

WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



MYANMAR BURMA

ANCIENT TEMPLES, MARKETS
AND MYSTICAL LAKES WITH
ALBERT NORMANDIN

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

- Shwedagon Pagoda – the crown jewel of Burma
- Yangon and its Colonial past
- Bustling local markets
- Monk processions and monasteries
- Long boat adventures on Inle Lake
- The Intha and Pa Oo tribes
- Mandalay Hill and the sprawling city below
- Sagaing a hillside covered in history
- Mingun Pagoda, a gigantic monolith
- The mighty Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River
- Ubein Bridge, the longest teakwood bridge in the world
- Ancient city of Bagan: a thousand pagodas and temples
- Mysterious Mount Popa

“Albert has an uncanny ability to find those special moments, those extraordinary glimpses into the heart and soul of people and their everyday lives to capture magic and have it shine through. His love and appreciation of Asian cultures and the inherent style and beauty leave me in awe and make me look at that world I have experienced many times before with a different vantage point and appreciation.”

Blaise Noto, President, Blaise Noto & Associates

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Myanmar, a fascinating and magical place. This is a wonderful photographic opportunity to join us for a well researched and inspiring journey through all the

classic locations for which Myanmar is rightfully famed. These include Yangon (Rangoon), Inle Lake, Mandalay and Bagan. Additionally we take in a host of other remarkable and adventurous locations allowing us to photograph and witness the very heart and soul of this remarkable country. November is the beginning of the cool season, the perfect time to be traveling throughout the country. In bustling Yangon, we visit the awe inspiring Shwedagon Pagoda, “The crown of Burma.” This world famous temple is Myanmar’s most sacred site. We venture through the crowded street markets of Chinatown and the chaotic Yangon Riverbank with great potential for capturing some very special images. From Yangon we fly over fertile rolling hills and rivers to the magical Inle Lake.



Travelling by long boats, we visit the floating villages, markets and temples surrounding the lake. The next stage of our journey takes us to Mandalay, the cultural capital of Myanmar. Our explorations here take us to the temple-covered hills of Sagaing with its numerous Buddhist monasteries, pagodas, and education centres. We visit Ubein Bridge, the longest Teakwood Bridge in the world and take a boat to Mingun Pagoda on the banks of the Ayeyarwady. This gigantic, monolith is the unfinished dream of a king. Finally we enter Bagan and are transferred back in time. Located on the banks of the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River, Bagan is home to the largest and densest concentration of Buddhist temples, pagodas, stupas and ruins in the world. All located in a surreal setting along the shores of the River and set ethereally against a backdrop of distant mountains. Bagan is Myanmar's most cherished prize.

PHOTOGRAPHIC TUTORS

Albert Normandin

For the past ten years Albert has travelled and photographed extensively in Myanmar, he knows the landscapes

and its people intimately. Drawing on his extensive and intimate knowledge of Myanmar he will be offering our guests some unique and off the beaten track locations in addition to the usual fabulous and iconic spots. All the images in our Myanmar gallery are the work of Albert.

Martin Sammtleben

Martin is the co-owner and a director of Wild Photography Holidays. Our guests seem to enjoy the gentle, humorous and practical way that he willingly shares his extensive photographic knowledge both before, during and after the workshops. His close working relationship with Lightroom Guru George Jardine has contributed to a new standard of excellence in the finished images of our workshop participants. A creative and imaginative artist, Martin has travelled and photographed extensively in Asia.

Geraldine Westrupp

Geraldine is the co-owner and a director of Wild photography Holidays. She has photographed, travelled and guided groups in wild locations world-wide, including India, Ladakh, Sikkim, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Spain, UK, Europe, Peru, Equador, Patagonia and of course Iceland. A passionate and creative photographer she assists with the photographic tuition on many of our tours and workshops. The majority of images on the Wild Photography Holidays website are the work of Geraldine and Martin Sammtleben.

DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1: Yangon

Arrive at Yangon International airport, transfer from airport to your hotel in Yangon.



