

BIG FIVE

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS



UNION OF MYANMAR

Travel Guide

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions, and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.



Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

YANGON

Average Temperature

°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	77	81	85	88	85	82	81	81	82	83	81	78

Average Number of Days With Precipitation

Days	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	1	1	2	2	17	26	28	28	22	13	6	1

CLIMATE

The ideal time to visit Myanmar is during the cool season, but even during the wet season, Yangon normally receives morning and afternoon showers while rainfall in Bagan and Mandalay is very low. The weather around Inle Lake and in Shan State is quite pleasant all year round but can be very cold at night from December to February

- Cool Season - October through February with average temperatures 20-24 C/ 68-75 F.
- Hot Season - March through May with average temperatures 30-35 C/ 86-95 F.
- Wet Season - June through September with average temperatures 25-30 C/ 69-86 F.

PASSPORT / VISA REQUIREMENTS

You will need a copy of your itinerary, airline tickets, and documents that show round-trip transportation to / from Myanmar.

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

Visas: Many countries require that travelers obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Zierer Visa Service (ZVS) to process required visas for our passengers. The Visa Application Kit is included with your pre-trip confirmation packet. You can also download the necessary forms from the website: <http://www.zvs.com>. Click on the "members" section to log in. For user name, enter **bigfive**, and the password is **55509**. You will enter the visa section for Big Five Tours & Expeditions. Here you will find a list of country-specific forms. You will also discover useful hints such as how to obtain a passport, adding passport pages, and other tips.

Important: Please look at your passport before you submit it to ZVS to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

TIME ZONES & FLIGHT TIME

Flight Time: A flight to Myanmar would be approximately 12 hours from Los Angeles to Taipei or Hong Kong, then 5 hours to Kuala Lumpur with an overnight layover, and then a final flight to Yangon which is about 3 to 4 hours.

Time Zone: The Myanmar time zone is GMT + 6.5.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

The International airport of Myanmar is in Yangon (RGN), and has a restaurant, bar, snack bar, bank, post office, duty-free shop and a public information booth.

Airport Tax: Any passengers departing Myanmar on international flights will need to pay a departure tax at the prevailing rate. The fee, which is subject to change without notice, is currently about US\$10.00 per person.

CUSTOMS

Duty Free: The following goods may be taken into Myanmar by persons over 17 years of age without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g tobacco, 2l of alcohol, 0.5l of perfume or eau de cologne.

Prohibited Items: Playing cards, gambling equipment, antiques, archaeological items and pornography are prohibited.

Restricted Items: Jewelry, electrical goods and cameras must be declared; failure to do so may result in visitors being refused permission to export it on departure. Receipt of purchase and an export permit voucher for locally bought goods such as gems and jewelry may be required upon departure. Video cameras will be held in safe custody at the airport and will be returned on departure.

U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. Regulations frequently change. You can get up to date information at your nearest Customs office. You can also write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044, or you can visit *Customs & Border Protection* on the web at www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml.

CURRENCY & EXCHANGE

Myanmar's currency is the **Kyat** (pronounced "Chud"). There are bank notes of 1 Kyat, 5 Kyats, 10 Kyats, 15 Kyats, 45 Kyats, 90 Kyats and 200 Kyats. Officially, the Kyat is divided up into 100 Pyas coins, but you will hardly come across them, as they are practically worthless.

Note that money transactions on the black market are illegal. In the past, many tourists chanced their luck and changed money on the black market. But owing to the large discrepancies, the Burmese government introduced a compulsory exchange, forcing every tourist now to exchange a minimum of US\$300 into *Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC)*. Unused FECs can be reconverted into US Dollars. In order to avoid payment of tourist services in illegally exchanged Kyat, which would make the services unrealistically cheap, foreigners are required to pay hotel bills, flight tickets and train tickets in dollars.

We recommend visitors bring US dollars only - small denomination notes are preferable. US dollars are easily exchangeable for FECs at authorized money changers throughout the country. Other foreign currencies such as euros, Japanese Yen, and pounds sterling can only be exchanged into FECs at the Currency Exchange Counter inside Immigration at Yangon International Airport on arrival. Authorized money changers throughout Myanmar will usually only accept US Dollars. They will also exchange your FECs into the local Myanmar currency "kyat"

Credit Cards: No longer accepted.

LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. For charter flights on small planes in Costa Rica and Southern Africa, for example, the total **including** carry-on is usually 11 to 15 pounds, depending on the destination. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside. Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

Note about luggage restrictions: Air Mandalay and Yangon Airways are privately operated airlines flying throughout Myanmar. There is a 20 kilo / 44 lbs limit for baggage per person. Excess baggage fees may be charged. We suggest you leave items not needed upcountry in Yangon and collect them upon your return.

CAMERAS & FILM

Taking Photographs: Please, approach people with an attitude of respect, just as you would want to be treated. Also please have respect and do not disrupt parades or festivals by sticking your camera in anyone's face. Never take photos of airports, police or government buildings, military installations, or borders.

Equipment: Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems. And, don't forget your

camera operation manual, filters, and a flash unit. *Cameras should be packed with good cushioning.* The roads are sometimes rough, and constant vibration can do damage. Keep your camera with you as much as possible, and do not leave it on the floor of the vehicle when on the road. Roads can be gravel or dirt and be very dusty. Make sure you have lens caps for all your lenses. Clean your equipment frequently. Bring along a puffer brush and lens cleaning tissues.

Lenses: A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. Zoom lenses such as 35-80mm, 70-210 mm, or 100-300 mm will help you capture the sights in a variety of different settings. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Point and shoot cameras are nice for a group or indoor shots, but leave something to be desired. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean.

Film: It is always best to bring along whatever you need with you. Film is generally more expensive abroad and it may be hard to locate. You'll be surprised at how much film you use when you are trying to capture all those special moments and rare animal poses. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot a couple of 36-exposure rolls per day, and enthusiastic shooters will easily double or triple that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

It is helpful to set up a numbering system for your film, marking each roll with masking tape and numbers or letters, before leaving home. This way you can code the rolls of film and where they were shot. It's quite a job to sort through hundreds of pictures with no clue where or when they were taken.

Avoid airport x-ray machines whenever possible and request a hand search of your film only. While security people are often obliging, some are not so allow a little extra time. X-rays are cumulative on exposed and unexposed film so the more times film is x-rayed, the more risk of damage. This is especially true with older machines found in many countries. Lead bags for film are available for purchase and are worth the small investment. Do not have film in your camera because it may be opened for inspection.

Note: Recent news reports warn that new explosive detectors used in more than 100 US airports to scan checked baggage will ruin unprotected, unexposed film. This technology will eventually be in place at all airports worldwide. Experts suggest either carrying your film in your carry-on luggage and/or placing film in safety, lead-lined bags to prevent X-ray damage.

Video: If you are planning to shoot video, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Do not plan to buy videotape. Videotape is not affected by airport x-ray; only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage videotape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts. You will probably have no problem finding a plug in most of the lodges and larger tented camps, but be prepared with plenty of batteries

Batteries: Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them, and batteries can be hard to find and expensive.

STAYING HEALTHY

Although there are not any inoculations or vaccinations required, unless coming from or passing through an infected area, protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, and hepatitis (A and B) is strongly recommended. Yellow fever certificates are required for those who are coming from an infected area.

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting. Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription anti-malaria drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites. As with every trip abroad, travelers should be in generally good health. Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.

Note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage for Customs inspections.

See a doctor who specializes in travel medicine for his recommendations or your local health department at least 4–6 weeks before travel to allow for shots, if needed, to take effect. Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta has a fax information service with updated travel information. To receive these documents, call 404-332-4565. Or, visit the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov> for more information.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Only drink purified bottle water. Bottled water is readily available and some hotels provide complimentary. Carry a bottle with you throughout the day.
- Don't purchase food from street vendors.
- Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don't handle any animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats).
- Swimming: salt water is usually safer than fresh water.

