

Myanmar Suggested Reading

BOOKS and MAPS:

Lonely Planet Myanmar (Burma)

10th Edition / Published Mai 2009

By Robert Reid, Joe Bindloss, Stuart Butler

Insight Guide Burma/Myanmar

8th Edition 2000; Updated 2003

By Francis Doval

Insight Guides are generally worth buying for the pictures alone, and the Burma/Myanmar volume is no exception. Covers the entire country (unlike the Odyssey guide). This guide manages to convey virtually all of the facts you will need about each place you visit, along with the associated mythology, significance of the site, and so on.

The Treasures and Pleasures of Thailand and Myanmar: Best of the Best in Travel and Shopping

Published: August 2004

By Ron Krannich

The Treasures and Pleasures of Thailand and Myanmar: Best of the Best in Travel and Shopping is an absolute "must-have" for international travelers looking to obtain quality goods or souvenirs from Thailand at a reasonable price. Intended as a supplementary resource and not a general-purpose travel guide, **The Treasures and Pleasures of Thailand and Myanmar** focuses specifically upon obstacles, negotiation techniques, and tips and tricks for those interested in shopping for everything from gemstones to textiles to artworks and much more. From learning how to walk away from the "touts" that try to lure tourists into overpriced stores (overpriced because the store must pay the tout a 10% to 40% commission for the service!), to a step-by-step introduction to the art of haggling, to knowing how to avoid paying thousands of dollars for what might be a cheap knock-off gemstone, to why even the locals may not always obtain the best deals (some shopkeepers can give tourists a lower price than their repeat local customers - who would expect the same bargain every time they walked through the door) to dealing with cultural differences and much more, **The Treasures And Pleasures Of Thailand And Myanmar** zeroes in on exactly what the money-conscious tourist in Thailand needs to know.

Myanmar Country Map: (Burma) (Periplus Travel Maps)

By Periplus Editions

The Periplus Myanmar map is an indispensable purchase you must make before you enter the country in order to plan and execute your trip, since you will find it very hard to find one once you are in.

I strongly recommend it in addition to the Lonely Planet guide (see my past review) as the two tools to

the serious and organized traveler.

Inside, you'll find 6 maps:

1. A big Myanmar map (1:2,000,000)
2. A map of Bagan area (1:35,000)
3. A detailed map of old Bagan (1:15,000)
4. A city map of Yangon (1:35,000)
5. A detailed map of Central Yangon (1:17,500)
6. A map of Mandalay.

All the maps are well printed and help a lot to get around in the country. The best places to see are highlighted in red. Inside you'll also find a few useful traveling tips for a kick-start.

NOVELS:

Finding George Orwell in Burma

By Emma Larkin

Emma Larkin is the pseudonym for an American journalist who was born and raised in Asia, studies the Burmese language at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and covers Asia widely in her journalism from her base in Bangkok. She has been visiting Burma since the mid-1990s. Emma Larkin tells of the year she spent travelling through Burma, using as a compass the life and work of George Orwell, whom many of Burma's underground teahouse intellectuals call simply "the prophet". In stirring, insightful prose, she provides a powerful reckoning with one of the world's least free countries. Finding George Orwell in Burma is a brave and revelatory reconnaissance of modern Burma, one of the world's grimmest and most shuttered police states, where the term "Orwellian" aptly describes the life endured by the country's people.

Burmese Days

By George Orwell

Imagine crossing E.M. Forster with Jane Austen. Stir in a bit of socialist doctrine, a sprig of satire, strong Indian curry, and a couple quarts of good English gin and you get something close to the flavor of George Orwell's intensely readable and deftly plotted *Burmese Days*. In 1930, Kyauktada, Upper Burma, is one of the least auspicious postings in the ailing British Empire--and then the order comes that the European Club, previously for whites only, must elect one token native member. This edict brings out the worst in this woefully enclosed society, not to mention among the natives who would become the One. Orwell mines his own Anglo-Indian background to evoke both the suffocating heat and the stifling pettiness that are the central facts of colonial life: "Mr. MacGregor told his anecdote about Prome, which could be produced in almost any context. And then the conversation veered back to the old, never-palling subject--the insolence of the natives, the supineness of the Government, the dear dead days when the British Raj was the Raj and please give the bearer fifteen lashes. The topic was never let

alone for long, partly because of Ellis's obsession. Besides, you could forgive the Europeans a great deal of their bitterness. Living and working among Orientals would try the temper of a saint."

Protagonist James Flory is a timber merchant, whose facial birthmark serves as an outward expression of the ironic and left-leaning habits of mind that make him inwardly different from his coevals. Flory appreciates the local culture, has native allegiances, and detests the racist machinations of his fellow Club members. Alas, he doesn't always possess the moral courage, or the energy, to stand against them. His almost embarrassingly Anglophile friend, Dr. Veraswami, the highest-ranking native official, seems a shoo-in for Club membership, until Machiavellian magistrate U Po Kyin launches a campaign to discredit him that results, ultimately, in the loss not just of reputations but of lives. Whether to endorse Veraswami or to betray him becomes a kind of litmus test of Flory's character.

