

Dos and Don'ts for Tourists

How to be a responsible
traveler in Myanmar



Dos and Don'ts for Tourists in Myanmar

2nd Edition 2017

Acknowledgements

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Dos and Don'ts for Tourists

How to be a responsible
traveler in Myanmar

The Myanmar Dos and Don'ts Project

As a frame of reference for responsible tourists in Myanmar, the Dos and Don'ts for Tourists provide suggestions on how tourists can visit Myanmar responsibly. The Dos and Don'ts aim to maximize tourism's benefit and minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, culture and society.

First adopted by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in 2012, the present 2nd edition of the Dos and Don'ts is the result of a collaborative approach by the Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, supported by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, Tourism Transparency, the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Institute and the UN International Trade Center, who embarked on a journey of review and evaluation. The first edition of the Dos and Don'ts was launched at a time when the tourism potential of Myanmar slowly began to be realized; five years on, and Myanmar's tremendous growth as a tourist destination is unchallenged in the region.

Recognizing that the impacts of tourism are more visible in 2017, and to keep with the goal of positioning Myanmar as a sustainable tourism destination, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism aims to ensure that visitors are culturally aware, environmentally conscious and economically deliberate. Unethical practice ought to be reduced and tourism activities that are undertaken with respect for dignity, safety and freedom from exploitation are encouraged.

As visitors to new destinations we must continue to demonstrate that we manage ourselves efficiently and exhibit integrity and respect at all times. The Dos and Don'ts are a foundation for the learning tourists can do in Myanmar by steering visitors toward a responsible path and setting the context for a more enjoyable and meaningful travel experience.

Myanmar's desire to strive for sustainable tourism sets high standards for itself, and the Dos and Don'ts project proudly supports such innovative vision.

Welcome message from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar

Dear Visitors,

Mingalabar, and Welcome to Myanmar!

We are delighted you have chosen to visit our country and we warmly welcome you! We trust that visiting Myanmar will be one of the most remarkable travel stories to tell.

Our Ministry aims to develop Myanmar's tourism sector in a sustainable way. We are encouraged by the growth of tourism in our country and we are setting up sustainable destination management structures to ensure that future generations will enjoy our environments and cultures. We believe that the Dos and Don'ts for Tourists will contribute to our aim for sustainability by raising visitors' awareness about Myanmar's intricacies and avoiding some of the common negative impacts of tourism.

With this 2nd edition of the Dos and Don'ts for Tourists we encourage visitors to learn about Myanmar and to create an enabling environment for responsible tourism to flourish. We hope this booklet will influence the way visitors interact with destinations and with each other, and that tourists will take full advantage of the guidelines set out in this booklet. In our combined efforts we will be leading Myanmar to create better experiences for visitors and for our citizens.

We are very grateful for your cooperation.

Once again, we seize this opportunity to warmly welcome you and to wish you an enjoyable stay in Myanmar.

Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar

Our Cartoonists

The appeal of cartoons has a long history in Myanmar, with the first comic books emerging in the 1930s. While the craft of cartoons has changed over time, and the depictions have evolved over the years, it remains essential among Myanmar cartoonists that their creations reflect the real life of the people.

In Myanmar cartoons are not only a source of fun – they depict morality lessons. The Dos and Don'ts project was fortunate to work with a diverse range of cartoonists from different generations and regions in Myanmar, all who support a sustainable and responsible tourism future.

Ngwe Kyi began drawing cartoons in 1964 for Myanmar magazines, journals and newspapers. His most famous cartoon character is called Kabasha. He is the author of a range of books called 'Myanmar laughter'.

f [facebook.com/CartoonNgweKyi/](https://www.facebook.com/CartoonNgweKyi/)

Thit Htun started drawing in 1971. His most famous cartoon is Maung Ti Htwin (Mr. Inventor). He draws comics, satire, illustrations and animation cartoons. Thit Htoon used water colour for his cartoons.

f [facebook.com/cartoon.thithtun](https://www.facebook.com/cartoon.thithtun)

