
12 DAY MYANMAR EXOTIC CHINDWIN AND IRRAWADDY RIVER CRUISE

Trip Code: TWMECR20

Duration: 13

Destination: Myanmar

Travel Dates: 2023

DAY 1 Mandalay - Yesagyo (D)

Board the majestic Anawrahta, berthed portside at the Mandalay riverside and enjoy friendly greetings by the staff and some welcome refreshments. Your room is prepared to be your “home” for the coming 11 nights. As the luxurious Anawrahta sets sail, wave good-bye to the riverbank and the local people on the quay of Mandalay. It is time to relax and settle in your cabin. Today will be a leisure sailing day on our way towards the Chindwin River. Perhaps you would like to take a refreshing swim in the pool on the sundeck, with infinity-like 360-degree views of the passing sceneries. Our Thazin spa is open until late; feel free to schedule an appointment whilst we are on the way and passing the temple-topped hillsides of scenic Sagaing.

Later, our expert local guides make you familiar with some old, but still very present, traditions of Myanmar. Together with our staff, they will explain about and demonstrate, how to wear the traditional Longyi, a wrap-around skirt worn by Myanmar’s men and women every day for any occasion. 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. You will see it during the journey on almost every local woman’s face.

Afterwards, join the afternoon tea served in the Kipling’s Bar with some delicious treats whilst we approach the confluence of the Ayeyarwady (Irawaddy) and Chindwin. The Chindwin is the largest tributary of the Ayeyarwady and is 1,200 kilometers long. The river originates up north in the Kachin State and takes a general southerly course. Much of the Chindwin lies within mountain ranges and deep forests.

The rest of the day is at your own pace. To kick off the evening we all come together to break the ice with fellow passengers during our Longyi Cocktail Party. Mingle, chit-chat and enjoy a drink before dinner as the ship has now entered the Chindwin River on the way to its overnight spot.

DAY 2 Yesagyo - A Myinth - Alon (B,L,D)

Rise early to join our daily yoga session on the sundeck. A good exercise to strengthen your muscles and ease your mind with stunning backdrops of Myanmar’s riverscape. You will be well-limbered for our first excursion of the cruise and every other one as we offer this wonderful and mindful activity every morning on the top deck.

After breakfast, the morning excursion takes us to the historical village of A Myint in the lower Chindwin region and just south of Monywa. It is a village of rich history which has seen several of ancient Burma’s dynasties come and go. Legend states that A Myint was founded in the 11th century by a general serving under

King Anawrahta, who was banished from the Bagan kingdom after having a promiscuous love affair with Princess Manisanda. Today, A Myint is famous for its 336 stone stupas scattered throughout its centre. Explore the rustic village and its lively riverside port to get to know about the life in this town. Marvel at the centuries-old pagodas and take a moment here to let the serenity of these millennium-old walls seep into your soul.

The afternoon is at your leisure time to enjoy our various facilities onboard. After lunch, our guide gives you an even deeper understanding of the country's traditions and customs and how they shape life still today within a fascinating presentation titled "Myanmar's Ways of Life".

As we sail into the dusk up the river our chef and kitchen team prepares for tonight's outdoor BBQ feast arranged on the open sun deck with a vast spread of grilled meat, seafood, veggies and local specialties. To end this exciting day, our team performs a traditional "Yamayana" dance - a legendary short story performance accompanied with traditional music. It is said that the "Yamayana" was introduced during King Anawrahta's reign.

DAY 3 Alon – Muktaw – Lon Pyi (B,L,D)

The ship starts sailing in the early hours as today we have to make some way further upstream.

We arrive at Muktaw in the morning, a distinctive riverside village or small town, where we will witness the traditional way of life that takes place along the remote Chindwin. If lucky, we may witness a special novice ceremony at the local monastery. Visitors are always warmly welcomed and one feels immediately like being part of the community. After our excursion we will visit a mobile clinic – a unique project sponsored by Heritage Line.

After lunch, it is cruising time again and we have prepared some interesting onboard activities to join freely. A ship tour with the cruise manager allows you to have a look behind the scenes of this fascinating river cruiser. A visit to the captain at the bridge can be a very interesting way to learn how he maneuvers safely along the sometimes rough Chindwin. Be sure to have some questions ready for the bridge crew! The late afternoon is also sweetened with our afternoon tea session at Kipling's bar.

