

# MOMENTS

on the road

A Burmese Journey -  
From the Shan Hills to the Bay of Bengal  
(9 or 12 Days)





## ON THE ROAD EXPERIENCES

BACK ROADS | HIDDEN GEMS

We love road journeys. They are by far our favourite way of traveling. We think the world of western China and the countries that border on this region – think Vietnam, Lao, Thailand, Myanmar, for example.

*On the Road Experiences* is all about sharing with like-minded travelers just how beautiful a road journey in these varied lands can be. Now turn the page to find out what we've come to love so much...



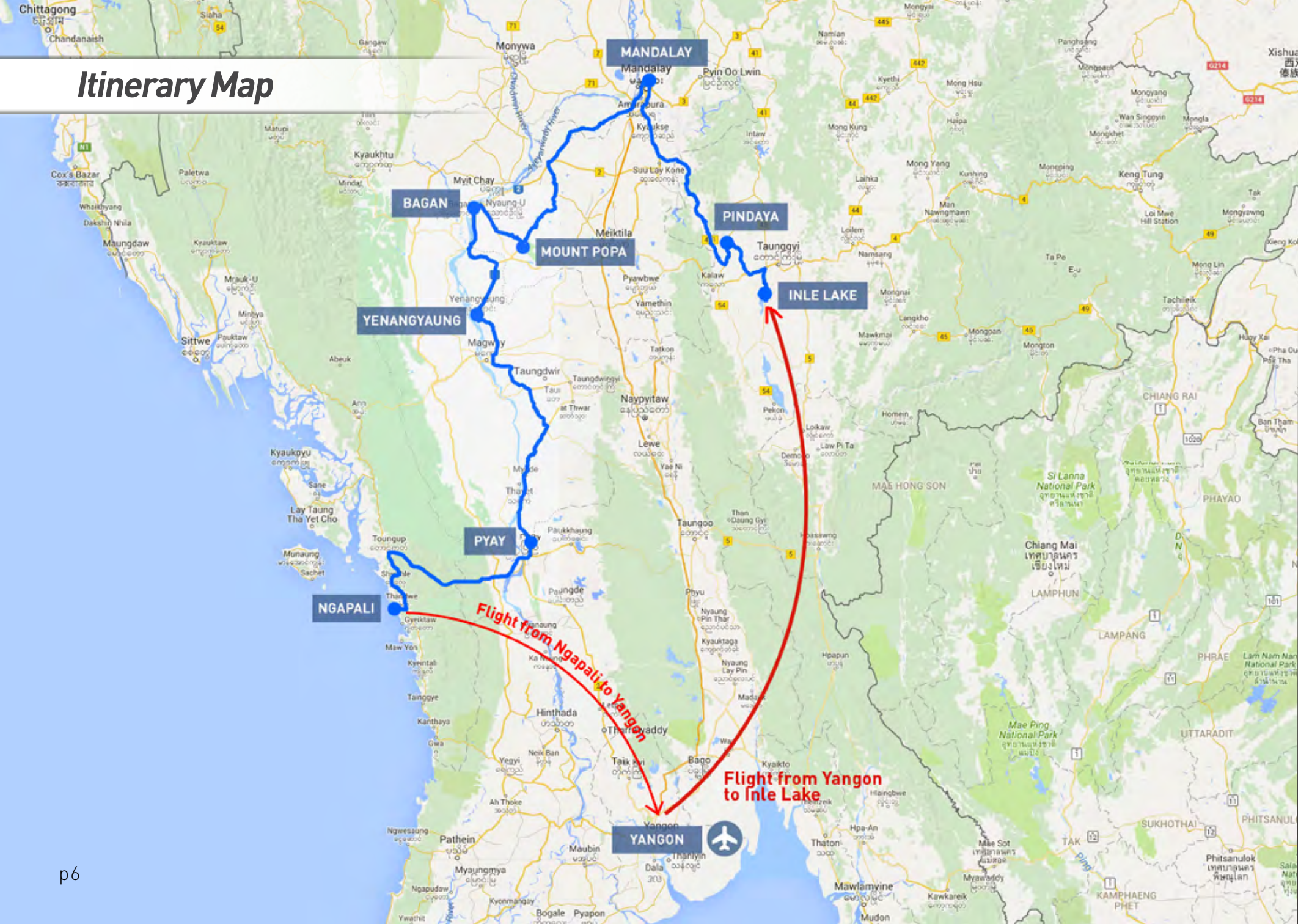




# Table of contents

Itinerary Map ...where you will travel...	p. 006
Yes, it is possible...	p. 008
Journey of Discovery...	p. 010
Day-by-day...	p. 062
<hr/>	
In closing...	
Any car you like, so long as it is an SUV...	p. 081
Adventures and discoveries in local cuisines	p. 082
What's included/Best Months to Go...	p. 084
Photo credits	p. 087





