



Yangon to Bangkok by road, river & rail

Myanmar and Thailand



DAY 1 Arrival Yangon

On arrival in Yangon you will be met by a representative of Goddard & Howse and transferred to your hotel. This evening there will be a welcome dinner and holiday briefing hosted by your tour director. **Accommodation: The Chatrium Hotel**

DAY 2 Yangon

We commence our travels in Myanmar with a leisurely walk on the boardwalk of Kandawgyi Lake located adjacent to our hotel. This man-made lake offers views of the Shwedagon Pagoda and the former British sailing club. There are tea and coffee houses where local people take a break to enjoy the calm atmosphere and shady surroundings. We meet our bus and drive to the Yangon Central Railway station originally built in 1877 then destroyed during WWII and rebuilt in Burmese style in 1954. We board the commuter train that circles the city connecting the Yangon metropolitan area and suburbs. We will spend approximately one hour on the train as it trundles along at a gentle pace, always busy with local people, a colourful and interesting way to begin our exploration of Yangon. This afternoon we will walk amongst the colonial past of Yangon known as 'the garden city of the East' during the British time; the city was laid out in 1852 on a grid plan over delta land. Yangon has the highest number of colonial period buildings in South-East Asia and our easy walk will commence on Pansodan St where the former high court, banks, customs offices and post office are located.

Accommodation: The Chatrium

DAY 3 Bago and Golden Rock

This morning we depart Yangon for Bago the ancient capital of the Mon people, and on to Kyaiktiyo to visit Golden Rock. Our drive takes us in a north-easterly direction, and along the way we will visit the Commonwealth war graves site at Taukkyan. Burma was a mostly forgotten theatre of conflict in WWII. In a series of retreats and advances from 1941 to 1945 the Allies sustained thousands of casualties in battles that ultimately played a crucial role in the defeat of the invading Japanese. Mon State originally encompassed all of lower Burma, and at various times fell to the control of the Burmese courts of Bagan and Ava. Periods of independence punctuate the chequered history of this state, however, remnants remain of an ancient time. We visit the thousand year old Shwemawdaw Pagoda and the four seated Buddha images at Kyaikpun Pagoda believed to have been constructed in the 7th century. We continue to Kyaiktiyo and one of Myanmar's most famous landmarks, the 'Golden Rock Pagoda' - famous for both its religious significance as much as its precarious position balancing on the edge of a cliff. To reach the pagoda we must transfer to a smaller vehicle and take the winding road some eleven kilometres up to close to the summit. From here we continue by foot to the Golden Rock in time to view the sunset. **Accommodation: Mountain Top Resort**



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Area with horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

DAY 4 Mawlamyaing

Our accommodation is high on the mountain, so for those early starters you are sure to be greeted by a spectacular sunrise and a chance to see pilgrims making offerings. We descend to the base camp and continue our journey to Mawlamyaing, the first capital of British-held Burma from 1826 to 1852. The road journey is around five hours and we will make stops along the way, including the picturesque town of Thaton. The countryside is broad and flat with rice fields as far as the eye can see. Set on the delta of Myanmar's other great river, the Salween, Mawlamyaing is the main gateway to the south-east. The city boasted a large Anglo-Burmese population during colonial times, who planted rubber and established mills to process teak. These days Mawlamyaing is known for its tropical fruits and the Kyaikthanlan Pagoda, made famous by Rudyard Kipling in his poem Mandalay. We arrive at the Salween River and cross by local ferry to the town itself and check into our hotel for the evening. **Accommodation: The Strand Hotel**



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DAY 5 Mawlamyaing

Today we have an opportunity to explore Mawlamyaing's colonial history, the bustling Zyegyi markets and some beautiful pagodas. Our morning will be spent by foot and coach with visits to the Judson Baptist Church, built in 1827 by Dr A Judson, notable as the first European to translate the bible into Burmese. We continue to the Holy Family Cathedral also built in the colonial era with a striking interior rarely seen by foreign visitors. We travel by coach to the village of U Nar Ouk named after a local entrepreneur from 100 years before who gained recognition for his wealth and generosity. His donations allowed the construction of Kawnat Pagoda with magnificent wood carvings and decorations. During the colonial time he also ran a ferry company that fell into competition with the famed Irrawaddy Flotilla Company. A price war ensued that resulted in free ferry travel for all locals. This afternoon we will visit Kyaikthanlan Pagoda, or 'Kipling's Pagoda', with magnificent views of the Salween River delta. Here we can dwell 'by the old Moulmein pagoda looking lazy at the sea'.