Let common sense prevail when traveling to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss. Don't put valuables or prescription drugs in checked luggage; carry them with you or leave them in the hotel safe. Leave your jewelry at home!

Passports, exchange vouchers, itinerary, air tickets, traveler's checks, visas and permits, and insurance policies should be with you in your carry-on baggage. Never leave an unlocked suitcase in a hotel room or unattended in airports or train stations.

Women Traveling Alone: Do not accept food or drink from a stranger! Never get into a taxi if there's a second man accompanying the driver, chain-lock doors in hotel room, and keep purses close to you securely closed.

Be careful when you use your credit cards for payment. Make certain that the card isn't used to make an impression on more than one credit card charge form.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or at the Bureau of Consular Affairs' home page at <http://travel.state.gov>. Or, contact the U.S. Department of State, 2201 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20520. (202) 647-4000. Web site: <http://www.state.gov>.

MEDICAL FACILITIES & INSURANCE

Medical facilities in Myanmar are inadequate for even routine medical care. There are few trained medical personnel. Common drugs for sale, such as insulin, are often adulterated products and unsafe to use. HIV/AIDS, malaria and hepatitis are definite concerns. Hospital and medical services are available in Yangon, but very limited elsewhere.

U.S. medical insurance is not always accepted outside the United States. Call your insurance provider before traveling to discuss coverage. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. Doctors and hospitals usually expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Travelers are strongly encouraged to purchase international medical evacuation insurance before traveling to Myanmar. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars or more. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas may face extreme difficulties.

ELECTRICITY

The voltage in Myanmar is 220-230 Volts AC. Most of the international hotels have their own generators. Other places may experience power cuts and voltage fluctuation which can damage equipment like computers. Please travel with the required protection for your electrical items.

FOOD & DRINK

MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE - (MSG) ALERT

Throughout most Asian countries including Myanmar, MSG (Monosodium Glutamate) - known locally as 'AJINOMOTO' - is still used in food preparation in some restaurants. Some travelers who may experience swollen feet, hands or headaches will more than likely have had a good amount of MSG in the food. It is always best to inform your guide when ordering if you do not wish it to be added to your food.

Rice is the core of most meals here. It's easier to buy authentic dishes from food stalls rather than restaurants. Chinese and Indian eateries predominate, and hotel restaurants tend to remove much of the chili and shrimp paste from dishes. Curry is in basically everything, but another flavoring is *ngapi* - a dried and fermented shrimp paste. There are also numerous forms of fish paste with salad. The food costs about USD 6 per day. Cheap food with curry or fried rice is about MMK 70 to 100. The most popular Myanmar dishes are "**Mohinga**", rice noodles with fish gravy that is served during breakfast and "**Ohn-No Khaukswe**", noodles with coconut curry.

Desserts include "**Sanwin-Ma-Kin**", sweet cakes of semolina, sugar, egg, butter and coconut, and banana cakes, known as "**Kyaukchaw**" that consist of seaweed jelly. Chinese tea is available and might be preferable to overly sweet, milky, strong tea. Sugar-cane juice is a very popular and available on the street. Stronger beverages include white liquor, orange brandy, lychee wine, and jungle liquor.

"**Htamin Le Thoke**" consists of small dishes of leftovers such as rice, onions, potatoes, noodles and small spinach. Tamarind juice is poured over the top. This juice comes from the pods of the tamarind tree, which contains a reddish sweet and sour pulp.

RELIGION & FESTIVALS

Over 85% of the population of Myanmar is Theravada Buddhist, although it is not the official state religion. The rest are Christians and Muslims. There are also a minority who practices Hinduism and Animism.

Festivals are enjoyable affairs that generally take place on or near a full-moon. There is a country fair feel to these

celebrations. They include shows with music and boxing bouts. Independence Day is marked by a seven-day fair in Yangon. Mid-April, a three-day Thingyan (water festival) starts the new year. This is the height of the hot season, but fortunately throwing buckets of cold water at anyone who enters the streets is part of the celebration. Girls and boys chase each other through the streets, covering their victims in soot and putting them on parade. Cows and fish are dressed up, adorned and set free by processions of dancing drummers. In October, when the three-month Buddhist 'Lent' ends, the Festival of Light celebrates Buddha's return from heaven. For three days Myanmar is alight with paper lanterns as offerings are made at the local pagoda.