## Itinerary Map

## Day-by-Day

Day1

Yangon to Inle Lake – Arrive in Yangon and fly to Inle Lake

Day2

In and around Inle Lake – Float across the serene waters of Inle Lake and discover the Intha people's unique way of life

Day3

Inle Lake to Pindaya – Travel to the pleasant lakeside town of Pindaya and visit Shwe Oo Min Natural Cave Pagoda

Day4

Pindaya to Mandalay – Leave the Shan Plateau behind as you approach Mandalay, Burma's last royal capital

Day5

In and around Mandalay – Explore the many sights of Mandalay; climb Mandalay Hill and chat to the monks there, while watching sunset over the city

Day6

Mandalay to Mount Popa – Overtake ox carts and drive past small villages to the most important Nat pilgrimage site in Burma

Day7

Mount Popa to Bagan – Visit a local village and learn how to make thanaka on the way to Bagan

Day8

In and around Bagan – Start with a stroll through the colourful local market and continue with visits to the most significant temples of Bagan

Day9

Time to say goodbye – Fly to Yangon and continue your journey home... or continue on the road with us:

Bagan to Yenanyaung – Along the Irrawaddy to colonial Salay and sleepy Yenanyaung

Day10

Magwe to Pyay – A beautiful drive through rural scenery – past ox carts and cotton plantations

Day11

Pyay to Ngapali – Travel on winding roads across the Rakhine mountain range

Day12

Ngapali – Back to real life? Or linger here awhile longer?



## Yes, it is possible...

A driving holiday in this part of the world is indeed possible. We take care of everything. All you need to do is come, drive and enjoy a rare adventure!

A Burmese Journey - From the Shan Hills to Bagan (9 days) or all the way to the Bay of Bengal (12 days) is a discovery of the Golden Land's beautiful scenery and traditions. This spectacular itinerary will take you from Yangon to the Shan mountains to Inle Lake, where you will witness the famous leg-rowing technique of the lake's fishermen. From rural Pindaya you will enter the plains of the Mandalay Division, the pilgrimage site of Mount Popa and the magical temple-strewn landscape of Bagan. Here you can either end the journey or continue with us on remote country roads along the east bank of the Irrawaddy to Yenanyaung – the police might follow you, as not many foreigners have been seen here! After Pyay, an important trading centre during the Bagan era you'll finish your drive though the Rakhine mountains and then unwind on the beach at Ngapali, looking out at the Bay of Bengal, where long, tranquil stretches of white sandy beaches and azure waters await.

*Join this spectacular journey and discover a country, which has kept its traditions and welcomes you every day with something different.*

On the Road Experiences has paved the way for you to cross borders in your own properly insured SUV, so that you can enjoy the romance of a classic overland journey without any of the logistical headaches that typically accompany such journeys...





# Journey of discovery





“VIEW  
from your hotel...”



“ In addition to FISHING,  
the Intha people GROW  
vegetables and fruit in large  
gardens that FLOAT on the  
surface of the lake...”





“PA-OH people  
WASHING their  
cloths at the  
lake...”

Typical village life at Inle Lake



“The villages of the INTHA people across the lake are wooden houses BUILT HIGH on STILTS...”

Typical stilt house at Inle Lake





“ FARMING  
is the main income for  
most villagers...”





“BURMESE MARIONETTES  
are all string operated and  
are a POPULAR ART  
in Burma...”



“COWS are a  
COMMON SIGHT  
on Burma's roads...”


On the way to Pindaya



“The idyllic town of  
PINDAYA is situated at  
Pone Taloke Lake...”

The small town of Pindaya





“This massive limestone  
CAVERN is filled with  
OVER 8,000 gilded  
BUDDHA STATUES...”

Shwe Oo Min Natural Cave Pagoda, Pindaya





“MONK feeding is A COMMON sight...”

Monks rely on offerings from locals



“A BEAUTIFUL  
1.2km structure  
built from  
TEAK PLANKS...”





“MONKS come in  
all SHAPES and  
SIZES...”






“ OXCARTS are used to carry PASSENGERS, BUNDLES OF HAY, BAMBOO CANES and more...”



“Young PRINCES  
before TASTING the  
lives of MONKS...”

The novitiation ceremony is one of the most important events in a Buddhist's life in Burma





“An **EXTINCT VOLCANO**  
regarded as Myanmar’s  
**Mount Olympus**, in which **SPRITS**  
called **NATS** reside...”

The famous Popa Taungkalat monastery



“TEMPLES and  
PAGODAS wherever  
you LOOK...it takes your  
BREATH AWAY...”

Bagan in central Burma is one of the world's greatest archeological sites



“WATER plays an  
IMPORTANT ROLE  
in peoples life...”



“The BEST PLACE  
to overlook the  
IRRAWADDY...”





