



SEE ASIA DIFFERENTLY
CAMBODIA LAOS VIETNAM THAILAND BURMA INDONESIA



**MYANMAR (BURMA)
HOLIDAY INFORMATION PACK**

Table of Contents

Thank you for choosing to travel with See Asia Differently. We hope that you have a fabulous holiday and return home with some wonderful memories of this incredible region and we look forward to hearing all about it!

This Holiday Information pack has been designed to help you get even more out of your Cambodian holiday with us. We are here every step of the way to assist you; so, if you have any further questions that are not answered in this pack then please get in touch with your Sales or Customer Services representative.

About Myanmar	Page 1
A Brief History	Page 1
Weather	Page 2
Main Festivals	Page 2
 Before You Leave	
Emergency Contacts	Page 3
Visa requirements	Page 3
Insurance	Page 3
Health (Vaccinations)	Page 4
Money and Expenses	Page 4
What to Pack	Page 4
Recommended Reading	Page 5
 During Your Stay	
Responsible Travel	Page 5
Do's and Don'ts	Page 6
Language	Page 6
Food and Drink	Page 7
Tipping, Bartering and Tuk Tuks	Page 7
Electricity	Page 7
Communications	Page 7
 Our Recommendations	 Page 8

About Myanmar

Myanmar (Burma) is a country that feels like it has been lost in time, with the country offering the visitor a completely different travelling experience to other South-East Asia countries. Traveling around the country will open your senses to a traditional and gentle land of intrigue and culture. The Burmese men still wear the traditional lungi (sarong) and the women (men as well) decorate their faces with a yellow paste called 'Thanaka' which not only is a natural sunscreen but also used as decoration.

Burma, Myanmar or Republic of the Union of Myanmar borders with Thailand, Laos, China, India and Bangladesh. With a land size of 676,578 square kilometres and a population well over 50 million, which makes Myanmar the world's 25th most populated country. When visiting this will surprise you as the country does not feel over crowded at all, in fact you get the complete opposite feeling as you travel on a Burmese adventure.

The country holds so many secrets that await to be opened by intrigued tourists. From the fascinating city of Yangon where you could take a walking tour and at various points, close your eyes and once opened you feel that you could have gone back in time to 1920's London due to the incredible architecture. To the thousands of temples in Bagan that were mostly built during the 12th to 13th centuries; Inle lake and its magical charm and picturesque setting on water. Mandalay with its fascinating day tours that take you back in time to Burma's lost era. Not only this but you have hidden beaches that many tourists will never find as well as mountain hill tribes where you can go in search for traditional villages and tattooed ladies that time has forgotten.

Whatever your wanting to experience, Myanmar and the Burmese people will leave your traveling senses wanting more and once you visit you are sure to come back again and again.

A Brief History

Recent research indicates that civilization in Burma's Irrawaddy Valley started 3,500 years ago with rice cultivation, raising livestock and using bronze implements. By the 4th century, mainly through merchants, it adopted South India's Theravada style of Buddhism. Today over 80% of Burma's people are Buddhist and the country has the largest number of monks of any country.

By the 19th century, groups of people from the north, the Bamar, gained prominence and founded the powerful kingdom of Pagan (today's Bagan). Old city states gave way to a more unified administration, which reached its apogee during the reign of king Anawrahta (or Aniruddha) who successfully unified all of Burma by 1057. The line of kings that followed him constructed thousands of pagodas, monasteries, libraries and colleges. Their harnessing of water resources led to a surge in rice production.

By 1581, Burmese rule stretched over almost all of the country and across to Thailand and Laos. But such dominion, won at great cost, was difficult to hold on to. The British made Burma a province of India in 1886 and instigated far-reaching changes to the country's make up, agriculture was geared towards export and Burma became the world's largest exporter of rice.

Burma was granted independence on January 4, 1948 and for few decades after and as the economy diminished the country resulted to civil war. In the 1960s, Ne Win took control of the whole nation in order to restore law and order. But instead, Ne Win's new revolutionary council suspended the constitution and instituted an authoritarian military rule. The country was closed off to the outside world as Ne We tried created an isolated society known as the Burmese Way to Socialism.

Today, with careful monitoring from United Nations, Burma is on a path to recovery. New labour laws have been introduced allowing labour unions and strikes as well as a relaxation of press censorship.