Day 2: Yangon

The day starts with an early morning trip to Shwedagon Pagoda, a classic highlight of Yangon. Glowing golden at sunrise, it is surrounded by many variations of Buddha statues, stupas and attractive long covered staircases. Locally known as Shwedagon Zedi Daw, the Pagoda sits on top of a hill where it can be seen from most places in Yangon both during the day and night as the golden roof illuminates the city. Yangon is well known for its authentic markets in the narrow streets of Chinatown, where there is plenty of chaotic activity to see, enjoy and photograph. If time and interest permits, there is the popular Scott market famous for its gem stones, jade, wooden figures and souvenirs.

After lunch, we visit the fascinating old colonial neighbourhoods. At the very heart of Yangon we find Sule Pagoda, the Grande Strand hotel and Botataung Pagoda located on the banks of the Yangon River. The Pagoda was named after the thousand military leaders who escorted relics of the Buddha brought from India over two thousand years ago. Inside we encounter fine gold covered walls and the sacred hair relic of Buddha. Our evening



location is Yangon riverbank for sunset to photograph the locals boarding ferryboats for their commute home across the river.

Day 3: Yangon to Inle Lake

After breakfast we will transfer to Yangon airport for the short flight up to Heho the primary air gateway to Inle Lake. A short forty-minute transfer finds us in Nyaung Shwe, a small quaint town on the shores of Inle Lake and a hub for visiting Inle Lake and Inle Lake Wetland Sanctuary. Following lunch we meander through the main street where we find shops, markets and various religious sites. Of particular interest is the busy canal leading up to our destination for tomorrow, Inle Lake.

Day 4: Inle Lake

Early morning we will board long boats for a day on Inle Lake. Located in the heart of the Shan Plateau, Inle is a beautiful highland lake, nine hundred meters above sea level; many different ethnic nationals of the area inhabit it. The Intha people are the Lake dwellers who are unique for their leg rowing. The most iconic photos of Inle Lake picture the fishermen, their conical nets resting on long wooden boats as the men paddle with one leg wrapped like a vine around the wooden oar digging into the placid lake waters. It's a beautiful, practical custom that is attractive to photograph. Our boat journey transports us to stilted homes and floating gardens. The super productive ecosystem around this shallow lake creates the separate lake culture and language of the Inthas. The local markets that we encounter are full of colour and interest to pho-

tographers. It is always a joy to interact and communicate with the local tribes that come down from the mountains to sell and purchase wares. We enjoy lunch at the attractive Inthar Heritage House located in the middle of Inle Lake. Afternoon sees us continuing our cruise around floating villages to our final location of the day, Maing Thank Village. With its long wooden boardwalk leading up to the village shores, it is the perfect spot to enjoy sunset.