Aw Pi Kyal began drawing cartoons in 1975. As chairman of the Myanmar Cartoonist Association, he is a particularly respected artist in Myanmar. He is well known for his satire cartoons, which he regularly publishes in Myanmar journals and magazines.

f [facebook.com/cartoonist.apk](https://www.facebook.com/cartoonist.apk)

Thet Su is one of the few female cartoonists in Myanmar. She was born in 1953 and lives in Yangon. She began drawing cartoons for magazines and journals in 1972 and continues to contribute her social commentary to local media.

f [facebook.com/profile.php?id=100011739211940](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100011739211940)

Harn Lay began his professional career by drawing film posters for theaters in Taunggyi, Shan state. After fleeing Myanmar in 1988, he began contributing his art to exiled organizations. He recently returned to his home country and continues to contribute his work to local magazines and journals.

f facebook.com/harn.lay

Chit Thu began drawing in 1992. One of his comic books is called 'The Adventurer'. He is famous for drawing child educational cartoons, monthly Myanmar hero cartoons, rural customs and monastery cartoons.

Arkar is a well-known cartoonist in Myanmar, who started drawing cartoons for Myanmar magazines and journals in 1999. He currently lives in Yangon, and continues his social commentary for various media outlets.

f facebook.com/cartoon.arkar

Thiha Skt is from Sa Khan Thit Village in Tanintharyi. His comics and graphic images describe various topics and began to appear in 2001. His work includes social commentary.

f facebook.com/cartoon.thihaskt

Moe Htet Moe grew up in Hintarta township but lives in Yangon. He first published his work in 1995, contributing to various Myanmar journals and magazines. He currently holds the position of Secretary of the Myanmar Cartoonist Association.

f facebook.com/moe.htetmoe.5

Wai Yan was born in Taunggyi, Shan state, in 1981. He started drawing in 1998, and got his first work published in 1998. He worked for a Korean comic company for six years before starting freelance work. His portfolio includes newspaper, journal, and magazine publications, as well as working with NGOs and local businesses.

f facebook.com/100008203327139

Shwe Lu was born in 1984 and currently lives in Yangon. He began drawing cartoons in 1999 for magazines, journals and also newspapers. He is well-known for his comic book creations for Myanmar audiences.

f facebook.com/cartoon.shwelu

The Myanmar Dos and Don'ts Project	2
Minister's letter	3
Our cartoonists	5
Map	8
Welcome to Myanmar	11
1. The people of Myanmar are friendly, helpful and polite	
2. Approach your visit with the desire to explore and participate	
Bridge the cultural gap	12
3. Interact with people in a respectful manner. Look for cultural exchange and respect the diversity you encounter	
4. When in Myanmar, do as the Myanmar do	
5. Public displays of excessive emotion, whether prompted by anger or by love, are frowned upon.	
6. The people of Myanmar love festivals and ceremonies	
7. Learn the names of guides and hosts, and perhaps some words of the local language	
8. Body language speaks	
Be mindful of our current situation	21
9. Review travel restrictions	
10. Visitors may experience electricity outages	
Engage in better communication	26
11. Do smile	
12. Interact!	
13. Hire a local tour guide	
14. Bargaining is okay, but keep it reasonable	
15. Tipping is not expected in Myanmar but tips are warmly welcome for a job well done	

Help us preserve our cultural and religious heritage

33

16. Removal of cultural artifacts is a threat to the local culture. Do not buy protected historical and archeological artifacts or accept them as gifts
17. Don't go climbing over the fragile ruins of the temples to find the perfect sunset viewing position
18. Show respect towards historical sites and ask for permission before accessing local archeological, culturally, and spiritually important areas
19. Religious sites are subject to strict dress codes

Be Aware, Be Caring

39

20. Practice responsible photography
21. Be a child-safe visitor
22. Think before you give
23. Sexual exploitation regardless of age is against the Myanmar law
24. Using drugs is illegal in Myanmar
25. Buy locally produced food, products and services

