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## 8 DAY IMPRESSIVE MYANMAR IRRAWADDY RIVER CRUISE

**Trip Code:** TWIMI20

**Duration:** 9

**Destination:** Myanmar

**Travel Dates:** 2023

### DAY 1 Mandalay - Nwe Nyein (L,D)

Board the majestic Anawrahta, berthed portside at the Mandalay riverside, and enjoy a warm greeting by the staff with some welcome refreshments. Your room has been prepared to be your 'home' for the next seven nights. As the luxurious Anawrahta sets sail, wave good-bye to the local folks on the quay of Mandalay. Soon after our departure, the riverside scenery changes from cityscape to wide open countryside fields and gently rolling hills. As we spend the morning cruising up the river, while away some time at the outdoor Kipling's Bar or enjoy the 360-degree view from the elevated sun deck and pool.

After lunchtime, our expert local guides make you familiar with some of the deep-rooted, yet still ever-present, traditions of Myanmar. Together with our staff, they explain and demonstrate how to wear the traditional Longyi, a wrap-around skirt worn by Burmese men and women on a daily basis. You also can try to apply Thanaka to your face, a traditional paste to keep your skin beautiful and blemish-free, even under Burma's hot sun. During the journey, you will see this ever-present paste on almost every local woman's face, and we may also be seeing you comfortably dressed in a Longyi along with Thanaka-decorated skin, just as locals do, during this journey.

We pass the village of Hsith, which we will see again and visit on our way back in a few days' time. This area is dedicated to the Ayeyarwady Dolphin Conservation Area. Be on the lookout and you may spot one of these endangered fresh water specimens. At mid-afternoon we reach the small town or village of New Nyein and its neighboring hamlet Kyauk Myaung, famous for pottery production. Next to the village of Yanderbo (located south of Mandalay) the pottery village of Nwe Nyein is renowned in Myanmar for its manufacturing of large ceramic pots. All of the pottery is still produced based on traditional techniques passed down over generations. A wide variety of decorative pots is on display, and you might have an opportunity to try your hand at making your very own. Known as Martaban jars, the large glazed earthenware pots can hold up to an impressive 400 liters.

The boat moors here, and to kick off the night, we all come together to break the ice with fellow passengers at our Longyi Cocktail Party. Mingle, chit-chat and enjoy a drink before dinner commences.

### DAY 2 Nwe Nyein - Tagaung (B,L,D)

For early morning risers, we offer a yoga session on the sun deck. Strengthen your muscles and ease your mind by merging your movements with the languid flow of the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy). We are still cruising in the

Ayeyarwady Dolphin Conservation Area, so keep your eyes open. This morning we also pass through the 3rd defile of the Ayeyarwady. Here, about 100 km north of Mandalay, is where prehistoric lava flows caused the river to bend sharply.

As we start the day sailing towards Tagaung, we have in stock this morning some interesting onboard activities to join in based on your own liking. A ship tour with the cruise manager lets you have a look behind-the-scenes of this fascinating river vessel. The visit with the captain at the bridge is an interesting way to learn how and what is required to maneuver safely along the Ayeyarwady and avoid its tricky moving underwater sandbanks. Afterwards, join our guide in the lounge for an informative presentation about the amazing waterway, the Ayeyarwady, learning of its many facets and peculiarities.

Sailing along, we pass by bamboo built villages and small fishing settlements. Fishermen cast their nets, and women do their laundry on the shores. Children curiously gaze and wave as we cruise by. Waiving enthusiastically back to them will surely brighten their day. In the afternoon, Anawrahta docks in Tagaung. Our excursion introduces you to life on the riverbank and the town's ancient, but naturally time-worn, fortifications. The place is also known for its archaeological sites and famous Nat (spirit) shrines, such as the Bo Bo Gyi shrine.

Upon returning to the ship, we serve an afternoon tea at the Kipling's Bar. Along with the magnificent sunset views of the surroundings from the ship's top deck, you may like to try one of our bar tender's signature long drinks or cocktails. The ship sails until nightfall and find its overnight mooring position. After dinner, you are welcome to enjoy a movie in a very unique setting, as we have set up our cinema under the stars on the sun deck.