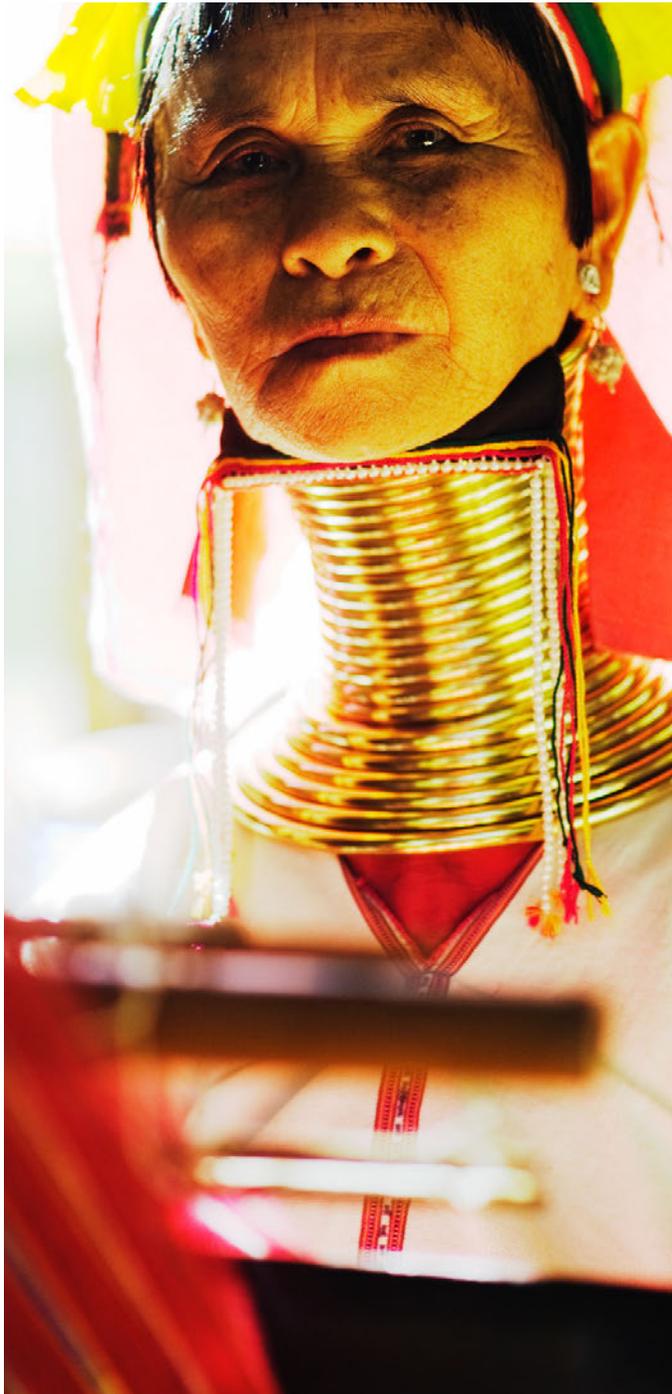
Day 5: Inle Lake

Following breakfast we enjoy our second day on Inle Lake with a visit to the village of Indein. Our boat passes through floating villages before drifting down a small canal leading to the village of Indein located on the South-western end of the lake. We will have the opportunity to wander around Indian village. The village itself is fascinat-

ing and includes passing a local school, always a rich location for spontaneous photography. Now we climb up the long covered stairway to Alaung Sitthou resplendent with hundreds of ancient stupas with expansive views of the lake and the surrounding mountains. We return late to Nyaung Shwe, where we may choose to explore more of this wonderful little town.

Day 6: Inle Lake to Mandalay

After breakfast we transfer to Heho airport for the flight to Mandalay. Our hotel is located centrally a perfect location for slipping out for some local street photography. Mandalay was the last capital of Myanmar before the British took over; it still has great importance as a cultural centre. Historically it is the most Burmese of the country's large cities. Mandalay's Buddhist monasteries are among the most important in the country about 60% of all the monks in Myanmar reside in the Mandalay area. The city takes its name from Mandalay Hill, the 236m-high bluff that rises just to the northeast of Mandalay Fort and its royal palace. Riverboat, trishaw and foot are still the main methods of transportation here; and water buffalo still work in the fields. Stories tell that Buddha foretold a great city of Buddhism would be founded at the base of this hill. In 1857, King Mindon chose to fulfill the prophecy by establishing a new kingdom. After the British occupied the city in 1885, the fort became the colony's government house and British Club. Mandalay Museum and Library contain fine examples of art and historic palm-leaf manuscripts. Depending on our flight times and arrival into Mandalay, we may visit the large city market or riverbank activity for sunset.



Day 7: Mandalay

This morning we will see the sunrise from one of the Mandalay Hill viewpoints. An easy climb up the sheltered steps brings us to a panoramic view over the palace, Mandalay and the paya-studded countryside. Following breakfast we have a choice of several possible sites all offering rich photographic opportunities and a wonderful insight into the history and culture of this famed city.

Shwenandaw Kyaungor: the Golden Teak Monastery. Built entirely of golden teak, this intricately carved wooden monastery was once part of the Mandalay Palace used as private apartments by King Mindon and his chief queen. Mahamuni Paya: the Buddha image enshrined here is perhaps the most venerated image in Myanmar, it is covered in over fifteen cm of gold leaf. Worshippers flock daily to the shrine at four in the morning to observe the unique face-washing ceremony. Enroute to the pagoda, stop to observe the laborious process of gold leaf beating where gold is painstakingly hammered out into tissue thin squares.

