

# myanmar

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INLAY



Ministry of Hotels & Tourism  
Office No.33 | Nay Pyi Taw  
+95 (0)67 4061 30  
+95 (0)67 4064 54  
[mohmail@gmail.com](mailto:mohmail@gmail.com)



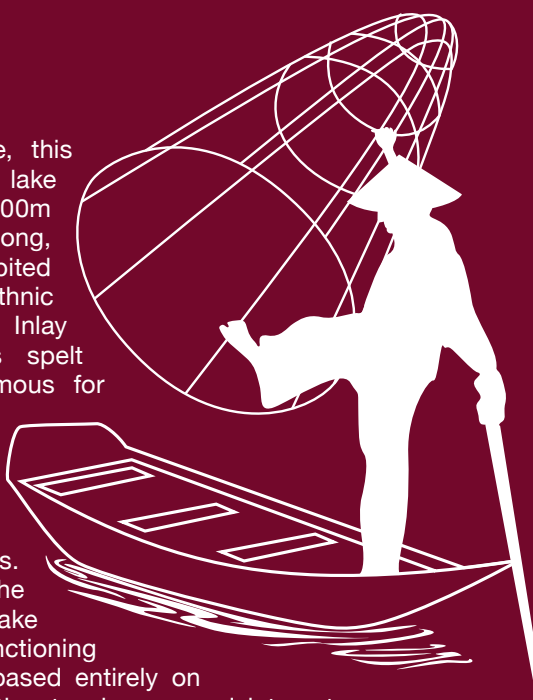
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# HIGHLIGHTS

**Where ethnic and natural biodiversity exist in abundance**

## On the Lake

Located in Shan State, this beautiful highland lake is based at about 900m above sea level, 22km long, 10km across, and inhabited by many different ethnic nationals of the area. Inlay Lake (also sometimes spelt Innlay and Inle) is famous for the unique way of life of the local tribes, for their villages on stilts, floating gardens, fresh produce markets and well-preserved traditions. In many places the authentic life on the lake shines through. Functioning communities - largely based entirely on the water - are fascinating to observe and interact with. Every experience of Inlay will leave an indelible mark on your soul.



## Environs

The lake itself is dotted with many interesting villages and sights worth visiting but there is even more to explore in the surrounding areas. Nyaung Shwe, a tourist hub for visiting both Inlay Lake and Inlay Lake Wetland Sanctuary, also serves as a marina for the numerous long boats ferrying visitors into the lake. Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State, is a cultural melting pot with vineyards nearby offering views of the picturesque Aythaya Valley. Ramblers will delight in Kalaw, a colonial hill station, also known as Myanmar's trekking mecca. For cave lovers there is Pindaya (45km from Kalaw) and Hten San Cave (42km from Taunggyi).

## Traditions

Rich in ethnic customs and rituals, the tribes inhabiting the lake have preserved much of their traditional existence. Many of them have a self-sufficient way of life, farming the floating gardens on the lake and fishing using long-established methods. The lake is well known for its locally produced woven textiles especially lotus, and hand-rolled cheroot cigars. It is also home to plenty of craftsmen who produce handicrafts in time-honoured traditions such as silver wares, bronze wares and wooden sculptures. The same is true of the surrounding villages where, for example, naturally beautiful, handmade Shan paper decorated with fresh flowers.





# WELCOME TO INLAY

## Experience an authentic way of life like no other

Ethnic groups like the Intha and the Pa-O make up the colourful social and cultural fabric of spectacular Inlay Lake. Many live in simple wood and woven bamboo stilted houses, earning their living in harmony with nature. Farmers tend to fresh produce in floating gardens; Intha fishermen have become icons and are much photographed by amazed visitors due to their impressive single, leg-rowing techniques and artisans abound from lotus weavers, silversmiths and woodcarvers. The breadth and cultural diversity of Shan State make it a hotspot for ethnic and Buddhist festivities.

