



Fact Sheet

Destination Myanmar

Population:	47.4 million
Language:	Burmese
Time:	GMT/UTC + 6.5
Electricity:	230V, 50Hz
Dialing Code:	95
Currency:	Kyat = 100 pyas

General

The Union of Myanmar (previously known as Burma) has borders with Thailand, Laos, China, India and Bangladesh. The capital of Yangon was originally named Rangoon. It has lush and beautiful coastlines on the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Myanmar has three seasons, the cool, dry winter from November to February; the unpleasant hot summer from March to May; and the wet, humid monsoon from May to October. Temperatures average 30°C during the day, dropping slightly at night. During the cool season, temperatures may range from between 25°C and 15°C. Coastal areas are usually cooler, but humid.

History

Myanmar was originally inhabited with groups from present-day India, the Mons from Cambodia, the Mongol Burmans from the east and Thai tribes from northern Thailand. The Tartar invasion led by Kublai Khan in 1287 resulted in chaos until the mid-16th century when the Thai were defeated. In the 18th century, the country was once again in turmoil as the Mons and hill tribes established their own kingdoms. The British first invaded Burma in 1824, and then again in 1852 and 1883. Burma became a part of British India and a major rice exporter. Indians and Chinese arrived with the British to complicate the racial mix. Myanmar's more recent history has seen civil war and a junta leadership causing poverty and hardship to its citizens.

Visa Requirements

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the traveller. The visa requirements vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. We keep the following information as up to date as possible, but rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself.

Visa approvals for entry into Myanmar can be extremely difficult with a number of documents to be supplied to the Embassy. This can take some time and we suggest that you allow at least 4 - 8 weeks for processing. We advise you to visit the official site at: www.myanmarembassy Canberra.com/visainformation/visainformation.htm or the Myanmar embassy web site in your home country. You should also be aware that visas are issued for a maximum of 28 days only.

Please ensure that your passport has at least a further 6 months validity and spare pages for any visa stamps.

Travel Insurance

It is mandatory for you to organise travel insurance prior to your departure and we will ask for details of your insurer and the emergency contact details before you leave home.

Health and Medical

We strongly recommend inoculation for cholera, polio, tetanus and typhoid. We strongly advise you to consult your own medical practitioner for specific personal advice. Bottled water only should be consumed. Medical services are not well developed, however there is an SOS International Health Centre in Yangon. You should carry prescriptions of any medications you may need, making sure you have the generic name as your specific brand may not be available. If you wear glasses, bring a spare pair and a copy of the prescription as well.

Safety and Security

The people in Myanmar are extremely gentle, friendly and polite and for us as tourists, it is a very safe country. Crime of any sort is extremely uncommon, however, like anywhere else you need to be aware of your surroundings and ensure the safety of your personal belongings. We strongly advise against engaging the local people in discussions about the politics of Myanmar – this can be detrimental to them!

Telecommunications

There are currently no global roaming agreements with Myanmar and therefore your Australian mobile will not connect. If you are coming from another country you should check your local provider's roaming agreement. Further, it is not advisable to take your mobile into Myanmar as it may be confiscated as an illegal import. If you need mobile connection, you are able to purchase a mobile phone on arrival. Email devices such as Blackberry also will not be successful. Some of the larger hotels have internet access and there are a few scattered internet cafes in the larger cities. However, please be aware that internet sites may be monitored and censored.

Useful Travel Information

Currency: We advise bringing only \$US cash into Myanmar in small denominations. Notes must be in good condition. Torn bills are virtually impossible to change, and the same sometimes applies to notes which have been written on, or otherwise marked, or even repeatedly folded. Travelers checks are not accepted. There are no ATM's available for cash withdrawal. You should ensure that you have enough funds for the time you spend in Myanmar.

Credit Cards: Only a few of the major hotels and a few restaurants will accept credit cards.

Religion and Culture

Over 80 % of Myanmar are Buddhists. Its culture is a blend of both Chinese and Indian with many ancient beliefs. Buddhism has great influence on daily life of the Myanmar. The people have preserved the tradition of close family ties, respect for elders, reverence for Buddhism and the simplicity of every day life. The Myanmar are known for their gentle nature, simple hospitality and open friendliness.

Respect must be given to the culture and we therefore respectfully request that Ladies not wear shorts or bra-less T-shirts. As we visit many temples and pagodas you should ensure that you are modestly dressed in order to gain entrance and not offend the locals or the monks. It is also useful to wear sandals or backless shoes that can be easily slipped off at the entrance.

Electrical

Electricity supply is 220v and sockets are mostly of the European two pronged variety, although some places have English style plugs. We suggest you bring a universal adaptor.



European circular plug with two metal pins



British plug with two flat blades and flat grounding blade

Alcohol

Alcohol is frowned upon by conservative Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims, but consumed widely, mostly among men. Myanmar Beer (lager) is most popular in the country. Toddy juice (ta-YEI) from central Myanmar is made from fermented palm sugar. It is also possible to buy full strength Beer Chang imported from Thailand. The hotels have bars serving a variety of wine, beer and cocktails.

Cuisine

Meals are usually a mixture of rice with two or three kinds of curry, sauces and green salad. As in other Asian cultures, the custom is to eat with the thumb, forefinger and middle finger of your right hand, up to the first joints. The clean left hand is used for handling serving spoons. Spoons and forks, will be provided for foreign tourists. In all city quarters where tourists gather, you will encounter eateries offering a good selection of Myanmar, Chinese, Indian, Thai and European cuisine. We caution against eating at the small roadside food stalls due to hygiene concerns.

What To Bring



Important Items to Include:

- New, clean USA\$ for exchange – remember you will need some smaller notes for tips
- Your passport
- Travel Insurance Policy
- Copies of your documentation e.g. passport, credit cards etc
- Sunscreen
- Camera (a large zoom can be valuable addition)
- Wide brim hat
- Torch/Pen light
- Waterproof jacket
- Binoculars
- Insect repellent
- Waterproof shoes/sandals
- Comfortable well worn sturdy shoes
- Luggage locks
- Medicines and prescriptions
- Glasses, sunglasses and items of a personal nature
- Swimmers
- First aid kit

Things to Consider

- Pack light - Leave empty space in your suitcase to buy souvenirs.
- Leave your mobile phone at home as it won't work in Myanmar
- Your email device will also not work

Notes

- Check your airline's policy on luggage allowance and what is allowable in the cabin and what must go into your hold baggage. Many airlines will not allow duty free over the amount of 100 ml on board so check this before stocking up.
- Ladies should be aware that not all feminine hygiene products may be available and are advised to bring a supply with them.
- Travelling with a group will provide you with the pleasure of new friendships and perhaps some frustrations. Your fellow travellers may be from around the world, differing cultures and likely a range of age groups. We ask you to be understanding and patient with your fellow travellers for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting.