Kyauk Taw Gyi Pagoda: built between 1853 and 1878. It is chiefly interesting for the huge seated image of the Buddha carved from a single block of marble. The marble block from the mines of nearby Sagyin was so colossal that it required 10,000 men laboring for 13 days to transport it from a canal to the current site.

Sandamani Paya: a cluster of slender whitewashed stupas built on the site of King Mindon's temporary palace used while the new Mandalay Palace was under construction. The paya enshrines an iron image of the Buddha cast in 1802 by Bodawpaya, it was transported here from Amarapura in 1874.



Kuthodaw Paya: the central stupa here was modeled on the Shwezigon Paya at Nyaung U near Bagan. Building commenced in 1857, at the same time as the royal palace. The paya has been dubbed 'the world's biggest book' because standing around the central stupa are 729 marble slabs on which are inscribed the entire Tripitaka. In the afternoon we explore the busy and colourful flower distribution market where flowers are brought down from the fields in the cool hills and sold to locals for offerings to Buddha. There is also an open fish market here, wild, wet and messy, but certainly interesting, if you dare. We visit the riverbank jetty for sunset, finding plenty of activity and interest photographically.

Day 8: Mandalay – Amarapura – Ubein – Sagaing

This morning we head out very early to visit Mahagan-dayon Monastery, to witness hundreds of Monks starting their day. This is a very popular monastery, but most of the tourists come for the lunch serving. By arriving early in the morning we will appreciate a much more peaceful atmosphere in this unique place. Now we head off for sunrise at Ubein Bridge, the longest Teakwood Bridge in the world, a peaceful place to walk alongside the locals as they commute and begin their daily rituals. It is possible to hire a small boat (not included) to cruise around and under the bridge. Following lunch we enjoy an excursion to Sagaing on the other side of the river. This is widely regarded as the spiritual heart of Myanmar. Spread over the Sagaing Ridge are hundreds of pagodas, nunneries, monasteries, meditation and education centres. From the

hills and pagodas, are vistas over the Ayeyarwady river, Mandalay and surrounding areas. If timing permits we may visit a Nunnery to see their dedicated peaceful lifestyle. If time permits we will explore Thabyedan Fort, the Burmese last defence against the British forces in the third Anglo-Burmese war in 1886. There are many lovely and important pagodas here for us to wander around

Day 9: Mingun

Today our boat crosses the Irrawaddy River to visit Mingun. Travelling up the river, we find the ruins of the incomplete Mingun Pahtodawgyi; also known as the largest pile of bricks in the world! King Bodwipaya commissioned construction of this massive structure. Unfortunately he died before it was completed and all work was halted. You can climb the stairs to the top for views of the river and



the hills of Mandalay in the distance. We will also see a gigantic Mingun bell cast for this huge stupa, it is said to be the largest un-cracked bell in the world. Nearby is the unusual white Hsinbyume Pagoda and its many picturesque strange terraces. During the afternoon we take a final visit to the riverbank and wander the Bamboo village. Bamboo is floated down the Ayeyarwady River, aged, stored and distributed here. This busy and interesting temporary village is in constant state of flux and provides a most remarkable end to our time in Mandalay.

Day 10: Mandalay to Baga

After breakfast we will depart for a four-hour drive to Bagan. In reality our photographic road journeys tend to be longer depending upon stops along the way. Stretching away from the Irrawaddy River the plains of Bagan are a truly overwhelming sight. Rising from the canopy of green are ancient temples, pagodas and stupas, hundreds of them, beautiful, otherworldly silhouettes. They were built by the kings of Bagan between 1057 and 1287 when their kingdom was swept away by both earthquakes and Kublai Khan together with his invading Mongols. Around

half of the four thousand or so temples survive, a legacy of the Buddhist belief that to build a temple is to earn merit. Most are superbly preserved or have been restored, many contain frescoes and carvings and statues of Buddha, big and small. Only a handful are regularly visited, and though tourist numbers are increasing and the hawkers are beginning to appear, this is still, by the standards of sites of a similar beauty and stature, a gloriously unspoiled destination. In the short time we have in Bagan, we hand pick some of the highlights and better locations for you to visit.