Tourists are now allowed to enter the country freely. Hilary Clinton visited Burma in December 2011 to encourage further progress followed shortly by President Barack Obama. An ongoing series of political, economic, and administrative democratic reforms in Burma are progressing and positive times lie ahead for the troubled nation.

Weather

Unlike other Asian destinations, Burma has three distinctive seasons:

- 1) Cool and Dry from November to the middle of March
- 2) Hot and dry from the middle of March towards the end of May
- 3) Wet and cool from June to mid-October

November to March is generally the best time to travel throughout the country. During this period, the average maximum temperature should not rise above 32 to 35 degrees Celsius and it will be dry. This is when the rivers will be full of water and the countryside is green and fresh. Please note that Burma is a large country stretching all the way from China to the south of Thailand, there are snow-capped mountains in the north and Northwest while more mountains, hills and highlands surround the central plains. If you are visiting, or trekking in these areas be aware that evenings and nights can be very cool to rather cold. The coastal areas and islands will always receive refreshing sea breezes and the sea will be calm and pleasantly warm.

April and May are the warmest months in Burma and temperatures can reach 40 degrees Celsius in Yangon and the central plains. During these hot and dry months, there are less visitors to Bagan and Mandalay while the mountainous region and highlands will be fresh and pleasant. The coast remains dry, with high seas and strong waves and currents. The south-west monsoon starts unpredictably between mid-May to June. During this period, it will rain almost daily but mainly in the afternoons and evenings. The central plains (dry zone) including Mandalay and Bagan will receive least of rain and will be surprisingly fresh.

From June to September, the north-west coast (Rakhine state) and the delta region will receive most of the rain (200-250 mm). Do not let the downpours of our green season stop you from visiting. Streets could turn into streams and rivers during a tropical thunderstorm, but all in all, the water and rain are gone before you know it. Most of all, nature is in its most radiant peak, rice-paddies wear their most vibrant shade of green while different flowers and fruits find their way to the local market stalls.

Main Festivals

- January – **Naga New Year**
- March / April – **Irrawaddy Literary Festival**
- 17th to 24th March – **Shwedagon Pagoda Festival**
- 14th to 16th April – **Thingyan Water Festival**
- 20th to 26th November – **Taunggyi Hot Air Balloon Festival**
- 26th November – **Tazaungmone Festival**
- November / December (Full Moon) – **Golden Rock Pagoda Festival**

*Please note that dates of some festivals can change slightly from year to year.

Before You Leave

Emergency Contact

See Burma Differently Emergency Telephone Numbers

24 Hours Emergency: +95 (0)940 1533484 = Khun Ti Taut

Secondary: +95 (0)950 62644 = Ms Marlar Aye

See Asia Differently contact

- Cambodian Office Number – +855 (0)63 966 355
- International Number – +44 (0)208 150 5150
- Cambodian Mobile Number – +855 (0)16 565 496

British Embassy (Yangon)

80 Strand Road, Yangon, Myanmar

+95 (0) 370865/867

If you anticipate requiring assistance, please telephone in advance of your visit to ensure access at +95 (1)370863 and ask for the Security Manager's email at Management.Rangoon@fco.gov.uk

Visas and Taxes

Do I need a Visa to enter Myanmar (Burma)?

Yes: All nationalities travelling to Myanmar (Burma) need to obtain a visa with only one exception which are Singapore passport holders.

How to get a Myanmar Visa?

There are two ways:

1) In Advance (E-Visa) – You can now obtain an e-visa for Myanmar (Burma) in advance. The visa costs \$50 and payment can be made online via a credit or debit card.

*You can apply for your visa in advance by applying here www.evisa.moip.gov.mm

2) In Advance (Embassy) – Alternatively, you can visit the Myanmar embassy in your country of origin. The visa in the UK costs £35 + a £6 surcharge to get your passport returned via special delivery.

*Please make sure this is done in advance as to get everything back can take up to 4 weeks.

Additional Information:

- Please make sure that your passport does not expire within 6 months of your holiday. And that your passport has at least one full clean page for the visa and another page for additional stamps.
- If applying for a visa on arrival please make sure that you have 2 passport photographs with you.
- For every day, you are in the country without a valid visa you will have to pay a fine per day.
- Please note that you are no longer need to pay an airport departure tax as this is included in your airline ticket.

Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory for anyone travelling on a 'See Asia Differently' holiday and you will be asked to supply us with your insurance details before travelling. Travel insurance can be acquired from a multitude of companies but it is vital that your insurance is comprehensive and covers you for all aspects of the trip you are taking.

Health (Vaccinations)

We recommend that you see your doctor or a travel clinic at least 6 weeks before your departure for general advice on travel risks, malaria and vaccinations.

Rather than giving out the wrong advice we have found that www.masta.org offers excellent medical advice about recommended vaccinations and malaria advice. With them you can buy a number of useful products including mosquito repellent, malaria tablets and many other forms of travel related products. An alternative you might like to try the Travelpharm.

If you are currently taking medicine or drugs, whether prescription or not, please make sure that you take a sufficient supply to last through your trip. Also ensure that you have insurance for accident and sickness. If you need a doctor while in Myanmar, you must be prepared to pay for these services and claim it back on your insurance on your return to your home country. Ensure you keep all receipts and it is recommended that you take a copy of your prescription with you.

Money, Expenses & Credit Cards

The kyat (pronounced 'chat') is the official currency of Myanmar, abbreviated as 'K' and usually placed before the numerical value (i.e. K500). Kyat come in notes (no coins) of value K50, K100, K200, K500, K1000, K5000 and K10,000.

The US dollar, however, is widely used as an alternative currency, particularly for larger purchases: foreigners are sometimes expected to pay in dollars for hotels, flights, and access to historical sites. If payment is made in kyat for these transactions, it may sometimes be at a worse rate. When paying in dollars, change will often be given in kyat. Smaller purchases, such as taxi rides, buses and meals are quoted and are almost always paid for in kyat (although some high-end hotels and restaurants quote meal prices in dollars).

Important note! US dollar bills taken to Myanmar must be in PERFECT CONDITION.

Blemishes of any kind – creases, marks, folds and so on – may result in getting a far worse rate of exchange or the money may not be accepted at all. Also, pre-2006 dollar bills or ones with the letters AB and CB at the start of the serial number (at the top left corner of note) may not be accepted. Euros are generally accepted as an exchange currency and do not have to be in pristine condition. It is therefore advisable to carry US dollars in a safe, flat folder – not in a wallet.

Banks, ATMs, and Credit Cards

While visitors once had to bring in all the necessary cash for their travels into Myanmar, there are now over 600 ATMs that accept international bank and credit cards located throughout the country - bear in mind that most are concentrated in Yangon, Mandalay, Naypyidaw, Bagan, and Inle Lake. Cardholders can also withdraw local currency from ATMs and use their cards at a growing number of major outlets such as hotels, restaurants, and retailers.

Currently only Visa, Mastercard, Maestro or Cirrus and China's Union Pay can be used; the biggest providers of compatible ATMs are CB (Co-operative) Bank and KBZ (Kanbawza) Bank. For ATM cash withdrawals, there is a K5000 transaction fee, and a withdrawal limit of K300,000 per transaction. Depending on the conditions set by your own bank at home, you may be allowed multiple withdrawals per day. The use of ATMs in Myanmar is sometimes restricted by internet failure.

What to Pack

Wear light and airy clothing to protect yourself from the sun during the day and mosquitoes at night. The sun can be quite intense at times so bring a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Carry a lightweight rain coat during the green season in case of an afternoon shower and a warmer but light jacket for the nights in rural and mountainous regions.

Wear practical shoes when visiting temples and monuments, you may climb narrow steps and walk on uneven surfaces. As in all travel in warm climates you pack light and sensibly.

Our list of essentials:

- Passport (with photocopies)
- Travel insurance (with photocopies)
- Airline tickets (with photocopies)
- 2 Passport photographs for visa on entry (bring 4 to 6 as backup)
- USD cash and travellers checks
- Credit or debit card
- Flashlight
- Sun hat, sun block, sunglasses and after sun (just in case)
- Walking shoes/sport sandals
- Waterproof jacket (just in case)
- Camera, additional memory cards and camera charger
- Travel power adapters
- Insect repellent
- First-aid kit (should contain lip salve, aspirin, band aids, anti-histamine, Imodium, or similar tablets for mild cases of diarrhoea, re-hydration powder, extra prescription drugs)

Recommended Reading

We are aware that you may want to do some background reading into Burma before coming on your trip, there are a number of different books available but here are the top 3 that we recommend:

Finding George Orwell in Burma

In one of the most brilliant and intrepid memoirs in recent memory, Emma Larkin tells of the year she spent travelling through Burma, using as a compass the life and work of George Orwell, whom many of Burma's underground teahouse intellectuals call simply "the prophet". In stirring, insightful prose, she provides a powerful reckoning with one of the world's least free countries. Finding George Orwell in Burma is a brave and revelatory reconnaissance of modern Burma, one of the world's grimmest and most shuttered dictatorships, where the term "Orwellian" aptly describes the life endured by the country's people. This book has come to be regarded as a classic of reportage and travel and a crucial book for anyone interested in Burma and George Orwell.

