of a circular gold leaf-gilded stupa surrounded by several smaller temples, shrines and a pagoda museum.



## Sulamani Temple

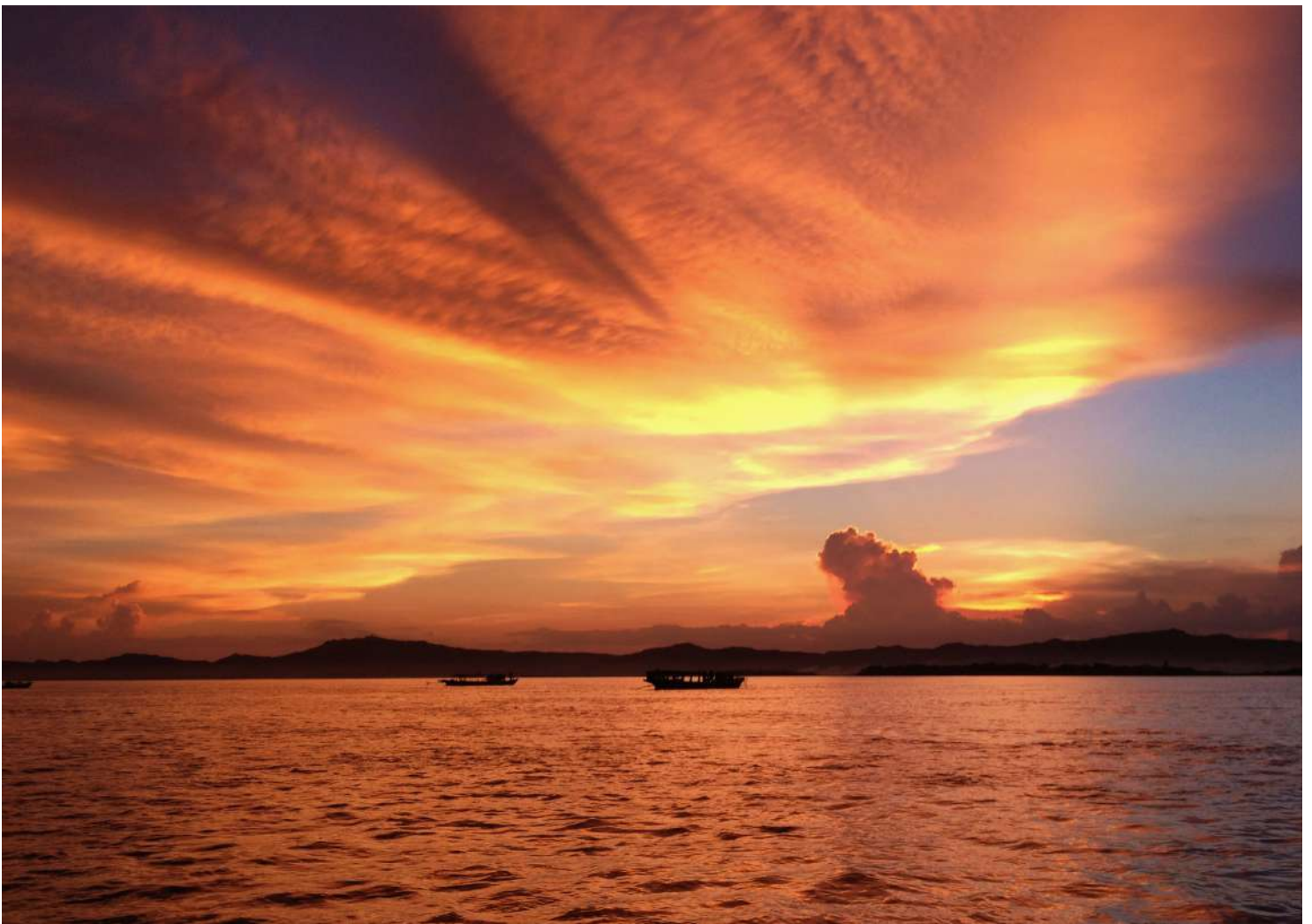
Entering the red-brick Sulamani Temple through its gateway is like entering another world. Built by King Narapatisithu in 1181, it is a large, very elegant multi-storey structure from the late Bagan period. One of the most visited temples in Bagan, the temple still has some frescos although many have been badly damaged due to their exposure to the elements. The light inside is particularly striking as the sun's rays shine through the outer arches and radiate a soft terracotta glow.