Day 11: Bagan

For our first Bagan sunrise we will go to Shwegugyi Temple as it has a second level that offers very special views of Ananda and the other temples near by. After sunrise we will visit Ananda Temple, the holiest and most important temple in all of Bagan. Built by the third King in 1091, inside Ananda you will find four tall Buddhas representing the four who have reached Nirvana. We can wander the grounds around the temple, hallways and shops. Later in the morning we drive towards Nyaung Oo, stopping at Shwezigon Paya with its long covered walkways, local vendors and golden spire. The beautiful bell shape inspired all future stupas built in Myanmar. A visit the bustling, colourful market in Nyaung Oo is a good place to discover the locals shopping, bargaining and going about their daily lives. If time permits we have several other temples up our sleeves!

Dhammayan Gyi Temple: a massive and unusual Egyptian pyramid shape. Inside we explore long hallways full of mysteries and ancient tales.



Htilominlo Temple: one of the larger monuments that is clearly visible and the focus of our drive towards Nyaung Oo, it cannot be missed.

Manuha Temple: a strong square structure where we find the sitting Buddha's and a reclining Buddha.

Damayazika Pagoda: on the outskirts of New Bagan its golden dome glows in the distance of many landscape images of Bagan.

Bagan is also known for its beautiful Lacquerware. You will notice the intricate detail work in these wonderful pieces. We can visit one of the shops if there is interest. Our sunset location is Lawkananda Pagoda in New Bagan. Overlooking the banks of the Ayeyarwady River, here from its elevated deck we find a fine place to enjoy a relaxing sunset.

Day 12: Drive to Chauk and Mt. Popa

Leaving Bagan, we follow the fertile Ayeyarwady River to the busy crossroads town of Chauk known locally for its huge market, which is relatively unknown tourists. From here we travel to Salay a colorful old religious center in Central Myanmar. Here we encounter an old wooden mon-

astery adorned with beautiful woodcarving and a couple of other impressive buildings. Salay is about one and a half hours south of Bagan. In between visiting the numerous ancient monasteries, adorned with beautiful woodcarving. Salay itself is packed with old colonial buildings, monasteries and pagodas. Leaving Chauk, we drive to Mt. Popa. On top of this remarkable volcanic plug is a monastery and temple with many golden stupas. This is home to the thirty-seven Mahagiri Nats or spirits. There are seven hundred and seventy seven steps to the top of Mt. Popa; en route we encounter many relentless monkeys. It is not necessary to climb to the very top, as there are more impressive views from Popa Mountain Resort. Here we will enjoy lunch whilst taking in the beautiful surrounding vistas. Around the base of Mt. Popa is the Nat museum, monasteries and a few shops to visit. Driving back through the countryside to Bagan we pass farms, local agriculture and remote villages, always-rich locations for photographers. Hopefully we arrive in Bagan for a final sunset.

Day 13: Bagan to Yangon

Today we will transfer to Bagan airport for our flight back to Yangon. Once we arrive in Yangon, we transfer to our hotel. Depending of flight times and our arrival back in Yangon, we have left the afternoon free for you own exploration of Yangon. This evening we will enjoy a final celebratory dinner together.

Day 14: Yangon – International Departures

This morning we transfer to Yangon International airport for your homeward flights.