Accommodation: The Strand Hotel

DAY 6 Thanbyuzayat and Set Se

Our journey continues in a southerly direction edging into stands of rubber trees, with mountains rising to the west and the Andaman Sea on our east. Our destination is Set Se located by the ocean with a sprawling sand beach and little habitation other than a local village. Along the way we will visit the small town of Thanbyuzayat. It was here in 1941 that the infamous 'death railway', or Japanese Thai-Burma Railway, began its construction (on the Burmese side) travelling 120 kilometres to the Thai border at Three Pagodas Pass, where it joined with construction teams working from Kanchanaburi in Thailand. The 'death railway' as it became known was constructed by the Japanese military from June 1942 to October 1943 using forced labour of Allied POWs and a local indigenous workforce of more than 150,000. Amongst the Allies were 13,000 Australians, of which 2802 perished from starvation, disease and brutality. There is little left of the original track on the Burmese side other than a stretch of 100 metres or so, and an old Japanese locomotive. In the Commonwealth war cemetery in Thanbyuzayat we will find the headstones of 1335 Australians who perished either in the construction of the railway or resisting the Japanese. The cemetery is located in beautiful grounds and provides a moving memory to their sacrifice. We continue to our hotel for the evening.

Accommodation: Paradise Hotel Setse Beach

DAY 7 Dawei

This morning we leave for the coastal town of Dawei, a drive of almost eight hours on a sometimes bumpy road that is mostly unsealed and in various states of construction. The remoteness of our travels is evident; very few foreigners have ventured into this part of Myanmar. To our left the mountains are more prominent, separating the Mon State with Tanintharyi State, dotted with the spires of pagodas and monasteries painted gold and white. We will stop at the small town of Ye, after which there is little or no habitation for most of our road journey to Dawei. This day on the road is never dull and our reward at the end of a dusty trail is the delightful town of Dawei. Located at the mouth of the Dawei River the town has a history dating to the 13th century when it was established under the court of Pagan (1287-1564). Here we will find a bustling streetscape featuring buildings with layered rooves of teak wood constructed in Mon and Burmese architectural styles. We check into our hotel. **Accommodation: Zayar Htet San Hotel**



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DAY 8 Dawei

The surrounds of Dawei are complimented by coconut and beetle nut palms, giving the city a tropical feel. We begin our sightseeing by local tuk tuk to visit the market and see some of the many handicraft industries that thrive in this town. We board our local Myanmar long tail boat for a leisurely trip on the river observing riverbank communities and an array of wildlife. There will be some free time this afternoon to explore the local streets and engage with the charming people of this area.

Accommodation: Zayar Htet San Hotel

DAY 9 Dawei and Kanchanaburi

Our destination today is Thailand and the city of Kanchanaburi. As the crow flies, Dawei is just 150 kilometres from the Thai border, an area largely uninhabited, however, in the past it was a flashpoint of conflict between the ethnic Kayin group and the Burmese. We follow a newly constructed dirt road that forges jungles, edges along rivers and crosses mountain peaks. The drive is unforgettable and a rare chance to travel in a remote part of Myanmar. The journey to the border crossing at Htee Khee should take around five hours. Along the way we will have plenty of opportunities to stop and take photographs. After completing border formalities we step into Thailand and an entirely different world. We say farewell to our Burmese friends and meet our Thai guide and driver to continue our journey to Kanchanaburi, a driving time of two hours. Immediately the road is sealed and modern, the countryside opening up to valleys of agriculture, western style road signs and advertising for local business and products. The difference between our early experiences in Myanmar could not be more profound. We reach our hotel and settle in for the night. **Accommodation: Dheva Mantra Resort and Spa, Kanchanaburi**

