



Save the Children



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TRIP NOTES

BELIEVE ACHIEVE INSPIRE

CYCLE BURMA (MYANMAR)
BURMA-MYANMAR

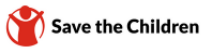
Wed 27 Jan - Tue 09 Feb 2016





In aid of Save the Children

27 Jan - 09 Feb 2016



14 DAYS | BURMA-MYANMAR | CHALLENGING

Arguably South East Asia's best kept secret, Myanmar is a mystical blend of unique culture, regal history, jaw-dropping views and a magnificent temple-lined landscape. Our six day challenge sees us tackle approx 450kms of rural countryside, from the former royal capital Mandalay to Inle Lake. Pedalling through the itinerary, expect to soak up spectacular sunsets over the ancient city of Bagan and pass remote villages in untouched corners, before flying to Yangon to discover the Shwedagon Pagoda.

- Uncover the secrets of magical Myanmar
- Cycle over 450kms from Mandalay to Inle Lake
- Watch the sunset over the ancient city of Bagan
- Board a private boat for a scenic cruise to Bagan
- Have a go at haggling at Nyaung Oo Market

YOUR CHALLENGE DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 Wed 27 Jan

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International departure from London

The day has arrived and it's finally time for the long-awaited departure to Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city. Here we meet the rest of our team and the Charity Challenge representative, before saying goodbye to family and friends.

DAY 2 Thu 28 Jan

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Arrive Mandalay

Touching down in Mandalay, the nerves turn to excitement as we disembark the flight and head for our bike fitting. Remember to bring any additional cycling gear you require (such as clip-in pedals and gel seats), as this is the best opportunity to adapt your bike for your comfort before setting off. We will spend the night in a hotel and enjoy our first team dinner together.

DAY 3 Fri 29 Jan

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Mandalay to Monywa (approximately 57kms)

After a quick transfer to the small town of Myin Mu, it's bums on seats for our first day. The road to Monywa is paved and we make plenty of stops to acclimatise, including visits to Thanboddhay Temple and Boditahtaung Pagoda. As we head deeper into the countryside, we come face to face with the traditional Burmese way of life. Overnight at a hotel in Monywa.

DAY 4 Sat 30 Jan

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Monywa to Pakkoku to Bagan (approximately 48kms)

Transfer to Chaung-U before setting off on our 48km ride, with steep gradients and tougher terrain. Stopping for lunch, you may have the opportunity to rack up some extra kilometres by cycling directly to Pakkoku depending on the time. Otherwise you will be transferred there, for your scenic cruise to Bagan. Then it's time to transfer to our elevated terrace to watch the sunset. Your reward will be dinner and a comfy bed in a Bagan hotel.

DAY 5 Sun 31 Jan

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Bagan to Mt Popa to Meiktila (approximately 50kms ride and two hour climb of Mt Popa)

You will need your strength to explore the back roads that lead to Mt. Popa and Taung Kalat, a volcanic plug at 1,518m. It's a tough uphill climb to the entrance to Mt. Popa, rewarded by dramatic views over the Myingyan Plain. Once here, you will get off your bike and begin the hike up the 770 steps to the summit of Taung Kalat. Following the hike, we transfer to Meiktila for the night.

DAY 6 Mon 01 Feb

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Meiktila to Kalaw (approximately 87kms)

Take it easy on an enjoyable flat route for the first 40km, before a hilly climb up to undulating terrain. The air gets cooler as we reach 600m – perfect for the series of hills that follow. Lunch is a traditional Burmese affair, before the final push to the charming town of Kalaw. The group will have the opportunity to explore this former British hill station before dinner.

DAY 7 Tue 02 Feb

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Kalaw to Nyaung Shwe (approximately 65kms)

The penultimate day of the challenge begins with a thrilling descent to Aungban, before powering back up into the hills. Cycling around the flat of the Heho Plains, we are led through a series of climbs in the Nyaung Shwe Valley. We stop for a packed lunch as we pass towns and villages, eventually reaching our destination: Nyaung Shwe, just north of Inle Lake.