Not to be missed is Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda Festival, Inlay Lake's most prominent celebration, when Buddha images from the pagoda are conveyed around 14 lake villages by a royal barge towed by the boats of leg-rowers. Hundreds of boats follow the procession and boat races take place during this 18-day event. Other important festivals are Shan State Day in January, Kaku Pagoda Festival and Pindaya Cave Festival in March, food offering ceremonies in Inthein in October and Taunggyi's stunning Hot Air Balloon Festival in November.







# ON THE LAKE

## Take to the water and explore unexpected treasures

The lake's serenity and spectacular scenery are often so beguiling that visitors may forget how Inlay is home to a plethora of busy communities. An excellent example of a traditional Inlay village is Nampan where you find small enterprises that produce handmade cheroot (traditional local cigars) and the lake's oldest pagoda, Alodaw Pauk, a large gem-encrusted golden shrine.

Vegetables and flowers are cultivated in floating gardens in the villages of Kaylar, Inchan and Zayatgyi. Famous for its floating market, Ywama village also has various handicraft workshops, a monastery and a pagoda. Other villages are worth visiting, many accessible via the lake's narrow canals, sometimes nestled among impressive bamboo groves with small lagoons where children play.





## Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda

This pagoda is one of the holiest sites in Shan State. The shrine itself is huge and features five ancient golden Buddhas. Next to it is the large golden barge, a replica of the one said to have been used by King Alaung Sithu to travel around the country, which makes an annual tour during the Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda Festival to 14 villages around the lake, towed by over 50-long boats, each with around 40 leg-rowers, dancers and music performers.

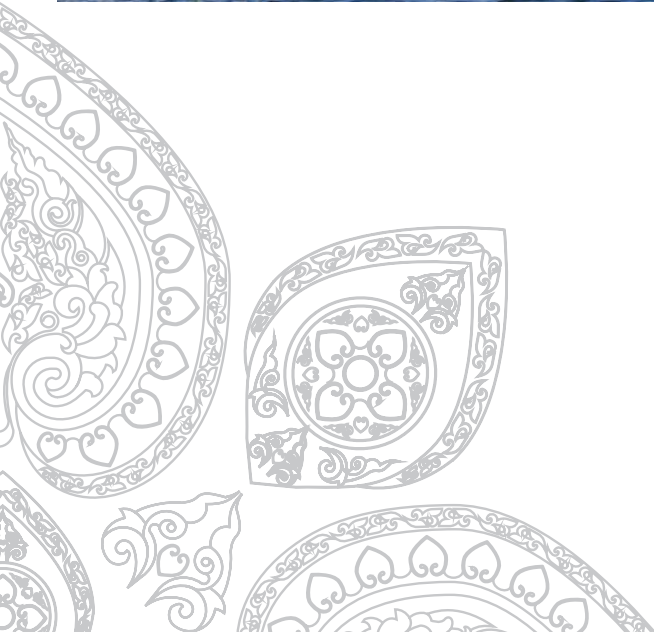
## Inthein

Meaning “shallow lake”, Inthein (also spelt Indein) is some distance from the main circuit of Inlay Lake and can be reached (water level permitting) by boat on a narrow canal to the west of Ywama. It is most famous for atmospheric clusters of hundreds of densely packed stupas and ancient pagodas (some ruined, some restored) waiting to be explored. The village has a vibrant market and wonderful views across the lake can be enjoyed from Shwe Inthein Paya.



## Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

Established in 1995 this wetland sanctuary covers 1,664 sq km in the townships of Nyaung Shwe, Pin Laung and Peh Kon and aims to conserve and protect natural vegetation, wetland birds and freshwater fish. Inlay Lake, though not large, contains over twenty endemic species of snails and nine endemic species of fish that are found nowhere else in the world. In 2015 Inlay Lake became the first site in Myanmar to be added to the UNESCO-backed “World Network of Biosphere Reserves”.



# ENVIRONS

## Travel further afield to sample more of Shan State's pleasures

Beyond Inya Lake lie bustling towns Taunggyi and Nyaung Shwe, and a more tranquil hill station, Kalaw, from where many trek to immerse themselves in nature and local tribal communities. Rural idylls abound in Shan, as do sacred cave systems bedecked with Buddhist icons, for example Pindaya Cave and Hten San Cave.