HOLIDAYS

Independence Day	Jan. 4
Union Day	Feb. 12
Peasants' Day	Mar. 2
Armed Forces Day	Mar. 27
Thingyan (Water Festival)	Apr.13-16
Burmese New Year	Apr. 17
Full Moon of Kason	May 26
Martyrs' Day	July 19
Full Moon of Waso	July 24
Full Moon of Thadingyut	Oct. 21
National Day	Nov. 29
Christmas Day	Dec. 25

CULTURE

Royalty and religion are evident in Myanmar's art. Artists' skills are displayed in the following mediums: temples, pagodas, palaces. Wood carvings, paintings, and sculptures can be found in the buildings that were traditionally built of brick. Many still stand today. The great palaces, however, were made of wood, and only one badly-deteriorating example of these beautiful carved structures remains today. Because art and architecture relied on royal support, these both faded when the last royal kingdom collapsed.

Street-level culture is popular, vibrant and thriving. Drama is the mainstay of this culture, and most celebrations offer an excuse for a pwe (show). Performances usually pertain to Buddhist legends, but can be more entertaining and involve comedy, dancing, singing or giant puppets. Music is integral to any pwe; Music emphasizes rhythm and melody. Instruments are also used such as drums, harps, gongs and bamboo flutes.

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

Languages: Burmese, minority ethnic groups have their own languages Burmese and English is widely used especially by the older generation.

Telephone: IDD is available to the main cities. Country code: 95. Outgoing international code: 00. For emergencies, dial 199 (police), 191 (fire) and 192 (ambulance). There is a limited public internal service. The Central Telephone & Telegraph (CTT) office on the corner of Pansodan and Mahabandoola Streets is the only public place in the country where international telephone calls can be conveniently arranged. The office is open Mon-Fri 0800-1600 and weekends and holidays 0900-1400.

Mobile telephone: GSM 900 network. Fees are high and coverage limited.

Fax: May be sent from the Central Telegraph Office on Mahabandoola Street and there are further facilities at the Post and Telecommunications Corporation in Yangon.

Post: Service takes up to a week and letter forms are quicker than ordinary letters. To ensure dispatch, it is advisable to go to the post office personally to obtain a certificate of posting, for which a small fee is charged.

OVERVIEW

Myanmar is in Southeastern Asia, bordering the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, between Bangladesh and Thailand. Its government is a military regime. The nationally recognized capital is Rangoon; however, the regime refers to the capital as Yangon which lies in the fertile delta country of southern Myanmar on the wide Yangon River about 30km (19mi) from the sea. The capital's population is nearly 4 million. The national holiday is Independence Day, January 4th, marking their independence from the U.K. in 1948. Burma became Myanmar in 1989 after the State Law and Order Restoration Council, now called State Peace & Development Council (SPDC)/ decided the old name implied dominance of the Burmese culture (the Burmese are one of many ethnic groups here).

52% of Myanmar is covered by forests. In the lower part, dense, tropical forests contain timber and oil-bearing trees, including teak which is a commercially valuable. Myanmar is being deforested at a rate of 1.39 percent (1990-2000) every year. Only 0.3 percent of Myanmar's land is officially protected. Other trees include rubber, cinchona, acacia, bamboo, ironwood, mangrove, coconut, betel palm, and, chiefly in the northern highlands, oak, pine, and many species of rhododendron. Tropical fruits such as citrus, bananas, mangoes, and guavas grow in the coastal regions. Vegetation in arid regions is sparse. Because of the preservation of the natural environment, slow economic growth has been a result.