DAY 10 RV River Kwai

A leisurely start to our journey this morning with time to wander around the gardens of our hotel and enjoy the facilities before we head for Hellfire Pass. This notorious section of the 'death railway' was the largest rock cutting undertaken, and gained its nickname 'Hellfire' at the sight of exhausted prisoners labouring through the night in shifts the Japanese called 'speedo'. The work area was illuminated by oil lamps and torches and many were to lose their lives here in unbearable working conditions. Hellfire Pass is supported by the Australian Government and also by individuals who survived the death railway. In tandem they have created a memorial to all who suffered and perished, in the hope that future generations will learn and never allow a repeat of such inhumane behaviour. We will take an extended visit along the well-maintained walking paths into the cutting and see remnants of the rail line. We return towards Kanchanaburi and the mooring point of our river boat at Daowa Dung Bridge. Here we meet our cruise ship the RV River Kwai, our home for the next three nights, and cruise down the Kwai Noi River (we call it the River Kwai) to our anchorage for the evening at Sai Yok Yai falls.

Accommodation: RV River Kwai

DAY 11 RV River Kwai

The RV River Kwai is the first inland cruise ship to operate in Thailand. Built in colonial style similar to that of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in Burma, she has just ten well-appointed teak wood cabins with private facilities. The dining area and lounge are located on the upper deck shaded by a canvas awning with uninterrupted views of the river from all sides. After cruising this morning our activities commence with a visit to a local school nestled by the bank of the river. This school is under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Sirindhom and was established to care for and improve the lives of refugee children, mainly of Mon or Kayin nationality. From here we travel by coach to visit Hin Dad hot spring which was accidentally discovered by Japanese soldiers during the construction of the 'death railway'. This natural hot spring features two large pools and is thought by the local people to cure many ailments, including berri berri and arthritis. Our excursion continues to Pha Tad waterfall considered to be the most beautiful falls in Kanchanaburi province. We return to the RV River Kwai for lunch and an afternoon of cruising and relaxation. Traditional Thai massage is available on board, and this evening the entertainment will be provided by a local Mon dancing and singing troop.

Accommodation: On board RV River Kwai

DAY 12 RV River Kwai

A leisurely breakfast this morning and an optional excursion to visit the elephant training village by the riverside. Elephants have always been an important part of Thai culture, not just for their expertise in working teak forests but also as religious vehicles for Buddha images and royal banners. If you wish, you can take an elephant ride for one hour through the jungle by the banks of the river. Otherwise relax on board. After lunch we will visit (by coach) Tham Krasae and travel on the original Thai- Burma railway line to the station of Tha Kilen. The one hour trip traverses a spectacular wooden viaduct constructed by the Allied prisoners and considered to be an 'engineering impossibility' as it hugs a cliff-face for 400 metres along the River Kwai. Despite predictions, it took the prisoners just seventeen days to complete. Here in the far south-west of Thailand we also find remnants of Khmer influence from the Angkor period some 800 years before. The extensive ruins of Prasat Muang Singh Temple are a great discovery, and indicate how extensive the Khmer empire was in its heyday from the late 10th century until its collapse in the 14th century. The temple is thought to be a trading point or military outpost. We return to our river boat. **Accommodation: On Board RV River Kwai**

DAY 13 Bangkok

Our boat travels downstream towards Wat Tham Khaopoon where we disembark and say farewell to our crew on the RV River Kwai. Our destination today is Bangkok, a drive of approximately three hours. To complete our journey we will visit the Bridge on the River Kwai, made famous by a Hollywood movie in 1957. The story was loosely based on the Thai-Burma Railway. Historical consensus suggests that the Thai-Burma Railway line was a failed concept from the beginning. Coming at enormous cost in human life the line was barely used as the Allied forces gained momentum in South-East Asia after 1944 and bombed the line regularly. The bridge has been rebuilt and remains a testament to the courage and endurance of those who lived and died during its construction. We arrive at our hotel this afternoon and this evening we will celebrate our journey by road, river and rail from Yangon to Bangkok at our farewell dinner.

Accommodation: Pathumwan Princess Hotel

DAY 14 Home

Continue your travels or return home.



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