DAY 8 Wed 03 Feb

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Nyaung Shwe to Inle Lake (approximately 30kms)

It's the final day of the ride and just a picturesque 30kms to the finish line. En route we explore the village of Khaung Daing, crossing canals and pedalling past paddy fields. Then, feeling triumphant, we say goodbye to our bikes and board a private boat across Inle Lake. Sailing down a small canal, we reach an idyllic spot for a picnic. Return for a celebratory meal.

DAY 9 Thu 04 Feb

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Inle lake to Heho to Yangon sightseeing

Fly from Heho to Yangon for the final day of the trip. As the hard work is over we indulge in a sightseeing tour of the city, taking in the Shwedagon Pagoda, the country's most revered Buddhist temple. Built more than 2,500 years ago, this massive temple complex offers breath-taking views and the perfect finale before we transfer to the airport for the flight home.

DAY 10 Fri 05 Feb

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~~Yangon to Bangkok~~
Flight to Bangkok and overnight at Peninsula hotel.

This part of the itinerary has been organised by Mitsubishi Electric.

DAY 11 Sat 06 Feb

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Bangkok

Day at leisure in Bangkok.

DAY 12 Sun 07 Feb

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Bangkok

Day of leisure in Bangkok.

organised by Mitsubishi Electric.

DAY 13 Mon 08 Feb

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Factory visit

Transfer from Peninsula Hotel to MCP factory in Chonburi c/w return Journey evening meal then transfer to Bangkok airport for late night check in.

DAY 14 Tue 09 Feb

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Arrive UK

Flight back at London Heathrow at 0620hrs.

NB

The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, the strength of the group and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary; however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your challenge leader will have the final say.

This part of the itinerary has been organised by Mitsubishi Electric

Level of Difficulty

The Burma Cycle challenge is graded as "challenging". This is the perfect challenge for participants who are of an adventurous spirit and an open mind, already have an interest in cycling and would like to train towards something that will test their endurance and stamina

You can tell your supporters that on your Burma Cycle Challenge you will be:

- Covering approximately 330km across 6 days of cycling
- Cycling for approximately 6-8 hours per day
- Tackling hills that reach approximately 20% gradient for short stretches
- Battling the heat and the dust. Your route is very exposed, and temperatures can reach the late 20s/early 30s
- Cycling on a mixture of tarmac and dirt roads

Money

Currency: The currency in Burma is the Kyat (pronounced Chat), but we recommend that you carry a mixture of Kyat and US Dollars, which are widely accepted in hotels and by currency exchange houses. However, please ensure that any bills are in good condition. For up to date currency exchange, go to www.xe.com.

Credit Cards: Credit cards will be used for emergencies, but are not widely accepted aside from in large hotels.

ATMs: ATMs are not widely available in Burma. You should carry small amounts of Kyat with you, and larger amounts of US Dollars which you can exchange.

How much to bring: All accommodation and meals are included within the price of the trip, as well as water during the days of your cycle. You will not need to carry a lot of money with you during the challenge, but you may have the opportunity to purchase drinks or snacks in the small local villages that you pass through on the way. The real shopping and spending opportunities come in Inle Lake, where there are lots of incredible artisanal products. We recommend carrying approximately £200 in a mixture of Kyat and US Dollars. Please get small denominations of dollars for exchanging.

Tipping: Tipping is at your sole discretion and all staff are paid a fair wage. However, tourism is a tipping culture, and Burmese guides will generally receive a tip at the end of a job well done. If you choose to tip, we would suggest an amount of approximately \$75USD per person, which will be split across the team for your whole challenge. Your challenge leader may collect a small 'kitty' amount at the start of the trek, which will be distributed to all members of staff, hotels, boatmen and rest stops along the way.

Visa

UK citizens do require a visa to enter Burma, and we will provide you with information at 3 months prior to departure. There are two different methods of applying for a Burmese visa: either an e-visa, or the traditional paper form. This will be explained on our visa application advice. The visa costs approximately £14/£35 depending on the method of application. You will need at least 6 months validity on your passport after the end of the challenge.

Vaccinations

For up to date vaccination information please check the NHS 'Fit for Travel' website:

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>. Although the Charity Challenge team are travel professionals, they are not medical experts and we would encourage you to visit your GP or travel nurse to discuss vaccination requirements. Your GP may ask questions about the specific locations that you are visiting in Burma, and as such it may be useful to take a copy of your itinerary with you.

