

Myanmar Frequently Asked Questions

1). We want to travel to Myanmar during summer time in the United States, but I have heard there is a lot of rain at that time. Is this correct?

Myanmar has a tropical climate with three main seasons:

(1) The rainy season (monsoon) is from mid-May to mid-October with an average temperature of 25-30 C (75-85 F). It rains heavily in Yangon and Inle Lake, however parts of the country such as Mandalay and Bagan are in dry zones.

(2) The cool season (winter) is from mid-October to mid-February, with an average temperature of 20-24 C (70-75 F). This is the best season to visit. Some regions in upper Myanmar, such as Kalaw (southwest of Shan State) and Kyaing Tong (eastern Shan State), have a temperature ranging between 5–10 C (40-50 F), so travelers may need to bring warm clothes for travel in these areas.

(3) The hot season (summer) is from mid-February to mid-May, with an average temperature of 30-35 C (85-95 F). It is a bit hot, so traveling is more enjoyable if touring in the mornings and evenings.

2). What commercial flights serve Myanmar (Burma)?

Qatar Airways from Doha operates four non-stop flights a week to Yangon. Yangon, Myanmar's capital city has direct air-links with Bangkok, Singapore, Doha, Kuala Lumpur, Calcutta, Dacca, New Delhi, Chiang Mai and Kunming. Myanmar Airways International, Thai Airways International, Bangkok Airways, Qatar Airways, Silk Air, Biman Bangladesh, Malaysia Airlines, Indian Airlines and Air China operate scheduled flights in and out of Yangon. China Eastern Airlines is the only airline that flies to Mandalay from Kunming.

3). Do I need a visa for Myanmar and, if so, how can I get one?

Every nationality needs a visa to come to Myanmar. A valid passport with entry visa is required for all visitors. A visa can be obtained at any Myanmar embassy or consulate abroad. Visa fee is about USD \$30 in local currency.

4). Can I get a visa online?

Not anymore.

5). What is the local currency? What does FEC mean? Do I need to change 200 FEC if we buy the tour service from you?

The monetary unit is the Kyat (pronounced "chat"), which is divided into 100 pyas. The official exchange rate is about 6 Kyats to USD \$1.

For the convenience of travelers, Foreign Exchange Certificates (FECs) are issued by the Central Bank of Myanmar to use during their stay. FECs are acceptable like US dollars by any person in the Union of Myanmar. It is printed on the note as 1 FEC = USD \$1.

There is no more compulsory exchange of USD \$200 into FEC 200 upon arrival at Yangon airport.

6). Can I pay with credit card?

No. Credit cards, traveler's checks and ATM cards are no longer valid in Myanmar. It's not certain how long this condition will be in effect so it is advisable to bring enough money in US cash.

The euro and other currencies are difficult to use in Myanmar.

7). What is the quality of domestic transportation services within Myanmar?

Domestic air service in Burma has improved greatly in recent years, however, travel by train, bus and ship is still not convenient. Baggage allowance on Myanmar's domestic flights is limited to 20 kg (44 lbs). Excess luggage can be left in Yangon hotels for collection on return after traveling to remote areas. Air-conditioned cars or buses may not always be available and travelers should be advised that road conditions in Myanmar can vary greatly. Due to poor roads, long distance land travel generally takes longer than travelers might expect, averaging only 45–50 kph (25-30 mph).

8). During our stay in Myanmar, we want to see the nature, culture, history and people and their lifestyle. Can you arrange a very comprehensive program?

Major sightseeing itineraries include a variety of religious and historic monuments, a rich cultural and artistic heritage and beautiful scenery. We also seek out interesting local markets, festivals, traditional handicrafts and industries providing an opportunity to meet local people in their own environment. A specialty is sampling regional cuisines around Myanmar and enjoying various traditional forms of Myanmar entertainment. By including such activities, we make any visit to Myanmar a richer, more rewarding and more memorable experience.

9). What is the quality of food and restaurants in Myanmar?

Myanmar cuisine is established around rice or noodles, usually served with a variety of curries over meat or fish, along with a dish of vegetables, salads, soup, and condiments. Myanmar curries tend to be less spicy than those served in Thailand. Meals & drinks at international hotels are very expensive, but there are many good local restaurants with comparable quality and hygiene as hotels but at reasonable prices. They serve various dishes of Myanmar, Chinese, European (French and Italian), Thai and Indian cuisine. Small roadside restaurants are not recommended, as they can be risky for health.

There are also a wide variety of local snacks and delicacies. Mouk-hin-kha (thin rice noodles served with fish gravy and onion soup) and Ohn-noh-khauk-swe (noodles served with chicken and coconut

gravy) are the most popular in Myanmar. Shan food is another delicacy. Shan style of cooking belongs to neither Myanmar nor Chinese nor Thai cuisine but tastes very good in its own way.

Restaurants and food served to travelers are carefully selected for hygiene as well as gastronomic considerations.

10). What is the quality of Myanmar hotels?

Hotel standards in Myanmar vary widely, especially in quality and availability. New and refurbished hotels meeting international standards are available in most destinations like Yangon, Mandalay, Bagan, Inle Lake, Kyaing Tong, Ngapali Beach, Ngwe Saung Beach, and Chaung Thar Beach. Only very basic and simple hotels are available in remote areas.

11). Is Myanmar a good place for shopping? What are the best buys?

Myanmar arts and crafts, mostly hand-made, are lovely souvenirs. Lacquer ware, woodcarvings, tapestries, silverware, brassware, silk and cotton fabrics, and shoulder bags are some of the more popular items. For jewelry there are Burmese rubies, sapphires, jade and pearls available at Myanmar gem shops. All gems and jewelry purchases should be made at government-licensed dealers, who can provide a voucher for export.

Bargaining is essential for obtaining reasonable prices. Possible price reductions of up to 70% are not uncommon.

12). Are there any compulsory vaccinations for travel to Myanmar?

No, but it is advisable to take precautions against malaria. Prescription drugs are not widely available in the remote areas of Myanmar so travelers should bring required medication with them.

Insect repellents are highly recommended, especially when traveling to remote areas in addition to other measures to prevent mosquito bites. The sun can be very hot so a hat and sunscreen is advisable.

13). Can I use my cell phone in Myanmar (Burma)?

Myanmar's Global System for Mobile (GSM) does not allow "international roaming" so mobile phones from other countries do not work in Myanmar. If any traveler brings in a mobile phone, Myanmar customs will keep it and issue a voucher to the traveler, which can be exchanged for the phone upon departure from Myanmar.

14). Can I bring along my Laptop?

Laptops are permissible for the traveler's own use.

15). Can I buy travel insurance in Myanmar?

It is advisable to purchase travel insurance in your own country. Please choose a reputable insurance company who has an agent in Myanmar. This is very important.

16). Do you have reliable postal and telecommunication services?

Postal service in Myanmar is unreliable. Letters and postcards sent overseas sometimes do not reach their destinations. Most hotels have International Direct Dialing (IDD) lines, but please be aware that the costs are high, with the average cost of a call to the United States approximately USD \$9 per minute and charged one full minute for any extra seconds. If you want to call home from a hotel, we advise calling and asking them to call you back.