JOINING ARRANGEMENTS AND TRANSFERS

You will be met at Yangon International airport upon your arrival into Myanmar, and transferred to your hotel at the beginning of the tour. At the end of your tour, you will be transferred back to Yangon International airport for your International flights leaving Yangon International Airport, Myanmar.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 13 nights hotel accommodation
- Transport in 30 seat private vehicle with air conditioning
- Transfers to and from Yangon International airport
- Domestic flights as per tour schedule
- Boats on Inle Lake and to Mingun
- Local English speaking guide throughout the tour
- Entrance fees as per program
- All meals at a selection of local restaurants
- Daily drinking water

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International Flights to/from Yangon, Myanmar
- Drinks and snacks between included meals
- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal travel insurance
- Entry Visa
- Any personal expenses including but not limited to laundry, phone calls, gratuities, souvenirs etc...
- Bicycle rental, trishaw, taxi or boats that you may choose to hire outside of the specified.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Optional balloon activities strongly recommended for photographers. The aerial perspective and the light at sunrise are truly amazing!

Option 1: Bagan

Balloons over Bagan: US\$ 300 per person
(Standard package, flight over Bagan at sunrise)

Option 2: Bagan – Mandalay – Inle Lake

Oriental Ballooning Package: US\$ 860 per person



(Premium Package, 3 flights over Bagan, Mandalay & Inle Lake). Please note that capacities in the baskets are limited and we recommend early reservations, in which case we will need the full names/weights of the passengers.

ACCOMMODATION

We will be staying at good hotels in each location, chosen for their convenience to our locations. They will be comfortable and have generators for when there are power outages. WIFI should be available, but it will be slow and not too reliable.

FOOD

Breakfast will be taken at our hotels before we leave for the morning photography. If we go out early for sunrise, we may arrange a packed breakfast to take along with us. Lunch and dinner will be at local restaurants or our hotel. The local Burmese food is influenced by Thai, Chinese and Indian foods; it is very tasty. Some of the hotels and restaurants will have Western and European selections. The restaurants we use will have high standards for good, clean, safe food.

SPENDING MONEY

Burmese Kyats (pronounced Jets)

As Myanmar is now opening up to the modern world, it is getting much easier to exchange money. A few hotels accept credit cards, but they will charge a high percentage for using them. It is still easiest and best to bring new, good, clean, crisp, unfolded US dollar bills, as they are accepted and easily exchanged everywhere. Euros are starting to be accepted as well, but US dollars still works best. When you arrive in Yangon, we can get your money exchanged to Burmese Kyats. Airports all over Myanmar are now a good place to exchange money; also new banks have been opening up in every town.

HOW MUCH

You will need spending money for your own personal drinks, snacks etc... outside of the meals supplied. Also for any souvenirs you might want. There will be a few places where you will find traditional souvenirs, if you are interested. Tip money for guides, drivers, waiters etc... we recommend £50 per person (70 euro, \$74) we will give you advice.

Generally the Burmese people don't ask for money to be photographed, but of course that is starting to change. If you arrange a photograph with young monks or something like this, it is good to donate some money to them. When visiting monasteries and nunneries, it is customary to donate money or food, out of kindness, support and respect. We can help you with suggestions for amounts when we are there.

As for how much to bring, that is of course up to you and your spending habits. Myanmar is generally not an expensive country.



VACCINATIONS AND HEALTH

Check with your local travel clinic or doctor at least 6–8 weeks before departure. If you are travelling from the UK visit fitfortravel.nhs.uk, for Myanmar specifically [Fit For Travel: Myanmar](#).

Mosquito repellent is recommended. Bottled water will be supplied, do not drink tap water. ask your doctor or physician for advice on anti biotics for common bacterial stomach infections. You may want to carry antiseptic wipes or lotion that sanitises your hands without soap and water.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is recommended that you have appropriate insurance to cover personal accident, medical costs, repatriation, and loss of luggage and holiday cancellation. We will require you to send us a copy of your insurance policy.

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

A passport valid for at least six months beyond the date of entry into Myanmar is required. Visa on arrival is now possible, but that can change at any time. It is best to con-

tact the Myanmar Embassy in your country and get your Tourist Visa before arriving in Myanmar.

LANGUAGE

The people in Myanmar speak Burmese. Generally, hotels and some restaurant staff speak English in the tourist areas. Some of the locals can speak some English. We will have an English-speaking guide to help us out.