Flights

You will be flying indirect from London Heathrow to Mandalay. The flying time is approx. 13-14 hours, with one stop. Your flight tickets will be issued to you upon departure at the airport. If you choose to book your own flights please confirm with the Charity Challenge office first, otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact flights@charitychallenge.com for further assistance). For more general flights questions, please refer to our main [FAQs page](#).

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have a suitable travel insurance policy whilst participating on the challenge. We have a special policy which covers among other things, medical (emergency, evacuation and repatriation) arrangements, cancellation and curtailment of the challenge, and more specifically for the adventurous activities undertaken on this challenge. If you have your own travel insurance policy, you must ensure that it provides at least the same level of cover as our recommended policy, including protecting the charity in the event of your cancellation 56 days or less prior to departure. If you choose not to purchase our recommended policy when you book we will send you a disclaimer which you should complete and return.

For more general travel insurance questions, please refer to our main [FAQs page](#).

Group Size

Each group is intended to be 13 people minimum in order to run and maximum of approx. 20 people. We will be able to run this challenge for 8 to 12 people by charging a small group supplement of £75 which will be added to your final balance invoice (self funders) or charged to your charity (minimum sponsorship or flexi).

Leadership

There will be an English-speaking challenge leader who will be responsible for the logistics and co-ordination of your challenge. There will also be numerous support staff to assist them. The challenge leader will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group.

Climate

Burma has two distinct seasons – wet and dry. At all times, it's fairly hot. The wet season runs from May-September, with the dry season from October-April. We run our cycles mainly in September or January/February. September may

still be wet but it's hot and a refreshing time to cycle. Most of the rain is in a short sudden burst, with warm and sunny mornings. You can expect daily temperatures from 25 – 35 degrees. Like the UK, the weather is changeable, and these are rough guidelines.

Terrain

You will be cycling 330kms over 6 days, from 55kms to 90kms a day. You will be cycling between 6 -8 hours daily with 20% of your cycling being off road and 80% on tarmac roads (these roads are poorly maintained in many areas). Some areas are fairly mountainous with several ups and downs. As tourism is increasing in Burma you will encounter some traffic on the roads around you. If the group becomes too far stretched then we will regularly regroup you. Although the days cover long distances, there is plenty of time to stop for photos, to meet locals or to refresh with a cold drink. To avoid all your time on long stretches of tar road we will re-route you at some sections through off the beaten track terrain which will be trails used only by farmers to get to their farming land. These are incredible routes however please be aware that the terrain will be sandy and challenging compared to the roads.

Luggage allowance and valuables

The luggage allowance will depend on the airline we are using for your challenge, but in general it will be one piece of checked baggage at around 23kg. However, we suggest that for our Burma challenge you should only need around 15kg-17kg. If you don't need it, don't bring it, is a good rule. Carry your passport with you and make sure you have a photocopy of your documents (travel insurance etc.) in case they get lost or damaged.

Responsible Tourism

At Charity Challenge we are committed to sustainable and responsible tourism, and work closely with bodies such as the International Porter Protection Group and Climate Care to ensure that our challenges benefit the local environments and communities in which they take place. We ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly, and following local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect, we aim to limit our impact on the natural environment. In addition to taking these practical steps to ensure that our challenges are sustainable, we also make a contribution each year to a number of local community projects, so as to give something back directly to the communities that we visit. Since 2000 we have donated almost £200,000 to such projects, supporting a range of initiatives, including schooling for children in Africa, shelter for street children in Brazil, and Orang-utan conservation in Indonesia. We recommend that any gifts brought over for children are given to the UK challenge leader and distributed where needed by them and our local Ground Agent. If you wish to do more, you should consider buying drinks, postcards and souvenirs from the local vendors. For many, it is their sole source of income. For more information, please visit our [Responsible Tourism](#) pages, where you will be able to view a list of the projects that we currently support.

Typical day

This cycle has lots of early starts to beat the midday heat. You will rise between 5-6am, with breakfast between 6-7 and departure on the cycle around 7-8am. You will fill up your water bottles and get on the bikes, cycling for around 5 hours before lunch. You will have regular water breaks but you may wish to bring extra snacks and energy bars to keep your energy up. You will arrive at your accommodation in the mid-afternoon, and have the rest of the day to relax, have

dinner and rest. Specific hours of activity for each day are given in the itinerary.