Think Green

46

26. Reduce waste
27. Try alternative modes of transport, such as side cars, horse-carts, ox-carts or bicycles
28. Water is a scarce resource
29. Help us protect our Myanmar wildlife by refusing to purchase such products
30. Experience wildlife in the natural environment

Useful Myanmar words

54

Cultural Festivals

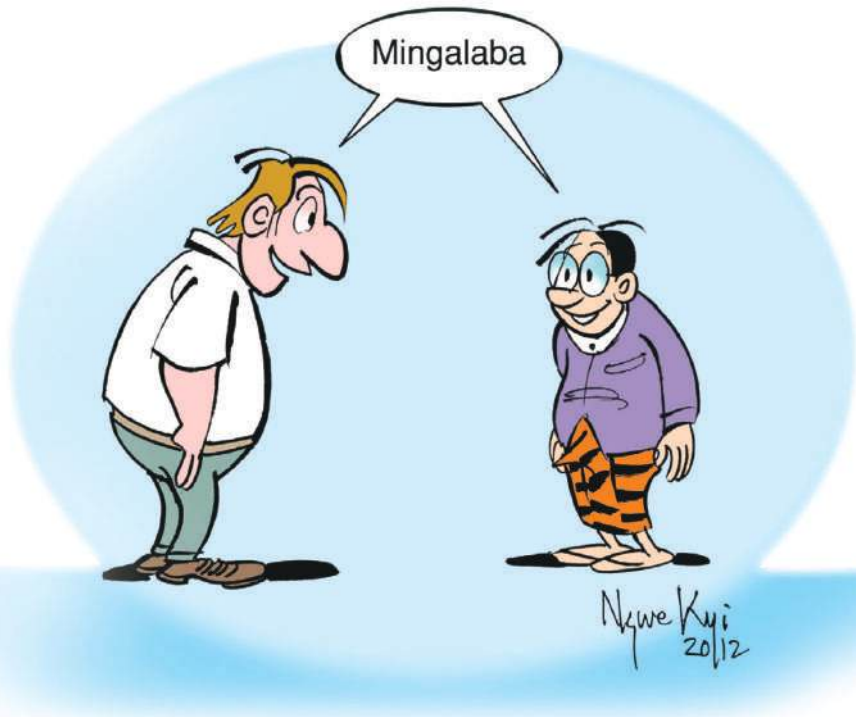
57

May I Help You?

58



**Welcome to
Myanmar**



1. The people of Myanmar are friendly, helpful and polite



2. Approach your visit with the desire to explore and participate

Open your mind to Myanmar's diverse cultures and traditions.

Bridge the cultural gap

3. Interact with people in a respectful manner. Look for cultural exchange and respect the diversity you encounter
4. When in Myanmar, do as the Myanmar do
5. Public displays of excessive emotion, whether prompted by anger or by love, are frowned upon.
6. The people of Myanmar love festivals and ceremonies
7. Learn the names of guides and hosts, and perhaps some words of the local language
8. Body language speaks



3. Interact with people in a respectful manner. Look for cultural exchange and respect the diversity you encounter



4. When in Myanmar, do as the Myanmar do

Treat your hosts as you would like to be treated in your own home. For example, in Myanmar it is customary to remove shoes before entering a house.



5. Public displays of excessive emotion, whether prompted by anger or by love, are frowned upon.



6. The people of Myanmar love festivals and ceremonies

Join the celebrations at Thingyan (Myanmar New Year / Water Festival), Thadingyut (Lights Festival) or Kayin New Year, for example. Check the festival calendar with your hotel or guide.



Go to page 57 for more information



7. Learn the names of guides and hosts, and perhaps some words of the local language

People will be delighted to meet visitors who are trying to immerse themselves in the language. Although Myanmar is the official language, there are hundreds of other spoken languages.



[Go to page 54 for more information](#)

8. Body language speaks

The head

The head is considered the most esteemed part of the body. If you touch someone on the head – even children – it will be seen as a sign of aggression.

Only use pillows to rest your head – don't sit on them!