Against this backdrop of politics and ethics, Orwell throws the shadow of romance. The arrival of the bobbed blonde, marriageable, and resolutely anti-intellectual Elizabeth Lackersteen not only casts Flory as hapless suitor but gives Orwell the chance to show that he's as astute a reporter of nuanced social interactions as he is of political intrigues. In fact, his combination of an astringently populist sensibility, dead-on observations of human behavior, formidable conjuring skills, and no-frills prose make for historical fiction that stands triumphantly outside of time.

The Gentleman in the Parlour: A Record of a Journey from Rangoon to Haiphong **By W. Somerset Maugham**

Among the many memorable books on travels in Burma before the Second World War, Somerset Maugham's leisurely progress from London via Colombo, then up the Irrawaddy to Mandalay and onwards through the then peaceful Shan States to Thailand and Cambodia ranks among the most enjoyable. He was not only a sharp-eyed observer of human nature but writes about his encounters with a good deal of empathy quite uncommon among travel writers of the 1920's.

The Glass Palace **By Amitav Ghosh**

Set in Burma during the British invasion of 1885, this masterly novel by Amitav Ghosh tells the story of Rajkumar, a poor boy lifted on the tides of political and social chaos, who goes on to create an empire in the Burmese teak forest. When soldiers force the royal family out of the Glass Palace and into exile, Rajkumar befriends Dolly, a young woman in the court of the Burmese Queen, whose love will shape his life. He cannot forget her, and years later, as a rich man, he goes in search of her.

The Native Tourist: A Holiday Pilgrimage In Myanmar **By Ma Thanegi**

This is the delightful story of an eighteen-day bus pilgrimage to sixty pagodas across Myanmar. As the author settles into her seat, the aisle blocked with luggage, she trains our eyes on the collection of

characters that like it or not, will be her traveling companions for the whirlwind tour. This native tourist amuses us with her adventures of eating at roadside cafes, climbing up pagodas, bathing in rivers, shopping at markets, and sleeping on temple floors. Along the way, she encounters deeply rooted cultural values and develops camaraderie with strangers that become like family for the duration of her travels.

MEMORIES:

Twilight over Burma: My Life as a Shan Princess

By Inge Sargent

When Inge Eberhard married a Burmese student she met in Colorado, she had no idea of the incredible future awaiting her as a princess. Unbeknownst to the young Austrian woman at the time, the man she called Sao would reveal himself to be a prince and the beloved leader of an ethnically diverse Shan state upon their arrival in Burma. In a stirring tribute to a remarkable man--and a gripping tale from beginning to end--Sargent reflects back on her loving, cross-cultural marriage to the prince of Hsipaw, with whom she had two children, a marriage that prospered until the disappearance of Sao Kya Seng during the 1962 coup d'état and takeover by dictator Ne Win. Although the prince was never seen again, Sargent manages to illuminate the harsh conditions in Burma over the last quarter-century in a touching memoir that would read like a fairy tale were it not for the unfortunate ending.

ART & ARCHITECTURE:

Shwedagon: Golden Pagoda of Myanmar

By Elizabeth Moore, et al

For hundreds of years the golden stupa of the Shwedagon, the pagoda enshrining the sacred hairs of the Buddha, has dominated the landscape of Rangoon. Since the nineteenth century, it has been the spiritual symbol of the entire Burmese nation.

Few countries have a shrine such as this, ancient yet with as much relevance today as it had long ago. It is an unforgettable vision to see the pagoda across the Royal Lakes at sunset or as a golden shimmer against the black night sky. Everyone who has been to Myanmar has a memory of their first visit to the Shwedagon; for all born in Myanmar, the monument is a cornerstone of their life and a guardian for their future.

Shwedagon provides a multifaceted view of this magnificent Buddhist shrine. The atmosphere of a visit to the site is admirably captured in Hansjorg Mayer's photographs. The texts, by archaeologist and art historian Elizabeth Moore and Burmese scholar U Win Pe, discuss the history and evolution of the stupa, and are illustrated by evocative old pictures and plans.

Burmese Design and Architecture

By John Falconer

About the Author

John Falconer is a curator at the British Library and is the author of *A Vision of the Past*, the first detailed history of photography in Singapore and Malaysia. Luca Invernizzi Tettoni is a world-renown photographer who has lived in and worked in Asia since 1973. He specializes in books on aspects of Asian culture, architecture and landscape. His books include *The Arts of Thailand*, *The Tropical Garden*, and *Filipino Style*: his work also appears frequently in *Asian*, *European*, and *American Magazines*.

Book Description

The Burmese tradition of architecture, art and design is ancient, diverse and wonderfully rich. A reflection of a civilization unbreached by European powers for 3,000 years and influenced by China to the north and India to the West, Burmese design is interwoven with spiritual, religious and political messages. It is only now that this tradition is coming to be appreciated by Western students of architecture and design.

Burmese Design and Architecture will deepen and enhance that appreciation, for this is the first book to capture the entire span of Burmese design, from arts and crafts to architecture, from the monumental pagodas of Bagan to the architectural heritage of contemporary Rangoon. Covering both religious and secular design, this book offers expert insights provided by leading archaeological experts in this field. With 500 full-color photographs, this is a major work-and a must-have for serious connoisseurs of architecture, design or Myanmar itself.