As the evening approaches and the sun immerses everything in a golden light, another special event is going to take place at the Kipling's Bar. Dress up in style and make 'a toast to the past' during our famous "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 – stop the ticking of the clock.

DAY 4 Lon Pyi - Maukkadaw - Kalaywa (B,L,D)

Once you wake up to the rhythmic cadence of the Chindwin, just step out on your private balcony to enjoy a few minutes' day dreaming in silence in a world so far from the normal. Those who prefer more action in the morning are welcome on the sun deck for our daily yoga session.

After another hearty breakfast, the morning starts with a stroll through a small village named "Maukkadaw". Nowadays it is a sleepy unknown dot on the map, but it was once a busy teak port back in the colonial days. Many houses are built in the traditional style. We have a look at one of the remaining teak enterprises to see how this beautiful wood is used today by local artisans. A local school is nearby so we drop by to take a glimpse

how education is conducted in such remote areas of Myanmar. Take some time to wander a bit by yourself along the streets of this old village to capture some photo memoirs.

The ship passes rolling hills and small villages lined up along the riverbanks on our continuing northbound cruise. In the afternoon you should take part in our Burmese language class in the Mandalay Lounge to learn a few common phrases you may need later. We recommend paying extra attention to shopping-related vocabulary, as this will be a very useful tool for market shopping the next day.

In the evening, Anawrahta arrives at the riverside port of Kalaywa after passing by its impressive bridge which connects Myanmar with the Indian border and facilitates all kinds of trade. Tonight we also host a cinema under Burmese stars on the sun deck, showcasing a classic film.

DAY 5 Kalaywa – Kindat (B,L,D)

This morning we embark on a land outing which begins with a visit to a hilltop pagoda boasting sweeping views over Kalaywa Town and the Chindwin River - another awe-inspiring moment! Our next stop will be the local market and it is now time to apply your Burmese language skills (were you paying attention?) as you do some shopping at the colourful market stalls. Feel free to shop around for unique local produce – veggies or fruits – have a laugh and chitchat with the vendors and mingle in the crowd and become a part of daily bustling village life. Enjoy this amusing time with our guide and staff at your side to assist you at any time.

The rest of this day will be cruising time. Indulge in the luxurious facilities aboard Anawrahta. Dive into the refreshing pool, relax in the sauna or let the expert therapists in the Thazin Spa spoil you with unique treatments. In the mid-afternoon we come together to review the odd and unknown products bought in the morning market. Our “local market items presentation” is an entertaining and fun activity helping you to understand more about local life and habits. As we partake in this activity, our kitchen team is busy setting up the afternoon tea at the Kipling Bar for some nibbles and drinks.

We moor at Kindat - A place in which you likely have not heard of before in your life. You won't find information either on the internet about this quiet and beautiful corner of the globe. Just be sure - it will be a good spot to let your soul rest while the sun sets gently over Kindat.

DAY 6 Kindat - Sittaung - Paungbyin (B,L,D)

This morning, chill out as we continue cruising northbound. After so many impressions and experiences from the previous days, unwind and do your own favourite things before lunch. The scenery becomes more and more spectacular with green jungles, vegetation clad hills and a very off-the-beaten track feeling. We provide some interesting historic insight with a lecture dealing with the topic “World War II in Myanmar”. Myanmar, or Burma at the time, became involved in the war back in the days as the advancing Japanese army conquered Southeast Asian countries, and this far flung corner of Colonial Burma was affected by the war as well.

We reach Sittaung in the afternoon, a tiny and quaint riverside hamlet of only 28 houses and about 200 inhabitants. They welcome you like relatives and friends into their tranquil world of isolated riverside life. But still, this village and the very nearby areas experienced violent times when the British Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, the greatest river fleet which was ever assembled worldwide, was scuppered by the retreating British in 1942, rather than leaving the ships for the advancing Japanese Army. Today, the village is a little utopia, like a lost paradise island in the stream, where locals never need a watch as the day-night cycle dictates their life and

the community is all they need to be happy.