## Thatbyinnyu Temple

This majestic structure is visible from much of the Bagan plains as it towers above other nearby temples and pagodas. At 61m high, Thatbyinnyu Temple is the tallest temple among all the monuments in Bagan. Suitably magnificent, "Thatbyinnyu" is an original name and signifies the omniscience of the Buddha. Built in 1144, the temple is a big complex structure with seven terraces which all face east. Inside the temple are circumambulatory vaulted corridors, four-terraced devotional stupas, a monastery and a library.







# RIVER

## Treat yourself to some inspirational Ayeyarwady River magic

If your budget does not stretch to taking a river cruise from Bagan to Mandalay, a memorable and affordable way to experience the magical beauty of Bagan is on a 2 or 3-hr boat excursion. Fascinating stops at riverside villages allow you to see village life and witness the donation of alms to the monks. Board a boat near Bu Pagoda in the late afternoon and cruise out to the middle of the Ayeyarwady River where a panorama of temples comes into view.

Kyauk Gu U Min is an 11th and 12th century cave temple, located in the north of Nyaung U. It was built into the side of a ravine on the banks of the Ayeyarwady. Recently, travelling to this mysterious cave temple by boat has become more popular among the visitors. Here you can see notable sandstone carvings, colossal Buddha images, and catch glimpses of local life along the riverbanks while enjoying sunset views on the way back to Bagan.

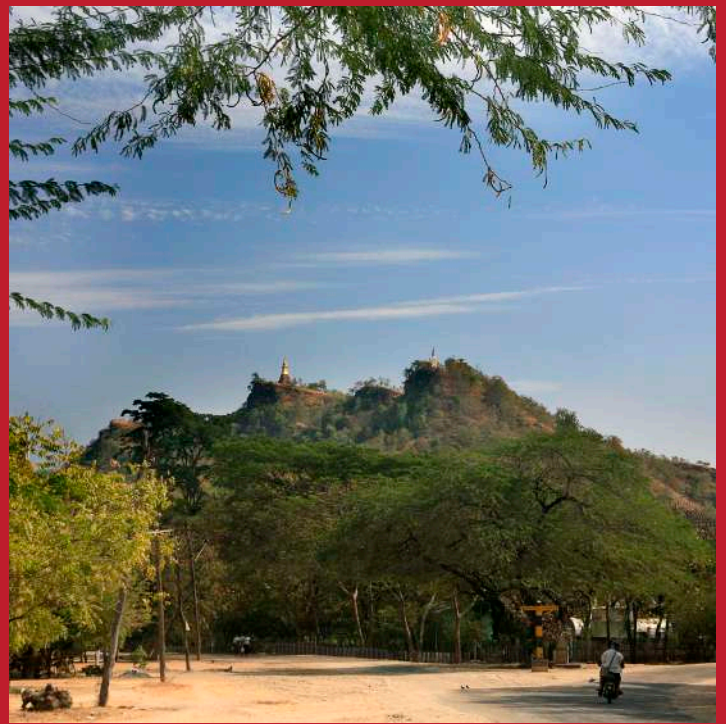


# ENVIRONS

**A myriad of authentic, diverse attractions are within easy reach**

Central Myanmar is an intriguing place. Apart from the spectacular sights of ancient religious monuments in Bagan, there are many additional scenic and cultural attractions in and around the ancient city that can be done as day trips or even overnight stays, should you wish.

Avid golfers who like to do a round in unusual and historic places will delight in Bagan's 18-hole course, set against an impressive backdrop of pagodas, plains and the river. To pack a little diversity in your Bagan trip you can always visit Mount Popa, an oasis in the arid region in central Myanmar, go to Salay, Nga Tha York or Zee Oo villages for local products and bubolic life.