Myanmar is inhabited by 98 threatened animal species. The tiger and leopard are common. Larger native animals are found mainly in the highlands of Upper Myanmar: elephant, rhinoceros, wild buffalo, wild boar, and several deer species and antelope. Elephants are tamed or bred in captivity to be used as work animals, particularly for the lumber industry. Smaller animals include: gibbon (species of apes that live in trees), several species of monkey, wildcat, flying fox, and the tapir. Myanmar has 999 known varieties of birds: parrots, peafowl, pheasants, crows, herons, and paddybirds. Reptiles are crocodiles, geckos, cobras, pythons, and turtles. Freshwater fish species are edible and plentiful.

The population of Myanmar is 42,238,224. The overall population density is 162 per sq mile, one of the lowest in East Asia. The population is 72% rural. More than two-thirds of Myanmar are Burmese, ethnically akin to the Tibetans and the Chinese. Also, several minorities have their own languages and cultures and inhabit the country. The most important being of these groups are the Karen and the Shan, each of them less than 10% of the population. The Karen are found primarily in delta villages and along the Thai border. The Shan can be found throughout Shan Plateau.

Yangon (Rangoon) Downtown: This area full of trees and shade so much so that some neighborhoods are practically jungles. Hence you will find a totally different feel from other Asian cities of similar size. At night, wide boulevards come alive with hordes of vendors selling delicious food and piles of big cigars.

Shwedagon Paya: gold-plated shrine built to house eight of Buddha's hairs, according to legend. Built in the 18th century, it is surrounded by statues, temples, shrines, images and pavilions. This area also has the best authentic Burmese cuisine, but hardly any food is available here after 9 p.m.

Chaukhtatgyi Paya: the colossal reclining Buddha and the peaceful Kandawgyi and Inya Lakes.

HISTORY

Three groups migrated into Myanmar: first the Mons from what is now Cambodia, then Mongol Burmese from the eastern Himalayas and later, Thai tribes from northern Thailand. The kingdom of Bagan was the first to gain control of the territory that is presently Myanmar, but it collapsed. And for the next 250 years, Burma was in chaos, the territory not reunified until the mid-16th century. In the 18th century, the country fractured again as Mons and hill tribes established their own kingdoms. In 1767, the Burmans invaded Siam, forcing the Siamese to move their capital to Bangkok.

Britain invaded in 1824, and then again in 1852 and 1883 over border clashes. Now a part of British India, Myanmar was developed into a major rice exporter. Indians and Chinese arrived with the British, complicating the racial mix. In 1937, Burma was separated from British India and there was a longing for self-rule. The Japanese drove out the British in WW II. The Burmese were briefly tempted by an opportunity for independence, but a resistance movement soon sprang up. In 1948, Burma became independent and almost immediately began to disintegrate as Mons, Muslims, hill tribes, and communists, revolted.

In 1962, General Ne Win led a revolt that set the country on the path of socialism. The economy crumbled over the next 25 years until 1988, when the people had had enough. Huge demonstrations called for Ne Win's resignation. A military coup resulted in General Saw Maung and his State Law & Order Council (SLORC) taking control. This new leader promised elections in 1989.

The opposition quickly formed a coalition party called the National League for Democracy (NLD), under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi. In 1989, the government placed Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest, but despite her imprisonment, the National League for Democracy scored an overwhelming victory at the polls.

The junta prevented the elected party leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, from actually taking office. But during Aung San Suu Kyi's imprisonment, she won several international peace prizes, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Much to the joy of her supporters, the government released her in July of 1995. She was prevented from traveling outside of Rangoon, and arrested again when she tried to leave the city in September 2000. Talks with a negotiator seem to have finally paid off - Myanmar's military government released her in May 2002. Today, Aung San Suu Kyi is still strong in her intent to bring democracy to her country even if it takes years.

ECONOMY

Myanmar is a resource-rich country that suffers from abject rural poverty. The military regime took steps in the early 1990s to liberalize the economy after decades of failure under the "Burmese Way to Socialism", but those efforts have since stalled. Myanmar has been unable to achieve monetary or fiscal stability, resulting in an economy that suffers from serious macroeconomic imbalances - including an official exchange rate that overvalues the Burmese kyat by more than 100 times the market rate. In addition, most overseas development assistance ceased after the junta suppressed the democracy movement in 1988 and subsequently ignored the results of the 1990 election. Myanmar is data poor, and official statistics are often dated and inaccurate. Published estimates of Burma's foreign trade are greatly understated because of the size of the black market and border trade - often estimated to be one to two times the official economy.

DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the adventures of international travel come unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag. Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored. But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects.

Consider the following for your next trip:

- ◆ Start your trip well rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure. Getting adequate rest before starting on your journey will help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- ◆ If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is the key to how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry a bottle of drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- ◆ Avoid alcohol and caffeine just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.
- ◆ Once settled onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- ◆ As much as possible, create a dark environment during flight. Studies have shown that bright lights strongly affect individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eye shades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- ◆ Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes that will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- ◆ Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.

CLOTHING / PACKING CHECKLIST

Check the items below to be taken with you on your trip. Additional items may be added in the blank spaces provided. This is not intended as an all-inclusive list, but only as a suggested packing guide.

CLOTHING - WOMEN

- Comfortable outfit for air travel
 - Sandals or casual shoes
 - Walking shoes or tennis shoes
 - Rubber thongs (shower)
 - Hat
 - Windbreaker or jacket
 - Pullover sweater or sweatshirt
 - Long pants *
 - Shorts *
 - Socks
 - Short sleeve shirts *
 - Long sleeve shirts *
 - T-shirts
 - Pajamas
 - Light-weight robe/cover-up
 - Swim-suit/cover-up
 - Casual slacks/skirt
 - Blouses
 - Belt(s)
 - Underwear
 - Scarves
 - Costume Jewelry
-
-

CLOTHING - MEN

- Comfortable outfit for air travel
 - Sandals or casual shoes
 - Walking shoes or tennis shoes
 - Rubber thongs (showers)
 - Hat
 - Windbreaker or jacket
 - Pullover sweater or sweatshirt
 - Long pants *
 - Shorts *
 - Socks
 - Short sleeve shirts *
 - Long sleeve shirts *
 - T-Shirts
 - Pajamas
 - Light weight robe/cover-up
 - Swim trunks
 - Casual slacks
 - Shirts
 - Belt(s)
 - Underwear
-

TOILETRIES

- Anti-malarial pills
 - Vitamins
 - Aspirin/Tylenol
 - Motion sickness pills
 - Short-acting sleeping pills
 - Decongestant
 - Antibiotic
 - Lomotil / Pepto-Bismol
 - Antacid
 - Antibiotic ointment
 - Insect repellent
 - Sun screen/Sun block
 - Lip balm
 - Shampoo & Conditioner
 - Prescription medications
 - Band-Aids
 - Deodorant
 - Toothpaste & toothbrush
 - Feminine Hygiene supplies
 - Dental floss
 - Mouthwash
 - Hairbrush/comb
 - Razor
 - Q-Tips/cotton balls
 - Nail clippers
 - Nail file
 - Tweezers
 - Make-up
 - Hand lotion
-
-
-

CAMERA EQUIPMENT

- Camera/Lenses
- Plenty of film
- Lead Protective Film Bags
- Camera bag
- Lens filters
- Cleaning Fluid/Tissues
- Lens Brush/Puffer
- Extra Batteries/Charger
- Flash & Flash batteries
- Zip-lock bags
- Camera instruction book
- Stick-on labels for film
- Video Camera/Charger

SUNDRIES

- Passport
- International Certificate
- Vaccinations-Health Card
- Airline tickets/vouchers
- Money Pouch
- Credit Cards
- Travelers Checks
- Small calculator
- Sunglasses
- Prescription glasses
- Eyeglass case
- Small Alarm Clock
- Converter/plug set
- Binoculars
- Small flashlight
- Sewing kit
- Small scissors
- Kleenex
- Handi-wipes
- Zip-lock bags
- Travel clothes line
- Pillowcase for dirty clothes
- Small notebook or journal
- Pen
- Deck of cards
- Books/Magazines
- Address book for postcards
- Photocopy of passport and airline tickets
- Hard candy
- Bandana
- Extra small, collapsible bag
- Neck pillow for airline travel

OTHER

****Clothing should be comfortable***