Your Feet

Please don't point with your foot. In Myanmar pointing with your feet shows great disrespect.

When you sit, your legs should not be stretched out in front of you, so please tuck away your feet.

Your feet should never face towards a family shrine or the Buddha.

Your Hands

When you are giving or accepting items, use your right hand to receive whilst holding your forearm with your left hand. This shows respect and courtesy to your hosts.



Be mindful of our current situation

9. Review travel restrictions
10. Visitors may experience electricity outages

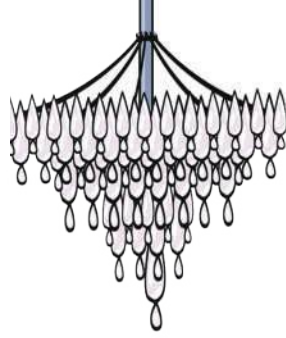


The



9. Review travel restrictions

Review travel restrictions and stay away from restricted areas. Some regions are off-limits for personal safety.

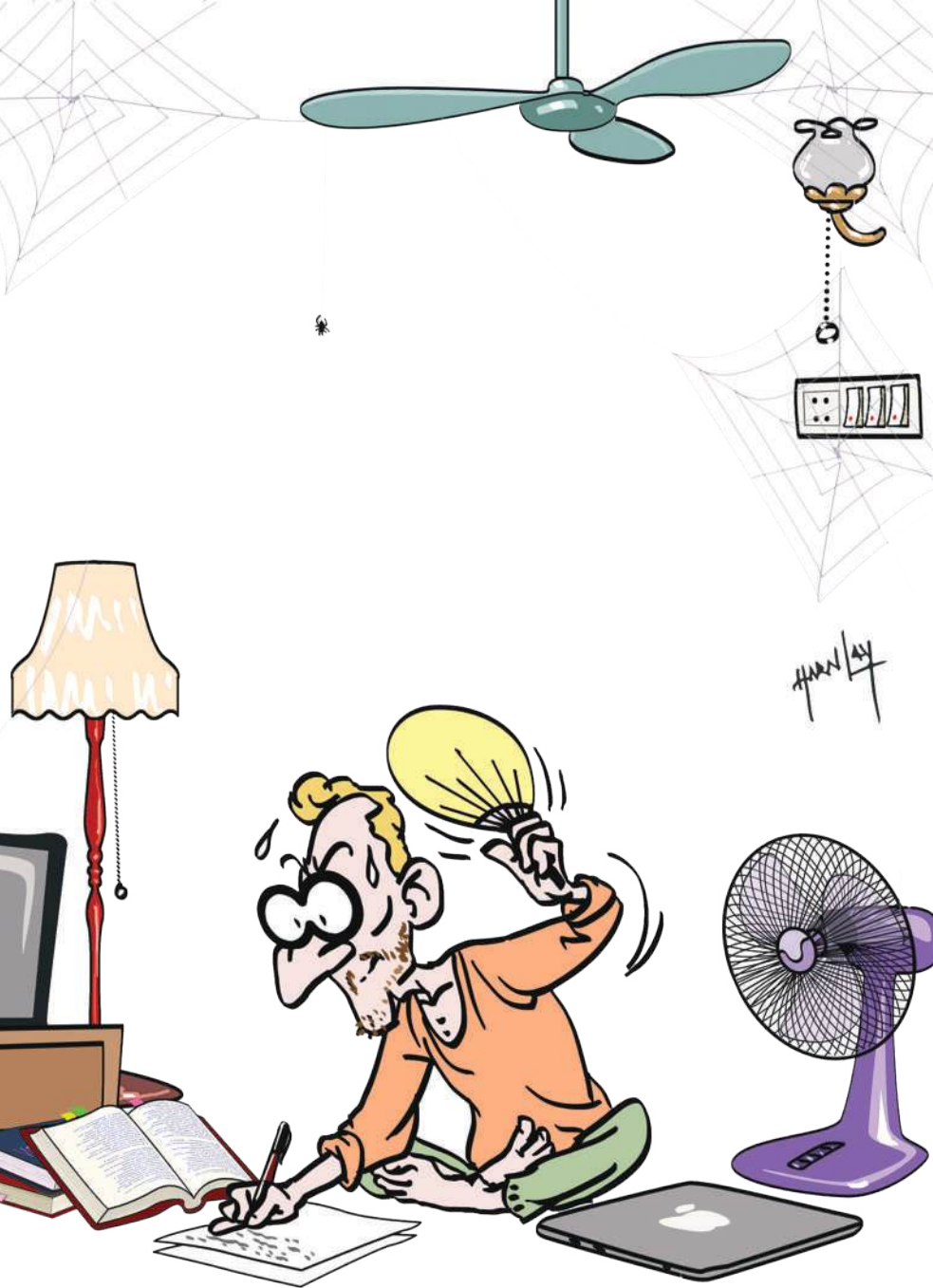


10. Visitors may experience electricity outages

Please be patient if you experience a power outage - catch a breeze, bring a book, or simply take a stroll and relax in the streets.

Everyone is in the same situation, join in the cheers when the power comes back on!





Engage in better communication

11. Do smile
12. Interact!
13. Hire a local tour guide
14. Bargaining is okay, but keep it reasonable
15. Tipping is not expected in Myanmar but tips are warmly welcome for a job well done

11. Do smile

Encourage conversations with local people and try to learn about their life. Educate yourself about culture, geography, customs, and the history of the destination.



Nkwe Kyi
2012



12. Interact!

Ask local women to show you how they grind Thanaka, and if they could apply Thanaka on your face.

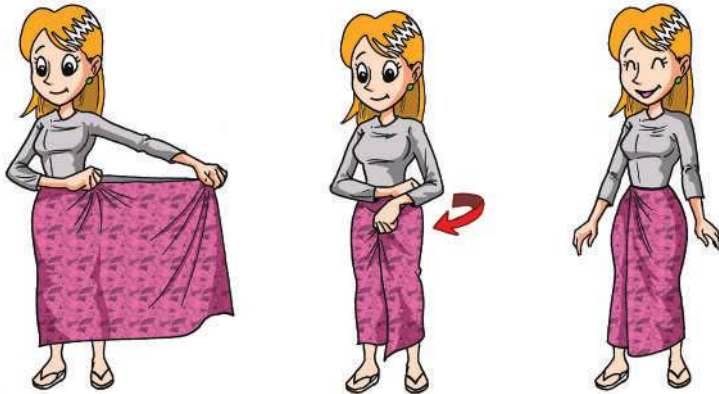
