

Uncommon Journeys, LLC

## Burma: Land of Harmony, Spirit of Grace

February 14 - 28, 2010

This is Burma...



...and it will be quite unlike any land you know about.

~Rudyard Kipling, "Letters from the East"

The reasons to love Burma are many: gracious people, millennia-old pagodas, picturesque villages, floating gardens, crimson & amethyst sunsets. Time passes ever so gently in this enchanting place, which is contentedly sheltered from mass tourism and the rush of contemporary life. The deluxe hotels are not oppressively chic nor modern, but simple, comfortable, peaceful, and remarkably harmonious with the environment. This magical country promises wonderful cultural experiences, and delivers even more than it promises.

### Tour Highlights

- Visit the resplendent, 2500 year old, golden Shwedagon Pagoda
- Explore 11<sup>th</sup> century Bagan temples from a hot air balloon
- Discover Inle Lake's charms and leg rowers in a magical world afloat
- Experience timeless scenes from life in the pristine Burmese countryside
- Enjoy the hospitality of the world's friendliest, most gracious people

**Tour price: \$3700 Single supplement: \$768**

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Itinerary: February 14 - 28, 2010

**Day 1: Sunday, February 14: Travel to Bangkok**

**Day 2: Monday, February 15: Arrive in Bangkok**

If an overnight stay required, the most convenient hotel is the Bangkok Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel. (Please note: not included in tour price.)



**Day 3: Tuesday, February 16: Bangkok → Yangon**

Depart Bangkok on Thai Airways flight TG303 at 8:30 a.m. and arrive mid-morning in Yangon. (Please note: not included in tour price. You must book and purchase on your own.) After a visit to Bogyoke Market, we spend the afternoon at the resplendent 2,500 year old Shwedagon Pagoda, for insight into the deeply spiritual lives of the Burmese people.

**Day 4: Wednesday, February 17 Yangon**

Today we visit the Chinese market, the bustling Yangon River Harbor and the 220-foot long Chauk Htat Gyi Reclining Buddha.

**Day 5: Thursday, February 18 Yangon → Mandalay**

Our morning flight takes us to Mandalay and a stop at the marble Buddha carving pavilions to observe one of Mandalay's most important cottage industries. At Mahamuni Pagoda, Burma's 12-foot high, most revered Buddha statue glistens with gold leaf that worshippers have burnished onto his body. We then observe the process of gold-leaf making and visit the intricately carved Shwe Nan Daw Monastery, once part of the Royal Palace. Nearby, Kuthodaw is the world's largest book, which houses the *tripitaka*, or Buddhist scriptures. Tonight we enjoy a presentation of the Mandalay Marionettes.



**Day 6: Friday, February 19 Mandalay**

Morning at the boat jetty reveals fascinating scenes from daily life on the Ayerwaddy River, made familiar to the world by Kipling as "The Road to Mandalay." We continue to Ava, the longest standing capital of the Shan Dynasty, where the ruined temple contains magnificent Buddha statues from the Shan period. We visit the silk weaving, tapestry and marionette workshops, where puppets are intricately carved and lavishly dressed in ornate costumes. Save room in your luggage for souvenirs and gifts! Depending on flight schedules, we fly to Bagan or enjoy sunset at the U-Bein Bridge and overnight in Mandalay.



**Day 7: Saturday, February 20 Bagan**

Prepare to be enchanted by this paragon of living history and spirituality. Since the 11<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist pilgrims have come here to build temples and pagodas, in hopes of achieving nirvana. Today thousands of these shrines glorify the landscape, pushing their way gracefully toward the sky, as if joined in one majestic prayer. They bear witness to Buddhist devotion, their grandeur undiminished through the centuries. We explore the historic and architectural sites, including Kay Min Ga, Ananda, Manuha and Shwe San Daw, followed by a (hopefully!) magnificent sunset.

**Day 8: Sunday, February 21 Bagan**

Weather permitting, we'll witness sunrise from a hot air balloon flight over pagodas, temples and the Ayerwaddy River. It is a magical, not-to-be-missed experience! We then explore the environs of Bagan, ending at Yoke Soun Monastery, which has been converted to a museum that houses some of Myanmar's most important religious artifacts and scriptures. The monastery's exquisite teak carvings depict scenes from Lord Buddha's life, and from the 550 reincarnations of Siddharta. Of course no trip to Bagan would be complete without a visit to the lacquerware workshop, where we see first hand why the artisans are celebrated for the beauty and delicacy of their work. After admiring this labor of love, you won't resist taking home one of these treasures.