“A GIANT seated Buddha,  
sits eye-to-eye with the  
Shwesandaw Paya and  
WATCHING over it...”



“NARROW LANES...  
across the RAKHINE  
mountain range...”





“HAPPY children  
welcome you at their  
SCHOOL ...”



“FERTILE  
PLAINS around  
Thandwe...”





“A BEACH  
PARADISE almost  
for yourself...”



“The PERFECT  
location to end the  
JOURNEY...”



“A SUNSET by the  
OCEAN...filled with  
MEMORIES of the  
JOURNEY...”



# Day-by-day





# Day 1

## Arrive in Yangon and fly to Inle Lake

Welcome to Myanmar!

Arrive in Yangon as per your own arrangements, not later than 11am and continue your journey with a flight to Heho, Inle Lake’s airport. If you wish to spend a few days in Yangon before joining our trip we will arrange an airport transfer for you.

In Heho, we will meet you at the airport and take you to your beautiful hotel, sheltered in a peaceful inlet on the eastern shore of Inle Lake, surrounded by the Shan mountains.

After settling into the hotel you can watch sunset over the lake before you can enjoy your first local dinner and meeting your fellow travellers.

### Details

#### Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: NA

Duration: NA

#### Elevation

Highest Daytime: 884m

Overnight: 884m

#### Hotel

Inle Princess Hotel, Inle Lake  
(\*\*\*\*)





## Day 2

### Float across the serene waters of Inle Lake and discover the Intha people's unique way of life

Today you have time to explore Inle Lake by longtail boat. A wonderful watery world of floating gardens, stilt-top villages and crumbling stupas awaits you. We will suggest a route for you and of course will join you on this tour, but if you prefer to go on your own with your own boat and boatman or relax at the hotel you can do so.

Setting out in the early morning, the boatmen will pick us up from the hotel pier. The day will not only include stops to see Inle's famous leg rowers, stilt villages and magnificent scenery but also at the lake's floating gardens. In addition to fishing, locals grow vegetables and fruit in gardens that float on the surface of the lake. The farmers gather

weeds from the deeper parts of the lake and bring them back to make floating flowerbeds anchored by bamboo poles. These gardens rise and fall with changes in the water level, and so are resistant to flooding.

After a delicious, traditional ethnic Inthar lunch in the middle of the lake, we will visit Inthein village on the lake's western shore, where you will find a staircase leading to the hidden Inthein Pagoda complex.

In the evening we return to the hotel for dinner.



## Details

### Driving Distance & Duration

Depending on your chosen activity

### Elevation

Highest Daytime: 850m

Overnight: 850m

### Hotel

Inle Princess Hotel, Inle Lake  
[\*\*\*\*]



Day 3  
Travel to the pleasant  
lakeside town of  
Pindaya and visit  
Shwe Oo Min Natural  
Cave Pagoda

Today’s drive is relatively short, and we will be able to take it slowly in order to enjoy the region’s spectacular scenery and for you to hget used to the driving in Myanmar. Before departing for Pindaya, we will visit a colorful local market in Nyaungshwe, where hill tribes come to sell fruit and vegetables, along with a handful of stalls selling Burmese string puppets.

As we leave Nyaungshwe, we will stop at the charming red-painted Shwe Yan Pyay teak monastery, built in the early 19th century. It provides a home for boys from poor families around the region and provides them with education and meals.

After arriving in Pindaya, a small town of ethnic Danu people in a fertile valley bordered by mountains,

we check into our rustic but charming inn. Then we can take a leisurely walk around Ponetaloke Lake and visit Pindaya Cave. Every nook and cranny in the cave is crammed with Buddha images and statues. The floor of the cave is studded with stalagmites and pagodas, with stalactites hanging from the cave roof.

Tonight’s dinner will be at the charming hotel restaurant.



Details

**Driving Distance & Duration**  
**Distance:** 95 km  
**Duration:** 2-3 hours

**Elevation**  
**Highest Daytime:** 1200m  
**Overnight:** 1200m

**Hotel**  
Pindaya Inle Inn, Pindaya (\*\*\*)

Day 4  
Leave the Shan  
Plateau behind as you  
approach Mandalay,  
Burma’s last royal  
capital

Today’s drive from Pindaya to Mandalay is highly scenic. Multi-colored fields, village live, buffalo cowboys, orange orchards, bullock carts loaded with cabbages and rolling pine-clad hills make it an interesting and pleasurable drive.

As we approach Mandalay the scenery changes and flattens as we emerge onto the plains

of Mandalay Division. After a local lunch in the mountains we will come to the small town of Kyaukse, from here it takes only an hour to drive in to Mandalay.