We return to the ship for lunch and as we sail along into the afternoon sun. Come join the afternoon tea time for some snacks and some shop taking. Before nightfall we reach the anchoring spot mid-river to end another electrifying, yet relaxing, day of remote cruising along the exotic Chindwin.

DAY 7 Paungbyin – Homalin (B,L,D)

Even if you are not an early riser, today you don't want to miss the yoga class (or at least a sunrise cappuccino) because this morning's backdrop is the most beautiful part of the upper Chindwin River. To prepare for today's exciting adventure, we invite you after breakfast to the lecture "Ethnic Groups in Myanmar". This is followed by a demonstration of the ancient habit of betel-chewing and smoking cheroot cigars. Tasting is optional, but if you want to try these traditional treats, now is your chance.

After 400 nautical miles we reach our most northbound destination - Homalin. Surrounded by forested mountains rising up to 2700 meters, the picturesque town does not see many tourists and offers us more of Myanmar in its rarest form.

In the afternoon we embark on a tour to explore the town and its Buddha Lotus Garden, which hosts various statues depicting scenes from Buddha's life and also offers stunning views of the mountain chains of the Nagaland. The high point of the day is next: a visit to a Naga tribe village, one of Myanmar's minorities which still lives with its own unique culture and customs. They welcome us with a wonderful jubilee – a replica of their new year festival - exclusively organized and arranged for us. Ancient warrior uniforms are worn as they perform tribal dances around a bonfire and traditional food and drinks are offered at this so special event. Happy New Year!

As we arrive back on board, Anawrahta stays moored overnight here. Let another eye opening day fade and look forward to the next as the sun sets over the exotic land of the Naga

DAY 8 Homalin – Mawlaik (B,L,D)

The ship raises anchor early with the sunrise as we have quite a bit of distance to cover downstream today. The current is with us now and you can feel the river's force as we cruise seemingly with little effort, with the river banks passing much more quickly now. Today is a full cruising day and you should pamper yourself a bit. Maybe it is a good idea to visit our gym to burn some calories with some exercise or ask our staff to prepare a sauna session for you (we offer private sauna set up upon reservations, with surcharge).

For a fun and informative time, join the cooking class hosted by our Executive Chef this morning. You can learn how to prepare some delicious local dishes, give a helping hand and can ask him all your questions about local cuisine which have been on the tip of your tongue since arriving in Myanmar. Among the recipes featured are some easy ones to try back home yourself. After lunch (and maybe a little snooze afterwards) our guide again offers you a historic presentation today about the famous British Irrawaddy Flotilla Company that sailed on Myanmar's waterways a hundred year ago. During the blue hour of the day, you may like to spend sunset at our comfortable bar or chilling on Anawrahta's crown – the expansive sun deck with its large Jacuzzi pool.

Our kitchen team is very much looking forward to inviting you to another special dining event this evening. They host another fabulous BBQ dinner on the sun deck accompanied by some entertainment performed by some of our talented crew members.

DAY 9 Mawlaik – Kyi Taung Oo (B,L,D)

After our relaxing day onboard yesterday, this morning we have an interesting excursion up our sleeve. Mawlaik was the administrative capital of the British Burmese empire and many of the colonial-era houses built by the Bombay-Burma Trading Company still remain today. The charm of the town is enhanced by the lack of many cars, due to the fact that towns along the Chindwin can only be reached by boat. This colonial heritage-themed tour takes you to the post office, the former British administrative buildings, the house of the British Commissioner, and eventually we end up at the “Old English British Golf Club” of Mawlaik. We admit - the name is our invention - but the course was built back in the colonial era. Get ready for some action here as we hold a fun mini golf tournament on the greens of this historic course. Afterwards we proclaim the winner at the veranda of the club house, which was the center of social gatherings during the Victorian era.

We are back for lunch on board and the ship sails on. If today’s sailing goes well and the currents cooperate, we will reach the next destination on time to still call at the small village of Kyi Taung Oo. In this village exists the only surviving (and still-operating) wooden monastery that pre-dates the Konbaung Dynasty’s Foundation in 1752. This age-old site is architecturally stunning and invites you to marvel at the know-how of the craftsmen back in the olden days. “Gyi-Taung-Oo” means “Great Sacred Hill” and as you might expect, there are some great views to be had from the monastery over the river and surrounding area.