Burmese Lacquerware

By Silvia Fraser-Lu

For the past 200 - 300 years the art of lacquer has been one of the show industries of Burma. Early travellers to that country have commented most favorably on it and it would be a rare Burmese household or monastery which did not have at least a few prized pieces of lacquer.

The initial impetus for the development of the craft in all probability came from neighboring China and Thailand, but Burmese creative genius channeled it in new and unique directions. Burma's polychrome incised wares are unsurpassed for their boldness and liveliness of design while its gilt molded lacquer inlaid with glass mosaic 'outshines' European ormolu work in its sheer sumptuous effect. The best of Burma's gold-leaf design work is equal to that of Thailand, the leading exponent of the craft in South-East Asia. Painted wares too are emblematic of a robust folk craft tradition.

Over the years the Burmese lacquer worker has been most adept at adapting to changing circumstances brought about by the colonial experience and post-war Independence. To meet the needs of a diverse clientele, artisans have added different colors, new forms and experimental techniques to the

repertoire. Despite modern innovations, the lacquer artisan continues to draw strength from the past. Ancient temple murals continue to provide much inspiration and subject matter.

This book explains the various techniques practiced by lacquer artisans, and describes the various forms, and the use of a wide range of wares. It also introduces the reader to some of the leading exponents of the art in different parts of Burma. Lacquer ware collections both within that country and abroad have been described as well.

Visions from the Golden Land: Burma and the Art of Lacquer

By Ralph Isaacs, et al

Lacquer is one of the most important artistic traditions of Burma - and also a living craft. Frequently used to decorate vessels of great style and variety, it is also important in the embellishment of architecture, furniture and musical instruments, in the making of sculpture and even in the Burmese theater. A natural plastic, refined from the sap of a tree, lacquer can be used to elaborate almost any surface, and its visual impact can be stunning - objects are dazzlingly colored, often in scarlet, gold and black, and are frequently inlaid with colored glass to produce an effect of shimmering iridescence.

Until now, Burmese art generally - let alone this important branch - has been little studied. This beautifully illustrated book features some 200 items which demonstrate the skill of the Burmese lacquer-craftsman. Many of these came from a recent gift to the British Museum, the Ruth and Ralph Isaacs Collection, while others from national, regional and private collections. A series of essays examines the history of Burmese lacquer, the methods of production, the wide regional variations, the inscriptions found on many of the vessels (a new and important area of study), the role of lacquer vessels in the ubiquitous betel habit, and the Buddhist context of many of the objects.

Imperial Pagan: Art and Architecture of Old Burma

By Paul Strachan

A descriptive catalogue of Buddhist temples built in the Pagan Plain of Burma from the mid-11th through the 13th century. The profuse illustrations include 34 color plates. Published in hardcover in 1989 as Pagan: Art and architecture of old Burma.

HISTORY & CULTURE:

The River of Lost Footsteps

A personal history of Burma

By That Myint –U

What do we really know about Burma and its history? And what can Burma's past tell us about its present and even its future? For nearly two decades Western governments and a growing activist community have been frustrated in their attempts to bring about a freer and more democratic Burma.

Now Thant Myint-U tells the story of modern Burma, and the story of his own family, in an interwoven narrative that is by turns lyrical, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Through his prominent family's stories and those of others, he portrays Burma's rise and decline in the modern world, from the time of Portuguese pirates and renegade Mughal princes through a sixty-year civil war that continues today—the longest-running war anywhere in the world.

Thant Myint-U, born in 1966, was educated at Harvard and Cambridge. He has served on United Nations peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and Bosnia, and was more recently the head of policy planning in the UN Department of Political Affairs.

The Illusion of Life: Burmese Marionettes

By Ma Thanegi

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Burmese marionettes enjoyed a rare and powerful privilege as speakers for both kings and subjects. Never merely for entertainment, puppetry was a high art held in much esteem. Marionettes were means of making people aware of current events; a medium for educating the masses in literature, history and religion; a display of lifestyle and customs. These yoke-thei, 'small dolls', enjoyed greater freedom of speech, dress and movement than live performers. They therefore played a significant role in the development of dance and dramatic arts. The author is a well-known Burmese painter, and this lively book is liberally spiced with information about Burma and Burmese ways. It contains a systematic presentation of the Burmese marionette tradition, a tradition in the danger of extinction.

Burmese Dance and Theatre (Images of Asia)

By Noel F. Singer

This book traces the history of dance and theatre in Burma in the courts and countryside, and describes the various dances, plays, and musical accompaniment that evolved as a result of the country's cultural and religious mix and its changing political circumstances.

Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know

By David I. Steinberg

Myanmar/Burma: Inside Challenges, Outside Interests

By Lex Rieffel

Letters from Burma

By Aung San Suu Kyi

A History of Modern Burma

By Michael W. Charney

Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity
By Lowell Dittmer

Security and Sustainable Development in Myanmar
By Helen James