Mandalay is Burma’s second biggest city with a population of roughly one million and the traffic can be dense. Please be aware of the many motorcycles and drive very slow and careful. After a brief stop at our hotel we will drive to Mandalay Hill to see the sunset over Burma’s last royal capital. Our dinner will be in a small restaurant where we enjoy a mix of Western and Burmese fusion cuisine.



Details

**Driving Distance & Duration**  
**Distance:** 202 km  
**Duration:** 7 hours

**Elevation**  
**Highest Daytime:** 1500m  
**Overnight:** 21m

**Hotel**  
Mandalay Hill Resort (\*\*\*\*\*)



Day 5  
Explore the many  
sights of Mandalay

Today you can explore the many highlights of Mandalay, either heading out on your own (our guides and hosts will be happy to help you plan your day), or joining our programme. We have planned a leisurely breakfast followed by a chauffeured drive to Amarapura, the “City of Immortals”, where we will visit the 150-year old Mahagandayon Monastery and the famous U-Bein bridge. Afterwards it is worth strolling along the different workshops

Mandalay has to offer as it is known as the center for many of Burma’s artisan crafts - working in marble, stone, gold and teak wood or making puppets just to name a few.

End the day in a small restaurant where we enjoy a mix of Western and Burmese fusion cuisine



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Depending on your chosen activity

Elevation  
Highest Daytime: 100m  
Overnight: 21m

Hotel  
Mandalay Hill Resort (\*\*\*\*\*)



Day 6  
Overtake ox carts  
and drive past small  
villages to the most  
important Nat  
pilgrimage site in  
Burma

Today you will enjoy a beautiful drive through the countryside of Mandalay Division. While the landscape is flat, the rural scenery is never boring, with its ox carts and rice fields. It is a leisurely drive and we will enjoy some interesting stops en route.

Our overnight stop, Mount Popa, was formed in the cone of an extinct volcano and is an important center for Burma’s nat worship. This distinctive, steep-sided mountain is considered to be the abode of the 37 nats or spirits.

The hotel we have selected tonight is a beautiful lodge at Mount Popa with a perfect sunset view over Taung Kalat monastery.



Details

Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 200 km  
Duration: 6 hours

Elevation  
Highest Daytime: 1000m  
Overnight: 1000m

Hotel  
Mount Popa Resort (\*\*\*\*)



## Day 7

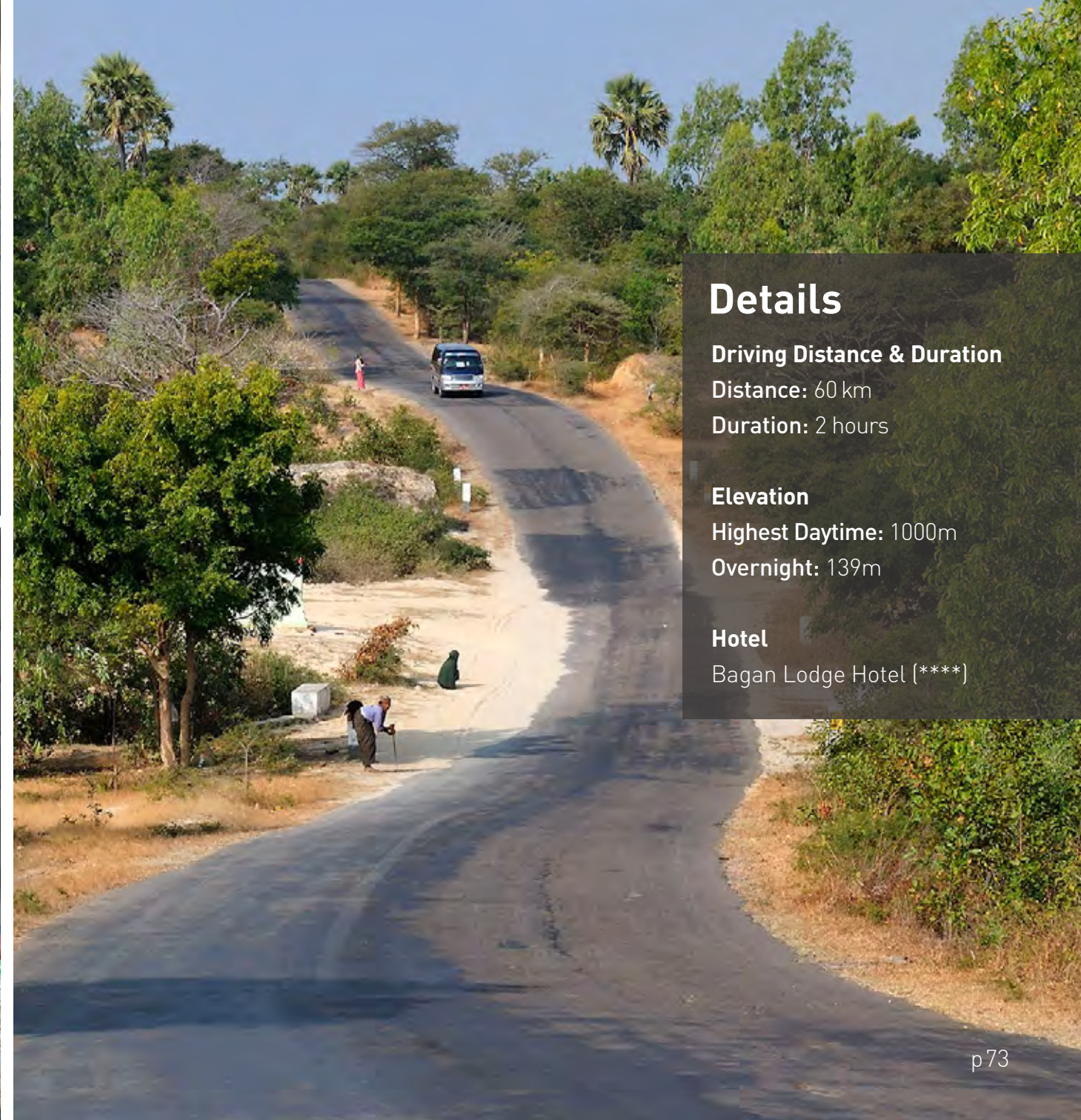
### Visit a local village and learn how to make thanaka on the way to Bagan