Burmese Days

George Orwell's first novel, inspired by his experiences in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, Burmese Days includes a new introduction by Emma Larkin in Penguin Modern Classics. Based on his experiences as a policeman in Burma, George Orwell's first novel presents a devastating picture of British colonial rule. It describes corruption and imperial bigotry in a society where, 'after all, natives were natives - interesting, no doubt, but finally ... an inferior people'.

The Glass Palace

Rajkumar is only another boy, helping on a market stall in the dusty square outside the royal palace, when the British force the Burmese king, queen and all the court into exile. He is rescued by the far-seeing Chinese merchant, and with him builds up a logging business in upper Burma. But haunted by his vision of the royal family, he journeys to the obscure town in India where they have been exiled.

During your Travel

Responsible Travel

Myanmar is a safe country in which to travel and it is most unlikely that you will find yourself with any problems during your holiday. Just be as careful as you would be in your home country and use your common sense. For example: Don't make it easy for thieves by putting your passport or cash in your back pocket and don't take expensive jewellery with you.

You will be seen as a role model here and you're also an ambassador for yourself and your home country. Set a good example at all times in the way your dress, your behaviour, and your time keeping. Be aware that whilst the vast majority of people and organisations are genuine, there are some known instances where this is not the case. Be aware of mothers asking you to buy them milk powder for their babies. The babies are not receiving the milk and are being exploited so the older children and adults can make money by returning the milk powder to the shop after the donor has left.

Avoid paying for simple acts of kindness with cash, a thank you is sufficient. Giving money to adults and children promotes a culture of begging, which is not sustainable. In particular, don't give money or food to children; if you must do something then a payment for goods or services (postcards or shoeshine) is better, though even better is only transacting with adults. Burma is also known for its jade mines, however many false gems are often for sale, be cautious before purchasing gems.

Dental care is limited in parts of Asia, so it's best not to give sweets or chocolate. If you want to help then supporting local NGOs and hiring local guides and drivers, going to local restaurants, and buying locally are your best contribution.

Do's and Don'ts

The Myanmar people are friendly, helpful, and polite and are always interested to come and talk to you and discuss various points of view, so be respectful and follow their unique traditions.

- **Don't** take photos that may make people feel embarrassed like when they are washing.
- **Do** smile.
- **Don't** point at things with your foot.
- **Do** dress modestly when visiting temples and Pagodas and do not swim naked or topless in public.
- **Don't** touch anyone on the head.
- **Don't** kiss in public.
- **Don't** disturb people that are praying or meditating.
- **Don't** take video cameras into minorities villages, they are considered to be too intrusive. Always ask for permission before you take someone's photo and do not photograph anything to do with the military.
- **Do** protect the Myanmar wildlife by refusing to purchase wildlife products.
- **Don't** litter. Picking up rubbish sets a good example for the youths.

Language

The Burmese language is the official language in Burma. Burmese is spoken by 32 million as a first language and as a second language by 10 million, particularly ethnic minorities in Burma and those in neighboring countries.

Here are a few words that we have spelt out phonetically that may help you on your way:

Hello – Min ga lar par

I'm sorry – taung pan par tal

How – Nei kaon la?

Good morning – Mingalabar

No – Ma ho bu

Help – kuu nyi par ohn

Goodbye – Thwa dau mal

Good night – Eigh douh meh

Numbers:

1 - tit **6** - chout

2 - nhit **7** – kuun-nhit

3 - thone **8** – shit

4 – lay **9** - cole

5 - ngarr **10** – tasal

Food and Drink

While people in Myanmar take great pride in their cuisine, if you ask someone for a restaurant recommendation then there's a good chance that they will suggest a place serving Chinese food. This is partly because they worry that foreign stomachs can't cope with Burmese food, but also because most people rarely eat at restaurants so when they do they eat Chinese as a treat.