**Day 9: Monday, February 22 Bagan → Pindaya**

Today we fly to Heho and drive to the charming mountain village of Pindaya. It is the epitome of an unspoiled land, where families engage in cottage industries of making Shan paper, parasols and terracotta pottery. Our last stop is the Pindaya Caves, which shelter 9000 Buddha statues that pilgrims have placed here since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The effect is awe-inspiring, and legend insists that if you persevere far enough into the cave you'll come to Bagan.

**Day 10: Tuesday, February 23 Pindaya → Inle Lake**

Early risers won't want to miss Pindaya Lake wake up and come to life. Scenes from daily life might include ox-drawn carts, bathing & washing clothes, or water pots balanced expertly on the bearer's head. We then drive to Inle Lake, a

world unto itself. Intha people live in charming hamlets in the lake, tend their floating gardens, and fish from flat bottom boats. The fishermen are known for their unique, graceful, one-legged rowing technique. The villages are untouched by modern world intrusions, sitting on stilts, in complete harmony with the environment.



**Day 11: Wednesday, February 24 Inle Lake**

This morning we visit the 12<sup>th</sup> century ruined pagoda complex of In Daing. The *stupas* and stucco carvings are superb examples of Shan architecture. Time-permitting, other stops might include the silk-weaving factory, a market, or whatever fascinating daily life scenes attract our attention. There are sure to be many.

**Day 12: Thursday, February 25 Inle Lake**

Today we continue our exploration of Inle Lake's many wonders.

**Day 13: Friday, February 26 Inle Lake → Yangon**

Fly to Yangon for the end of our all-too-brief, magical journey.

**Day 14: Saturday, February 27 Yangon → Bangkok**

Thai Airways flight TG 304 at 9:45 a.m.

**Day 15: Sunday, February 28 Bangkok → Onward destinations**



## **Please note...**

### **Tour price**

The tour price, based on a minimum of 6 participants, **includes** domestic flights within Burma, ground transportation, 11 nights of deluxe accommodations, all meals from lunch on February 16 through breakfast on February 27, entrance fees, hot air balloon ride, tips of a group nature and the services of an English-speaking local guide. The tour price **does not include** international airfare to Yangon, overnight in Bangkok (if required), tourist visa, beverages and tip to local guide.

### **Deposit**

A \$500 deposit is required to register and secure a place on the tour. The balance is due 60 days prior to the departure date. The deposit is fully refundable if notice is given 60 days prior to the departure date.

### **International airline tickets**

You must book and purchase your own airline tickets to Bangkok, and between Bangkok and Yangon.

### **Passport and Visa Requirement**

A passport with 6 months validity and a visa are required to enter Burma.

### **Tour Leader**

**Burma: Land of Harmony, Spirit of Grace** is organized and accompanied by Debbie Jefkin-Elnekave, a travel photographer and tour guide who specializes in remote and exotic cultures. Her extensive travels in Myanmar, knowledge of the customs and profound appreciation for the people ensure a very rewarding journey. To learn more about Debbie, please visit [www.uncommonimages.biz](http://www.uncommonimages.biz) and click on Video.

### **Waiver of Liability**

Uncommon Journeys, LLC (d/b/a Jefkin/Elnekave Photography) assumes no responsibility for accidents or injury to individuals participating in the tour. You will be required to read, accept and sign an agreement which releases Uncommon Journeys, LLC from any responsibility of liability.

### **Preserving the Burmese Culture**

Much of the world has been taught by well-intentioned tourists to beg for money, candy, pens, toys, lipstick and trinkets. This type of giving erodes the local culture, perpetuates a negative stereotype of rich foreigners, and creates reliance by the local people on begging. It also encourages parents to exploit their children by sending them out to beg from tourists instead of going to school. In order to preserve the local culture, Uncommon Journeys, LLC and our local tour operator enforce a strict policy against this type of giving. Instead, we encourage you to focus on cultural interactions by smiling, making friends, and learning a few basic phrases in the Burmese language. You are also encouraged to buy handicrafts in the markets and from privately-owned shops. By following these suggestions, our presence in this wonderful place will not endanger their habits and traditions. If you feel that it would be difficult for you to comply with this policy, you should reconsider before signing up for the tour.