DAY 10 Kyi Taung Oo – Monywa (B,L,D)

In the morning our ship sails further south towards the mouth of the Chindwin river. We are still 1.5 days of cruising time away from our final destination so enjoy the final stretch to the fullest as we glide through this wonderful exotic landscape and watch the ever-changing riverbank life. As we know, the Chindwin measures a total length of 1,200 km (of which we have sailed a combined 1,000km). However, the Chindwin basin is a massive 114,000 square kilometers! 3.5 million people live in this area, of which approximately 50% is covered with forest. Local people plant rice and other crops for food and income, and mine for gold, amber and sand, and collect non-timber forest products for food, medicine and housing as supplementary income.

During lunch the ship is still moving on until we arrive in the afternoon at Pho Win Taung. We take a 45-minute bus ride to reach and discover the cave temple complexes outside the city and in the Shwe Ba Taung mountains. The sheer number of around 900 small shrines and temples are believed to be around 500 years old and contain many sandstone carvings of Buddhist images, animals, plants, demons and ogres. We won’t be able to see all of the nearly 450,000 Buddha images, but we surely do have the opportunity to gain insights into this massive spiritual landmark.

Once back on the ship the sun sets as we get ready for dinner. After another sumptuous repast, a group of local artists joins us and performs a puppet show in the lounge. This is a traditional form of entertainment, and still immensely popular. Grab a seat and let our barman prepare you a tasty cocktail while you revel in this unique performance.

DAY 11 Monywa – Bagan (B,L,D)

This morning we leave the ship to visit Monywa, which features a spectacularly styled Thanboddhay Pagoda with hundreds of golden spires. Thanboddhay Pagoda is a massive Buddhist complex, and each pillar and tower of this pagoda is completely covered with images of Buddha. Originally built in the early 14th century, it was reconstructed in 1939, and is today lovingly preserved in its golden form. The entrance, unlike many other temples in Myanmar, is not guarded by lions. Instead, two imposing white elephants stand out against their shimmering backdrop. The sight is quite overwhelming, so spend some time to take in every aspect of this wondrous, otherworldly place. Further down the road is the world's second tallest Buddha statue, measuring 116 meters. It is behind an expansive religious site with Bodhi trees, gardens with hundreds of sitting Buddha's, and a huge reclining Buddha. The entire interior features depictions of Buddhist teachings on several floors - yet another spot to completely immerse yourself in and let go of the thoughts and worries of everyday life.

We pass now the confluence which we have seen already on the first day of our voyage. We do not turn left (portside) which leads up the Ayeyarwady River again to Mandalay, but we instead take a right (starboard) heading towards our final destination, Bagan. The Chindwin's outlets into the Irrawaddy are actually interrupted by a chain of long, low, partially populated islands. The most southerly of these outlets is an artificial channel cut by one of the kings of Bagan. Choked closed for many centuries, it was reopened by a massive flood in 1824.

In the afternoon, we arrive at Bagan, the ancient city of King Anawrahta, the namesake of our ship. On the Bagan orientation tour, we explore the magnificent Ananda Temple and Shwe San Daw Temple. Built almost one thousand years ago, the Ananda temple is a magnificent example of Burmese Buddhist architecture. To this day it remains an important site of worship and draws many devotees to its golden stupas and gleaming Buddha statues every day. The Shwe San Daw Temple is an imposing tiered structure crowned with a bejeweled umbrella. The relic of Buddha's hair which is kept inside the stupa gives this temple special meaning and makes it an important destination for pilgrimage and daily worship. The tour ends at one of the sunset pagodas or on a nearby hill to capture some incredible moments of this holy site of temple-strewn plains of Bagan. Let the millennia of history come back to life in your mind.

We conclude this amazing journey up the Chindwin with a last splendid dinner and a traditional Bagan dance performance dating back to the ancient Bagan dynasty (11th -13th AD).

DAY 12 Bagan (B)

After breakfast, your adventurous Chindwin expedition on your floating luxury home comes to an end.

DAY

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