Most towns will have at least a couple of Chinese restaurants, typically with large menus covering unadventurous basics such as sweet and sour chicken. Dishes start at around K1000 (vegetables) or K1500 (meat). Indian restaurants are also popular, particularly in Yangon which had a very large Indian population during the British colonial era. In tourist hotspots, you'll also find restaurants serving Thai and Western (usually Italian) dishes.

One local tradition that has become an essential tourist experience is a visit to a teahouse. These are hugely popular places to meet friends, family or business associates over tea and affordable snacks, which, depending on the owners, might be Burmese noodles, Muslim samosas, or Chinese steamed buns. Teahouses have long had a reputation for being places where politics can be openly discussed, although there have always been rumours of government spies observing. Some teahouses open early for breakfast, while others stay open late into the night.

Burmese food

In Burmese food, it's considered important to balance sour, spicy, bitter and salty flavours; this is generally done across a series of dishes rather than within a single dish. A mild curry, for example, might be accompanied by bitter leaves, dried chilli, and a salty condiment such as fish paste. The typical local breakfast is noodle soup, such as the national dish mohingar (catfish soup with rice vermicelli, onions, lemongrass, garlic, chilli, and lime, with some cooks adding things like boiled egg, courgette fritters and fried bean crackers). Alternatives include oùn-nó k'auq-s'wèh (coconut chicken soup with noodles, raw onions, coriander, and chilli) and pèh byouq (fried, boiled beans) served with sticky rice or naan bread. All of these dishes are served in teahouses or available to take away from markets.

Noodles also feature strongly at lunchtime: many locals will have a small bowl at a street café, teahouse, or food court. Various Shan noodle dishes are popular, including mī-she (rice noodles in a meat sauce accompanied by pickle). Other common dishes include various āthouq, which translates to “salad” but rarely includes vegetables; they are cold dishes, usually with noodles, raw onions, gram flour, chilli, and coriander, served with a watery vegetable or bone soup. One variety worth trying is nān-gyī thouq, made with thick rice noodles that look like spaghetti.

Lunchtime is also when you should try Burmese curries if you’re worried about hygiene, since they are usually cooked in the morning then left in pots all day. Local people, however, would typically have curry in the evening at home. A meat, fish or prawn curry will be accompanied by rice (t’āmin), a watery soup and fried vegetables. A great deal of oil is added to Burmese curries, supposedly to keep bacteria out, but like locals you can skim the oil off. At the best restaurants, the meal will also include a selection of up to a dozen small side-dishes, plus fresh vegetables, and herbs with a dip (such as ngăpī-ye, a watery fish sauce). Green tea will usually be thrown in, as will a dessert, traditionally lăp’eq (or lahpet) (fermented tea leaves with fried garlic, peanuts, toasted sesame, and dried shrimp), which is much tastier than it sounds. You may also get t’ānyeq (jaggery, unrefined cane sugar).

There are plenty of regional variations to discover as you travel: the food of Rakhine State, for example, is influenced by its proximity to Bangladesh, so curries are spicier and many dishes include beans or pulses. Vegetarians should find it reasonably easy to find suitable food throughout the country, particularly since some Buddhists are restrained in their consumption of meat.

Drinks

Tap water isn’t safe to drink in Myanmar; bottled water is available throughout the country for around K300. In many restaurants, free green tea (ye-nwè-gyàn) is left in jugs on tables and is safe to drink. In teahouses, black tea is usually drunk with plenty of milk and sugar, while coffee is almost always instant, other than in Western-style cafés.

Although there are few places resembling Western bars or pubs outside of Yangon and Mandalay, most towns will have a couple of beer stations which look like simple restaurants but with beer adverts on display and a predominantly male clientele. These places usually serve draught beer (around K700 for a glass) as well as bottles (from K1700 for 640ml), with the former usually restricted to the most popular brew, Myanmar Beer (produced by a government joint venture) and sometimes its rival Dagon. Both beers are also available in bottles, as are Mandalay Beer and several Thai and Singaporean beers, including Tiger, Singha, and ABC Stout.

Mid-range and upmarket restaurants will often have a list of imported wines. There are a couple of vineyards making wine in Shan State, and it’s better than you might expect: look out for Red Mountain and Aythaya. Fruit wines are produced around Pyin Oo Lwin, while local spirits include t’àn-ye (toddy or palm wine).