For those who would like to start the day with a bit of exercise, it is possible to make the 20-minute walk from the hotel to Taung Kalat Hill and then up the 777 steps to the hilltop monastery. Make sure you don't take your breakfast with you, as you may end up "donating" it to the troops of macaques that live around the monastery.

After the climb our team will pick you up from the bottom of the mountain and we will return to the hotel for breakfast before departing for Bagan. On the way to Bagan we will visit a village, which offers a fascinating glimpse of local life. Shortly before arriving in Bagan we make another stop at a workshop – while this may be touristy it still makes a fun break from the road. Here, we will learn how sesame and peanut oil are made using a

vintage ox-driven press, and how to apply Burmese thanaka paste. From here it is another half hour drive to Bagan.

After checking into our hotel and eating lunch, you can explore a few of the 2,200 temples and pagodas that litter the region. In the early evening we set off to watch the sunset from Bagan's most picturesque spot followed by a nice local dinner.



## Details

### Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 60 km

Duration: 2 hours

### Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1000m

Overnight: 139m

### Hotel

Bagan Lodge Hotel (\*\*\*\*)



## Day 8

### Start with a stroll through the colourful local market and continue with visits to the most significant temples of Bagan

Today we have a whole day to explore Bagan, a vast plain that once sat at the heart of the Kingdom of Pagan, which ruled this region of Burma between the 9th and 13th centuries. At its height, between the 11th and 13th centuries, over ten thousand monasteries, pagodas and temples thrived in the devoutly Buddhist kingdom.

