

# Burma

## The Country of Golden Pagodas



Burma, despite poverty, catastrophic political situation and brutal concentration camps for the opponents of military regime, has a lot to offer and it is safe. Because of long isolation has survived an old culture based on Buddhism, and the wonderful golden pagodas are the biggest advantages of this country.

*Martin Malik*

The main city is Yangon which houses the religious and cultural symbol of Burmese national identity – the wonderful temple called Shwedagon Paya Pagoda. It is also the most sacred building in the country which was built about

2500 years ago (558 BC), although historians think that Shwedagon could have been built even before death of Buddha himself, in 543 BC. Apart from that Shwedagon is covered with 8868 golden plates, what equals to 60 tonnes of pure gold! Shwedagon is also decorated with precious stones, like diamonds, rubies and sapphires, and there is a big diamond on the top too. I also

recommend Bago where the bus station is rich in many holes filled with water and rubble. There are a few interesting temples in Bago and the biggest in Asia reclining Buddha. Bago means also the first encounter with Burmese countryside which consists of wooden hats covered with straw. There is also a Snake Temple where monks keep a big Burmese python. Beside the point,

whilst in Bago I played a passionate volleyball match with local people, next to coconut palms and a river, which floods every monsoon...

The Golden Rock Pagoda is one of the holiest places in Burma, and as it is with every place of this type, also the Golden Rock has its own legend.



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\*Burma does not have direct flights from England. You should fly to Bangkok first, and from there take Air Asia to Yangon. The flight should cost about £500.

\*28 day tourist visa in the consulate in London costs £14, although you can buy in in Bangkok too.

\*Prices: cheap hostel costs on average £3 and a meal is about £1.5. Transport costs about £3-£7. There are also entrances to places of interests, but it also costs around £2-£4.



**T**he Rock is decorated with golden petals and visually it gives impression as if it was going to fall into the abyss. However the legend says that such option is impossible because there is a hair of Buddha himself underneath the rock. Bagan is an ancient area where in the area of 44 km<sup>2</sup> there are 4400 bigger and smaller temples, and a lot of them are 800 years old. All those temples are remains of Buddhist dynasties, rich in legends.

**T**he most prominent temples are even 1000 years old and there is a long way to climb to the summits to admire the landscapes. Inle Lake is another interesting attraction of Burma. Wooden huts on stilts appearing from the water, factories of silver and cigars and floating vegetable fields. Sailing between the vegetable fields we get to the far away villages and Buddhist temples on the top of the hills.

(Photos: Martin Malik)



Martin Malik, author

Has been travelling to many remote, far away regions of Asia, and according to his business card he is a "traveller and adventure seeker". Martin has travelled most countries of Asia, including beautiful Burma. He also swam Pyanj river into Afghanistan, what to the readers of Gonic magazine we rather don't recommend.

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