Worth visiting any time, Kakku is an enchanting place with thousands of closely-packed, tinkling stupas. It is also the impressive setting for Kakku Pagoda Festival in March when the Pa-O people, for whom Kakku is an important centre of worship, pay homage in their finest ethnic attire and by decorating their prize bullocks.





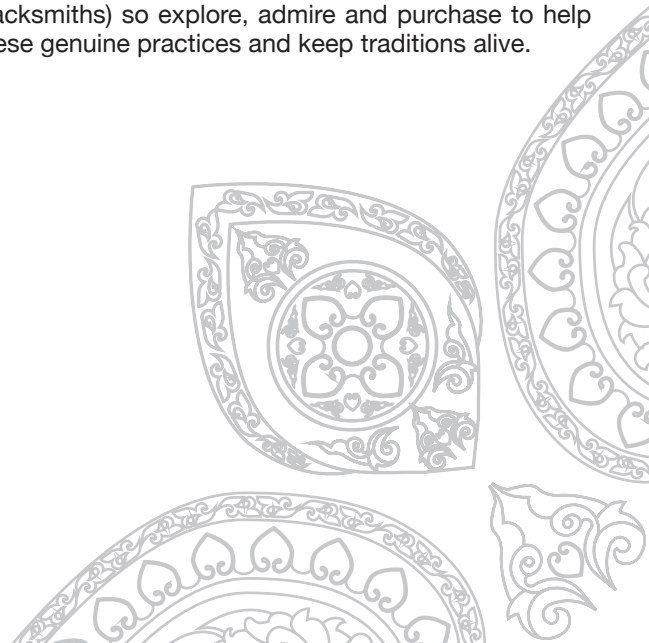


# TRADITIONS

## Embrace a plethora of wonderful customs from a bygone era

No visit to Inlay Lake (or Shan State) is complete without exploring at least a few of its ethnic and tribal customs. There is a wealth of indigenous traditions in the area that have been developed and upheld with great passion. Some like Shan cuisine are found all over the region and even elsewhere in the country. Mostly made from natural, locally-grown produce, be sure to try dishes like Shan khao swe, htamin jin, lahpet, mala hin and myae oh meeshay. Tasting the authentic charm of Inlay Lake is by no means limited to food.

Inlay is a feast for all the senses and perhaps the most memorable sight is watching Inthar fishermen single-foot paddling and retrieving their catches in their conical nets. Taking home a souvenir or two from this unique place is a must. Certain villages on and around Inlay Lake specialise in particular handicrafts such as Phaw Kone Village (silk and lotus weaving), Kyaut Taing (pottery), Ywa-ma (gold and silver wares), Se-khong (blacksmiths) so explore, admire and purchase to help sustain these genuine practices and keep traditions alive.







## Myanmar with its cities and neighbouring countries

**Destination:** Inlay Lake & the environs in Shan State

**Destination Climate:** Mild - generally warm with cooler evenings

**Region Borders:** Kayah State, Kayin State, Mandalay Region, Sagaing Region, Kachin State, China, Laos & Thailand

**Region Size:** 155,800 sq km / 60,155 sq miles

**Region Capital:** Taunggyi

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

**Destination Lineage:** Shan, Bamar, Han-Chinese, Wa, Lisu, Danu, Intha, Lahu, Ta'ang, Pa-O, Taungyo, Indians & Gurkha

**Destination Languages:** Intha, Myanmar/Burmese & limited English

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

**How To Get There:** Inlay Lake (also known as Inle Lake) is a scenic highland lake in Shan State. It is easily accessible by plane from Yangon, Bagan or Mandalay to Heho airport. From there it is a 35km journey by road to Nyaung Shwe, the main "marina" for pick-up by boat. The Shan capital Taunggyi is accessible by either road or rail from where you then proceed to Nyaung Shwe. Typically, a motorised boat is the best way to explore the lake. The traditional non-motorised one-legged rowing canoe is also enjoyable.





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