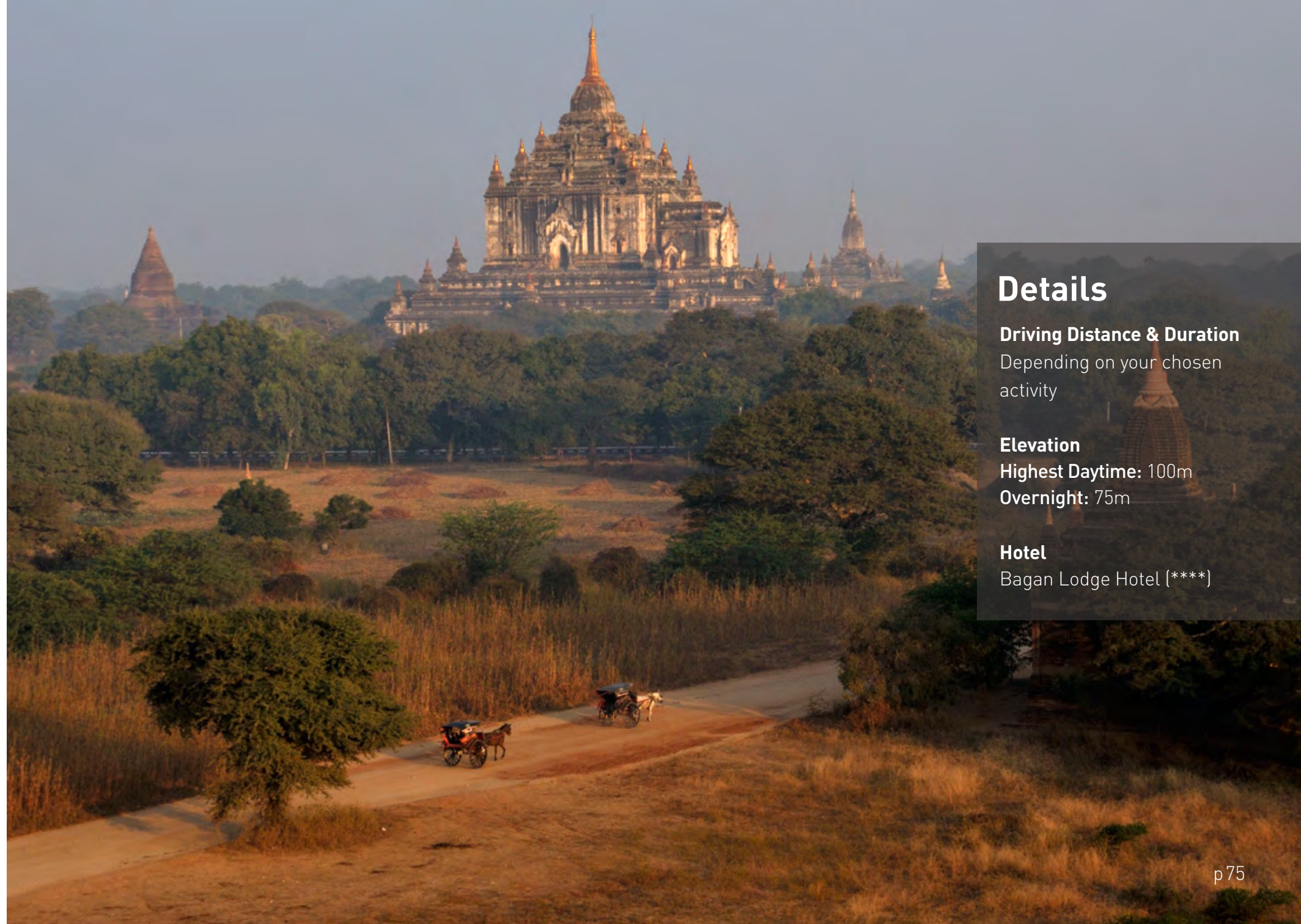
Our day here starts with an optional sunrise drive or you may wish to take the jaw-dropping balloon ride (not included in our package) over Bagan to get a sense of the site's vast scale. Then we will have a shopping stop at

Nyaung U's colorful market before returning to the hotel for breakfast.

The rest of the day is very flexible and we recommend you to explore the many temples and pagodas by horse cart.

In the evening we meet for a dinner at a local restaurant.

*Please note, breakfast and dinner are included in the tour price, lunch is not included today.*



## Details

### Driving Distance & Duration

Depending on your chosen activity

### Elevation

**Highest Daytime:** 100m

**Overnight:** 75m

### Hotel

Bagan Lodge Hotel (\*\*\*\*)



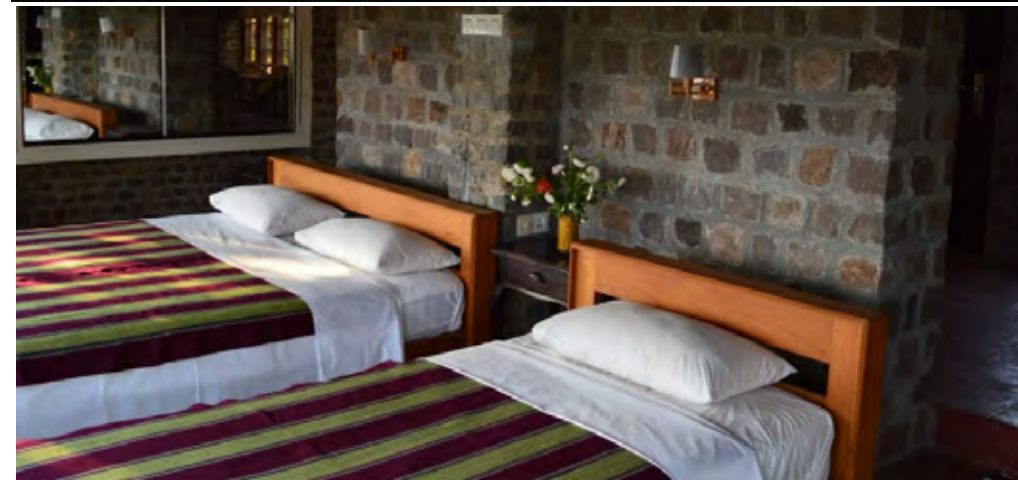
## Day 9 Fly to Yangon and continue your journey home... OR Along the Irrawaddy to colonial Salay and sleepy Yenanyaung

Roughly 1.5 hours South of Bagan lies the Bagan-era village of Salay, our lunch stop for today. It remains an active religious centre, with around 50 monasteries shared among the fewer than 10000 residents. You might wonder why the town has such a colonial feel to it. The colonial houses are remnants of the Burma Oil Company, which housed rig workers in the area starting in 1886. Working in Chauk, a crude oil production centre just 15 kilometres (9 miles) upstream, the men settled in Salay.