### **DAY 3                      Taguang – Katha (B,L,D)**

Enjoy the morning at ease after breakfast while we are sailing towards Katha, a former British outpost on the upper Ayeyarwady with a fascinating colonial history. Katha was the final resting place for many of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, and over a hundred ships were scuppered here in 1942 - an act of denial by the British before the advancing Japanese. The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's sunken ships bells are one of the town's highlights.

For some onboard entertainment, join a cooking class led by our Executive Chef. You can learn how to prepare some delicious local dishes, give a helping hand and ask him questions about local cuisine which lay on the tip of your tongues since you arriving in Myanmar and tasting the local food. Among the recipes shown are some easy ones to try back home yourself. The cooking class is followed by a beginner's Burmese language class in the Mandalay Lounge, where you can learn a few useful phrases to use during the journey. We recommend paying extra attention to shopping-related vocabulary, as this will be a very useful tool for a market shopping tour on our excursion on the next day.

In the afternoon, we reach the charming colonial town of Katha, the setting of George Orwell's novel *Burmese Days*. As you stroll around Katha's streets (we also use a trishaw for authentic local transportation), you can imagine that little has changed since the time the book was published in 1934. Our tour takes you around the places which play a major role in his novel, including George Orwell's personal house. It gives you a chance to imagine how life must have been in this far-flung corner of the British Empire. We also invite you for a special lecture, hosted at the former British Commissioner's house by the local historian Mr. Nyo Ko Naing. His expert knowledge paired with the historic venue, make for a truly special experience. Enjoy a relaxing tea time in the garden of the British Commissioner's house after the lecture to chit-chat a bit more about the old days of yore with Mr. Nyo Ko Naing (alternatively, we may host the afternoon tea onboard the ship).

Back on board enjoy some down time. As the evening approaches and the sun immerses everything in a golden light, a special event is going to take place at the Kipling's Bar. Dress up in style to send 'a toast to the past' during our ever popular "British Club", as we reenact a time where gents smoked cigars and ladies sipped on tasty gin and tonics (bring your respective attire to make this night unforgettable). As you look around, the moment seems like a scene from an old photograph dating back to a bygone era. Sometimes we need just that – to stop the ticking of the clock.

After dinner, we welcome some folks from the Shan tribes who live in a village near town. They perform a traditional local dance with music on the sun deck. We also offer our cinema under the stars once again on the sun deck.

#### **DAY 4 Katha - Sinkan (B,L,D)**

This morning, after breakfast, we embark on an exclusive and quite adventurous daytrip. We have chartered a carriage to take you on an Oriental train ride from Katha inland towards the small town of Naba. The train meanders through the thick and vivid jungle of teak forest. It is a little like a step back in time to the old days when trains slowly rolled through the countryside passing small villages and lush green vegetation. At the train station in Naba, a small local welcome committee awaits our "delegation" with a local performance amidst the on-goings on the platforms of Naba's main terminal.

After this tour through Myanmar's back gardens and nature, we drive back by bus to Katha. We stop at the local, colorful market for some grocery shopping. Here you can try to apply your Burmese language skills which you have learned the day before. Hope you were paying attention! Partake in some banter and laughter with the vendors like the locals do and become part of the daily bustling market atmosphere.

Back on board lunch is served and the afternoon is at your own leisure as the ship enters the most scenic area of the upper Ayeyarwady, making its way to the famed 2nd defile. You can kick back on your private balcony, have a snooze on the sun deck, or join us for a demonstration of the ancient habits of betel-chewing and smoking cheroot cigars. Tasting is optional but if you want to try these traditional pleasures, now is your chance.

For a low-key end of this cruise day, join the open-air cinema showing of the documentary film titled "The Lady", the story of Aung San Suu Kyi and her path to becoming a hero of Burma's democracy movement.