Tipping, Bartering & Tuk Tuk’s

Unlike in Europe and America, Myanmar doesn’t have a specific rule on tipping. It is up to you how much you tip, generally tip is not expected. Tip if you feel that your experience has been enhanced but don’t leave too much as sometimes can be seen slightly insulting. Saying this some there are few exceptions, tourist guides and porters traditionally rely on tips to build up their wages.

Prices of goods in supermarkets, pharmacies, restaurants, hotels, official transport, basic commodity shops and so on, are usually fixed. When in local markets don’t be afraid to barter most of the shop owners will at least double their price. Keeping your sense of humour is most important and remember that no shop owner will sell you something at a loss. Always think of your ideal value before you start to barter. For Rickshaws, Tuk Tuk’s, Moto’s and all Taxi’s in Asia, always bargain first and make sure that you agree on the price before you start the service.

Electricity

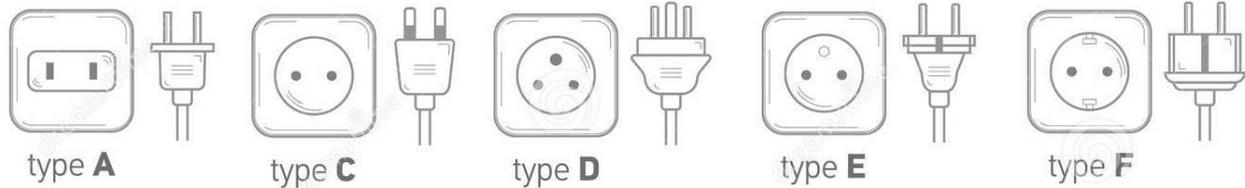
Electricity is available in all major population centres and all district capitals. Though power outages on some areas are frequent.

For more details please check on: www.power-plugs-sockets.com/

Voltage: 230 V

Frequency: 50 Hz

Power Sockets in Myanmar:



Communications

The country code for Burma is +95. Mobile phone coverage is unreliable in Burma. Depending on the service provider and handset, your mobile phone may or may not work. Many travellers choose to leave their mobile phones at home and surrender to a simpler way of living while in Burma.

Our Recommendations

We believe that in parts of your holiday you should follow your instinct as to where to eat, drink and what to do in your spare time as people's tastes vary dramatically. However, in this section we have listed a few of our favourite places to give you a helping hand.

Rangoon (Yangon)

Wai Wai's Noodle Place

You will have to climb to the 5th floor of the Wai Wai Hotel to find this place. But believe us when we say that the climb is worth it. The staff is friendly, food is delicious and cheap. What more could you ask for?

Le Planteur

Set in a lake side colonial villa, this fine dining restaurant provides a mesmerising experience unlike any others. The food is a little bit pricy, but worth it. It is the perfect restaurant if you are looking for a romantic night out.

Rangoon Tea House

The Rangoon Tea House serves traditional Burmese cuisine in a modern and stylish setting. The menu is diverse, reasonably priced, and the food is incredible, hence why it is incredibly popular amongst locals and travellers alike.

LinkAge Restaurant and Art Gallery

Don't be put off by the steep stairs up to the restaurant, and the quirky interior design. This outstanding NGO, provides training to the youth of Myanmar, not only is it a great cause to support, but the food is spectacular.

Mandalay

MinGaLaBar

Conveniently located in the downtown area of Mandalay. This traditional Burmese restaurant uses the freshest ingredients to cook up some of the tastiest food you'll have in the city.

The Little Mushroom Coffee

Just as the name suggest, the interior design of The Little Mushroom Coffee is playful and cosy. Their coffees are brewed with carefully selected coffee beans, and their 'Detox' fruit juice are an absolute bliss. They also served a wide selection of snacks, we recommend you try their cheese cake!

Bagan

La Terrazza

The owners of La Terrazza are committed to using fresh ingredients organically grown in their garden. Their flavourful Italian dish are comparable to what you'd get in an Italian restaurant. The atmosphere is fabulous and the staff are well trained and always smiling.

Sanon

Another NGO dedicated to changing the lives and future of Myanmar's youth. Sanon, provides them with the experience they need as well-trained chefs, bartenders, and waitresses to find job opportunities elsewhere.