After our lunch we continue with a leisurely drive to Yenanyaung. Yenangyaung is located in the Dry Zone of West-Central Myanmar in the Magway Division, on the Irrawaddy River. For centuries

the dominant industry of this area was petroleum – thus the name “Yenangyaung” which in Myanmar literally means “stream of oil”. This region is not well known among tourists and finding good accommodation is near to impossible.

We stay overnight at the Lei Thar Gone guesthouse. The rooms are basic but comfortable and we can enjoy the sunset over the Irrawaddy in the evening.



## Details

### Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 150 km

Duration: 5 hours

### Elevation

Highest Daytime: 60m

Overnight: 60m

### Hotel

Lei Thar Gone Guesthouse  
(\*\*)

## Day 10 A beautiful drive through rural scenery – past ox carts and cotton plantations

Toady's drive might feel similar to many roads we have driven already on this journey, but eagle-eyed travellers will still be able to find something fresh and new on the roadsides. Cotton grows along the road, for example, the plants looking like little flowers. Closer to Pyay the road gets busier as Pyay is an important transit point for goods between Upper and Lower Myanmar and due to its location on the Yangon–Bagan highway. Pyay's glory days date from the ancient Pyu capital of Thayekhittaya, the partially excavated remains of which lie 7km east of Pyay's other stellar attraction: the dazzling Shwesandaw pagoda.

The Burmese switch between two pronunciations of the town's name: 'Pyay' and 'Pyi'. In British Burma, the British

colonialists – apparently unable to deal with either name – called it Prome.

Whatever you decide to call it, soak up this town's atmosphere and prepare for the long drive ahead of you tomorrow.

*Please note, hotel choices here are also limited. We have again chosen the best available.*



## Details

### Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 200 km

Duration: 6 hours

### Elevation

Highest Daytime: 60m

Overnight: 30m

### Hotel

Mingalar Garden Resort, Pyay  
(\*\*)



## Day 11

### Travel on winding roads across the Rakhine mountain range

Our last driving day is also the third of our journey's three longest drives. Almost the whole day will be spent on winding mountain roads across the Arakan Mountains. The road finally flattens out for the last two hours as we finally draw closer to the ocean. The Arakan Mountains separate the coast of Rakhine State from the Central Burma Basin.

This scenic drive leads through small mountain villages and an impoverished primary school, which we can visit on our way. Unfortunately – as in so many other parts of Burma, deforestation has had a considerable impact on this region's scenery, but this drive is still a fantastic one. When we have left the winding roads behind us, we come to the sleepy town of Taungup. Beyond Taungup the scenery changes, the land becomes

flat and very fertile, and our route runs past rice fields, banana trees and cashew nuts as we approach Thandwe and Ngapali Beach.

The hotel you are staying is at one of the best locations along the beach and – with a well-earned cocktail in hand – you can watch the sunset over the Bay of Bengal before we meet for a farewell seafood dinner on the beach.



## Details

### Driving Distance & Duration

Distance: 235 km

Duration: 9 hours

### Elevation

Highest Daytime: 1600m

Overnight: 141m

### Hotel

Ngapali Bay Villas & Spa  
[\*\*\*\*\*]



## Day 12

### Back to real life? Or linger here awhile longer?

Some of you will have to fly home today because, after all, life must go on. We will transfer you to the airport in Thandwe, from where you will fly to Yangon. In Yangon our tour comes to an end, leaving you to continue your journey as per your own arrangements.

On the other hand, if you can spare an extra day or two, why not stay on and explore the area around Ngapali? Whether you choose to go snorkeling, kayaking, visiting fishing villages or prefer relaxing on the pristine sands, an extension is thoroughly worthwhile. We are happy to assist you with an extension of your stay.

Regardless of how your trip ends, we hope that you will leave us refreshed and with many new memories of your exotic journey from the Golden Triangle to the Bay of Bengal.





## Choice of Cars

We include in the package price an SUV we procure from Avis or Hertz or another reputable car rental company. Most of the SUVs are Toyotas, but on occasion Mitsubishi's or other brands may also make an appearance.

We wish the car rental markets of China and its southern neighbors would be more developed and we could give you more choice, but this is not so: since we want to provide well-maintained and well-insured cars, the choice is rather limited.

But SUVs are in fact the right choice for driving journeys in this part of the world because they are spacious enough to accommodate a lot of luggage, photography equipment, and good-and-bad-weather gear.

Also, they reinforce the feeling of adventure, exploration and discovery...which is, in the end, the mood of journeys in this region, no matter how comfortable or even luxurious the night's hotel may be. What's more, they offer sufficient clearance when required and thus add a sense of safety and all-round ability. (4-wheel drive capability is hardly needed in China these days since all roads are either very well-paved or, with good gravel, offer solid support.)