#### **DAY 5 Sinkan – Inywa (B,L,D)**

Today is the most scenic day on this voyage, and for our captain, the most challenging day. In the early

morning, prepare your binoculars and camera on the sun deck as we make our first passing through the impressive Second Defile. It takes us about two hours to cruise through this section of the river, depending on the force of the current. Breakfast this morning is served on the sun deck, so you can take in every unforgettable moment of this dramatic part of our journey.

Once we reach the other side, Anawrahta makes a U-turn at Sinkan Bridge for a second run through the amazing Second Defile. With the current on our side, it may take as little as 30 minutes to reach the other end this time around. After the defile we reach Kyun Daw Island, where we halt for an afternoon excursion. We visit the countless small pagodas, local villages and river nomads who live on the riverbanks of the Ayeyarwady. To this day, they live off the land for the most part and make their living from agriculture and fishing. Delve into this wonderfully remote area and get a taste of what a simpler life might be like.

Now sailing downstream, you can feel the current pushing us forward and the riverside landscape passing much faster. After lunch, the rest of the day is all yours. Opt for a spa treatment including sauna for deep relaxation or grab an interesting book from our library (we do have George Orwell's *Burmese Days* on board).

Our kitchen team is very much looking forward to inviting you to a special dining event this evening. They are going to host one of their renowned BBQ dinners on the sun deck, which is accompanied by an entertaining Burmese traditional dance performance by the crew.

## **DAY 6                      Inywa - Hsithé (B,L,D)**

As there is no rush this morning, you can sleep in a bit longer. We offer the usual sunrise morning yoga or meditation on the sun deck inclusive of wonderful natural backdrops. After breakfast, come to our enlightening presentation on 'Religion in Myanmar' in which spiritual habits and customs play a very important role.

We are now back in the region of the Ayeyarwady Dolphin Conservation which was established in 2005 and stretches over 74 km along the river. The Ayeyarwady dolphin (*orcaella brevirostris*), named after the river of course, is one of five species worldwide that live in rivers. They look different than ocean dolphins, having a grey body and blunt forehead and nose. They can live up to 50 years and are found in only three rivers today. There are less than 70 individuals left in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady River.

After a relaxed cruise, we reach the picturesque fishing village of Hsithé in the early afternoon. The village has established a visitor center directly on the river bank with panoramic views. Often dolphins can be observed in the waters close-by. This village is also home to fishermen who conduct co-operative fishing with Ayeyarwady dolphins. They do so to protect this critically endangered species. Aside from getting in touch with the locals here, the fishermen also show us how to cast a traditional fishing net.

Life in this small village has changed very little over the centuries. Its charm abounds with its bullock carts, smiling children, and locals going about their daily routine. We moor here overnight alongside our Hsithé village neighbours.

## **DAY 7                      Hsithé - Mandalay (B,L,D)**

In the very early morning our crew participates in alms giving at the local monastery. Feel free to join before we raise the anchor and sail on further south.

Around mid-morning, we will reach Mingun. From a far distance, the huge unfinished stupa of King

Bodawpaya is already visible. If time permits, we make a short stop to visit this colossal stupa. It has never been completed because of an astrologer stating that once the temple would be finished, the king will die. As people back in the days believed astrological predictions, the king decided not to finish but continue the construction indefinitely.

Eventually we reach Mandalay in the late afternoon. Once the ship has docked we head out to visit one of the must-see attractions located on the outskirts of the city in a place called Amarapura, an area known for traditional silk weaving and silver/bronze casting. Here the renowned wooden U-Bein Bridge - the world's oldest and longest teakwood bridge – attracts locals and visitors especially during sunset. You may take a stroll on the bridge to mingle with the locals, but one of the best views one can have is from a small barge rowing onto the lake with the bridge and sunset composing a magical picture to remember forever.

We return to the ship and get ready for a joyful farewell dinner aboard paired with a 'Ramayana' dance and music show, depicting legendary ancient stories.

## **DAY 8 Mandalay (B)**

After breakfast, your stay on your floating, luxury home comes to an end.

## **DAY**

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