Accommodation

You will be staying in hotels throughout the cycle. Most of these are good quality 3-star standard hotels, but in a couple of locations the quality and choice is much lower due to the non-touristy nature of the towns. The facilities in these hotels are much more basic and the quality is lower than elsewhere on the challenge. All rooms here are en-suite, so if you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with please ensure that you note this where appropriate when booking or email challenges@charitychallenge.com.

Food & Drink

Food in Burma is mainly South-East Asian fare, and delicious. For breakfasts you will have a mixture of Western and Asian fare, including eggs, pancakes, fruit, cake, fried rice, eggy bread etc. In the more basic hotels the breakfasts may be less plentiful and good quality than others. Lunch will be taken en route and could consist of a range of things including noodles, soup, avocados, sesame biscuits, fruit. Dinners will be a range of vegetarian and meat dishes, with noodles and rice. It is important that you eat as much as possible during the cycling phase in order to replace body salts lost due to increased perspiration, and you should bring snacks to keep yourself going while cycling, particularly when there is a big break between breakfast and lunch. The tap-water is not safe to drink. Bottled water will be provided during the cycling sections. Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

Clothing and equipment

Good quality, durable kit could mean the difference between a fantastic challenge experience and an uncomfortable one. For your cycle challenge, padded cycling shorts and comfortable footwear are essential, and helmets are compulsory throughout. Training with your cycling shorts is definitely advised! You can bring equipment like clip-in pedals or a gel seat, if desired, in order to adapt your bike in country, and we would also recommend technical/wicking t-shirts rather than cotton shirts. A full kit list for this challenge can be found [here](#). Once you book you will have access to kit discounts with our partners The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire and Cotswold Outdoor.

Toilets

These range from very basic (the public toilets are squat toilets) to normal western standards in the hotels en route.

Phone and WiFi

In most of the hotels WiFi is advertised, although it is not often reliable or fast. Don't rely on having WiFi available every night, and when it is, some websites such as Facebook may be blocked. Phone signal during the challenge will be patchy, but sporadically available depending on your phone provider. In Burma, you can look forward to a simpler way of living, technology-free!

Safety

Charity Challenge considers the safety of all of its participants and staff to be a top priority, and as such we have set up one of the most advanced and thorough safety management systems in the industry. In a nutshell, Our Challenge Safe brand formalises our ethos when it comes to safety, and brings together the procedures and risk management strategies that we use to audit all aspects of our challenges, from vehicles to accommodation to the activity itself. Your welfare is paramount!

In terms of your Burma Cycle challenge, there are a couple of important points that you should be aware of:

- The route is quite exposed, with almost no shade, and on sunny days the temperatures can soar. You should ideally be wearing sun cream, and hydrating constantly throughout the ride!
- The brakes on your bike will be the opposite way to normal. Be aware of this and ensure that you test them softly in order to become accustomed before starting the ride.
- You will be cycling on some dirt roads, but also tarmac roads that can have more car users. Remember that in Burma you will be cycling on the right, and always signal when turning.
- You will be flying internally from Heho to Yangon with a Burmese airline. We have had an external safety audit carried out on the available airlines, and we will only request those carriers that have fulfilled the audit checks.
- Smoke alarms are not a legal requirement in Burma, and as such some of the hotels we use do not have them in place. Your leader will explain the emergency fire procedures to you.

Emergencies

The event is not a race and there is always a large discrepancy in people's cycling abilities. This is allowed for. We have a support vehicle following the group at all times, with staff members at the front and the back. In the event of an emergency, all guides and leaders are maintaining contact via radio, and their decision is final.

Training

Training and fitness is definitely required. It is important that you work specifically on your stamina, leg and joint strength, and balance in order to get as much out of the challenge as possible. The cycle takes place in a hilly environment, so the best training advice is to get outdoors and do some long cycles in the hills around your area. Try and cycle for at least 2 consecutive days in the run-up to the challenge, and if you can do any more this will also really help. Although you will be able to put all of your equipment on the support vehicle during the challenge, it's a good idea to train while carrying a bag or panniers, in order to make it easier for yourself when you no longer need to carry the weight. For more information on training weekends [click here](#)

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Any more questions?

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