CLIMATE

November is the beginning of the cool season in Myanmar and the best time to travel there. It can get into the 30s°C (85 to 90 degrees F) in the heat of the day. Inle Lake will be cooler to cold on the water and at night. Yangon and Mandalay are generally hot and maybe a bit cool at night. Bagan is very dry and maybe slightly cooler than Yangon/Mandalay. There is little chance of rain, if we do get rain, it usually doesn't last long. Overall it will be very pleasant and comfortable.

CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS

Evenings and early mornings you might need a light jacket or sweater. Boat rides on Inle Lake can be cold and windy in the early mornings. Best to bring layers that can be peeled off in the heat of the day. The sun can get very hot and intense during the day. Sunglasses, hat and sun-screen are recommended. Long pants (with zip off legs to make shorts) and long sleeve shirts (with sleeves than can be rolled up) made of thin, light material work best to protect from the sun, bugs etc...

At temples, pagodas, and monasteries, short pants, shorts, tank tops are not allowed. Modest clothing and cover up out of respect for their culture. The traditional



Longyi (a cloth wrap worn around the waist, running down to the feet) is worn by woman and men.

Bare feet is mandatory at all religious sites, including temples, pagodas, monasteries, nunneries. Sandals, flip-flops or light shoes that can be removed easily are recommended as shoes and socks are not allowed. You will find sandals and no socks works best, as you will be removing them so often. Your feet will get dirty which is just part of the experience.

The difficulty level of this trip is low, some walking and a bit of climbing around temples, some longer stairways, but not in any way extreme.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT AND INFORMATION

- Camera bag or backpack such as the Flipside or Trekker series designed by LowePro.
- Any extra equipment that doesn't fit in your camera bag/hand luggage will need to go in a hard case that can be put in the aircraft hold.
- A spare camera is highly recommended.
- Sturdy tripod – not only useful for low light photography but also for accurate framing and composition of landscape and close-up images.
- Cable release – mechanical or electronic remote to avoid shake on long exposures.

- Neutral density, graduated filters and polariser, if you use these.
- Lens cloth,
- Sensor cleaning device (optional)
- Lightweight 'trekking' absorbent towel for drying cameras and equipment
- Camera rain cover for camera and camera bag
- Sufficient memory cards for the whole tour. Myanmar has poor quality, unreliable memory cards, it is not recommended to buy them there.
- Film users should bring enough film, as it will not be possible to buy good quality, fresh film in Myanmar.
- A laptop with the image editing applications of your choice, essential for checking and presenting images during the trip and for one-on-one sessions with the tutor. Wi-Fi will be available albeit slow.
- Backup storage device (optional)
- Spare batteries and chargers. Power outages are very common in Myanmar, but the hotels generally have backup generators. carry plenty of extra batteries. If your equipment uses AA or AAA batteries or any other replace/dispose type of battery, bring enough for your trip. You will not be able to find good quality, reliable batteries in Myanmar.
- International all-in-one travel plug adapter, on sale at airports, is strongly advised. Myanmar has a real mixed bag of electrical sockets from different countries that supplied electrical components over the years. Bring a universal adapter with a variety of plugs.

PARTNERS

Although this is primarily a photography holiday non photographer partners will be very welcome as there are many

options and interesting possibilities for a relaxing and culturally rewarding holiday in addition to taking photographs.

MORE QUESTIONS?

We hope that this information has answered some of your questions about the holiday, it doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any more questions please get in touch, talking on the phone (we will always call you back) can often be a quick way of sorting out individual questions and helps us to get to know each other before the tour.

BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Fill in the [online booking form](#), or give us a call on our landline: +44 (0)1630 647828

ADVENTURE TRAVEL

This is an adventure travel photography holiday and the itinerary will be dependent on the vagaries of the weather, local conditions and other variables. Wild Photography Holidays may use their discretion to change the itinerary should conditions dictate this; your health, safety and enjoyment will always be our primary concern when making such changes.

LINKS

View [images and information for this tour](#) on the website. Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#).