## Mount Popa

A 1,500m-high, extinct volcano just 60km southeast of Bagan, Mount Popa has great importance to those who believe in the 37 Nats, ancient Burmese animist spirits. Perched dramatically atop a huge rocky outcrop of its slopes there is also the sacred Popa Taungkalat Monastery. To reach the summit of this solitary mountain and fully enjoy the amazing views of this designated nature reserve and national park, you need to climb the 777 steps which are populated with monkeys.

## Salay Town

A colourful old religious centre about a 1.5-hr drive south of Bagan, Salay long ago developed its own unique style of Bagan-era architecture. While exploring you can learn more about this and about monastic life. Of the numerous ancient monasteries, a highlight to any trip to Salay is Yoke Sone Monastery which is a cultural heritage site located on the eastern bank of the Ayeyarwady River. It is worth visiting for its exceptional 18th century spectacular woodcarving works. Salay is also famous for its cultivation of plums which are sold all over Myanmar.



## Cottage Industry Villages

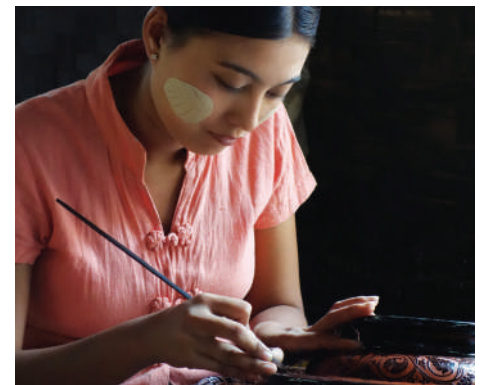
A number of villages close to Bagan continue to foster cottage industries through traditional practices. One such place is Zee O Village, famous locally for its enormous, 1,000-year old tamarind tree. Here you can see palm sugar production and local methods of making peanut and sesame seed oils. Witness cow rotating a mortar and pestle to extract the oils in a traditional manner. On the other hand, Nga Tha York Village is renowned for its wooden sandals, earthenware pottery and soya bean paste production.

# TRADITIONS

## Experience authenticity with handicrafts and festivities celebrated throughout the generations

Numerous traditions have been preserved in Bagan and its surrounding villages, including handicrafts such as beautiful lacquerware, basket weaving, sand art painting, woodcarving and bronze wares. If you cannot make it to a workshop to witness these items being made, be sure to browse some of the stalls around the pagodas for suitable souvenirs and keepsakes. There are also some truly delicious locally produced foodstuffs such as jaggery, toddy, tamarind flakes, plum jams and bean paste.

Enjoying the atmosphere of a pagoda festival in Bagan can be the best time to witness Buddhist rituals and experience the social gatherings of local people. The month long, sanctified festival for Ananda Temple usually falls in January, whereas the one for Manuha Pagoda is held in September or October. Another famous event in Bagan, Alo-Daw Pyae Pagoda Festival, occurs in December. In April the whole country enjoys the water festival, Thingyan, and in the dry zone Bagan is no exception.



## Myanmar with its cities and neighbouring countries

**Destination:** Bagan in Mandalay Region

**Destination Climate:** Mild - no rainy season as in a dry zone

**Region Borders:** Sagaing Region, Magway Region & Shan State

**Region Size:** 37,024 sq km / 14,295 sq miles

**Region Capital:** Mandalay

**Region Population:** 6.1 million (2014)

**Destination Lineage:** Myanmar

**Destination Languages:** Myanmar/Burmese & English

**Destination Religions:** Buddhism, Christianity, Islam & Hinduism

**How To Get There:** Bagan is a key tourist destinations in Mandalay Region with over 2,000 ancient pagodas and temples. You can visit Bagan all year round as there is no actual rainy season like in the lower parts of Myanmar. With more than 1,500 years of history, beautiful local art, such as lacquer ware, basket and cloth weaving, it is the most fascinating place for travellers. Many tourists arrive at Nyaung U airport but it is also possible to reach Bagan by road or on one of the river cruises.





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