And so SUVs from reputable brands are our car of choice!

**“ANY car,  
as long as  
it is an SUV”**



## Adventures and Discoveries in Local Cuisines

While this itinerary is not one of our 'Foodie'-themed journeys, we do believe that each one of our journeys should introduce you not only to hidden gems of cultural and scenic beauty, but that sampling local cuisines is also a must.

In Burma this means a mixture of Burmese and Chinese food. While local people rely on noodles and salads for breakfast and snacks, main meals are based around various curries prepared fresh each morning, selected from a buffet and served with side dishes. Thanks to the country's unreliable electricity supply, refrigeration is not yet widespread in Burma, and for this reason many local people prefer to eat curry at lunchtime, rather than in the

evening when it will be less fresh. For evening meals, many Burmese people prefer Chinese food, as it is freshly cooked to order. You will enjoy a combination of these two styles on your journey.

Wine and beer is always included in our meals for you to enjoy. (When we travel into high-altitude, we suggest moderation!)

Finally, if you have special dietary requirements are particularly interested in the culinary aspect of one of our journeys, please let us know.

For private journeys, we can, of course, tailor the meal experience to your taste (and budget).





# What's Included / Best Months to Go...

Generally speaking, our journey packages and prices are all-inclusive. Once you've paid and you arrive at the starting point, you really won't have to take out your wallet again.

- **Cars** – a modern SUV is provided for all driving days, expertly maintained and serviced by Avis Laos, and covered by the best insurance available. The sending of the cars from Ngapali back to Laos is included as well.
- **International Journey Host, Guide and Support Vehicle** – you will be accompanied by a registered Burmese tour guide, an On the Road Experiences host and a fully equipped lead car with a local support driver. In Burma we are also required to have 1 government minder in the lead car.
- **Routes** – A well-researched itinerary and carefully crafted journey experience. You will receive a detailed route book before your departure. We will also supply each car with a pre-programmed GPS and printed maps. (The GPS maps are not yet ideal in Burma, though.)
- **Driving License** – All arrangements, fees and permits for driving in Burma are included
- **Fuel & Tolls & Parking** – we provide petrol for the car throughout the journey, pay all tolls and all parking fees



- **Airport Transfers** – all airport transfers are included
- **Flights** – Flights from Yangon to Heho (Inle Lake) and from Thandwe (Ngapali) to Yangon are included
- **Permits and logistics** – all entry, border crossing and road permits are included.
- **Hotels** – the best available or five-star accommodation is included in each overnight stop

- **Meals** – breakfast (a choice of Western and Local is provided), and lunch and dinner are included on all driving days, as are drinks. Meals on non-driving days as specified above. Prepare for a culinary adventure!
- **Goodies** – you will enjoy an On the Road Home-Away-from-Home Kit containing wet towels, anti-bacterial gel and basic toiletries, and a daily picnic basket containing fresh fruit, fruit juice, water, and a mixture of sweets and nibbles

- **Other Essentials** – we provide each car with walky-talkies
- **Travel Insurance** – including 24-hour medical assistance, evacuation and repatriation emergency service
- **Tips & Entrance Fees** – basic tips and entrance fees for jointly attended activities are included
- **Activities, Meals, Transport** during 'free times' as indicated in this Journey Dossier
- **Top-up Collision Damage Waiver insurance**

## What's Not Included

The only items not included in our prices are your flights to and back from Yangon, your Burma visa and personal purchases (e.g., gifts, souvenirs)





## Photo Credits

- © Anantara Chiang Mai - page 12
- © Hpa An Lodge - page 20
- © Htein Linn - Front & Back Cover, pages 3, 4, 10, 16, 18, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 44, 46, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 64, 76, 78, 82-83, 84-85, 86-87, 88-89, 90-91, 92-93, 95, 97, 99, 106, 109
- © Mareen Windsch - pages 66, 70, 72, 81, 98
- © Nancy Wu - pages 8, 14, 40, 42, 60, 62, 68, 96, 102-103
- © Ngapali Bay Villas - page 74
- © Peter Schindler - pages 100, 104-105
- © Ron Yue - page 48



## Contact Us

E-mail  
contact@ontheroadexperiences.com

### Main office

Telephone: +852 3106 4839  
Fax: +852 3012 1251

### Overseas

Taiwan: +886 978 317 465  
+886 921 162 079  
Australia: +61 2 8003 5317  
Switzerland: +41 (44) 586 58 43  
UK: +44 121 288 6879  
Germany: +49 160 9622 2506

“A picture is worth a thousand words. True, but when it comes to a road journey, moving images are priceless. Please visit :  
<http://www.ontheroadexperiences.com/en/video-gallery>”







## ON THE ROAD EXPERIENCES

BACK ROADS | HIDDEN GEMS

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