Thanaka is a distinctive feature of Myanmar. It is made from tree bark, gives a cooling sensation and provides some protection from sunburn.

Learn how to tie a Myanmar longyi.

Men



Women





13. Hire a local tour guide

Get your nose out of the guidebook, put your phone away and hire a local licensed guide. No one knows a destination better.



14. Bargaining is okay, but keep it reasonable

Bargaining is part of Myanmar culture.

It is about respect so that no one loses face during the transaction.



15. Tipping is not expected in Myanmar but tips are warmly welcome for a job well done

Help us preserve our cultural and religious heritage

16. Removal of cultural artifacts is a threat to the local culture. Do not buy protected historical and archeological artifacts or accept them as gifts
17. Don't go climbing over the fragile ruins of the temples to find the perfect sunset viewing position
18. Show respect towards historical sites and ask for permission before accessing local archeological, culturally, and spiritually important areas
19. Religious sites are subject to strict dress codes

16. Removal of cultural artifacts is a threat to the local culture. Do not buy protected historical and archeological artifacts or accept them as gifts

Myanmar loses its heritage every time antique items are taken out of the country.



17. Don't go climbing over the fragile ruins of the temples to find the perfect sunset viewing position



18. Show respect towards historical sites and ask for permission before accessing local archeological, culturally, and spiritually important areas

For example, nearly all villages have certain items that ought not to be touched, climbed or sat on. Show your respect for these restrictions.





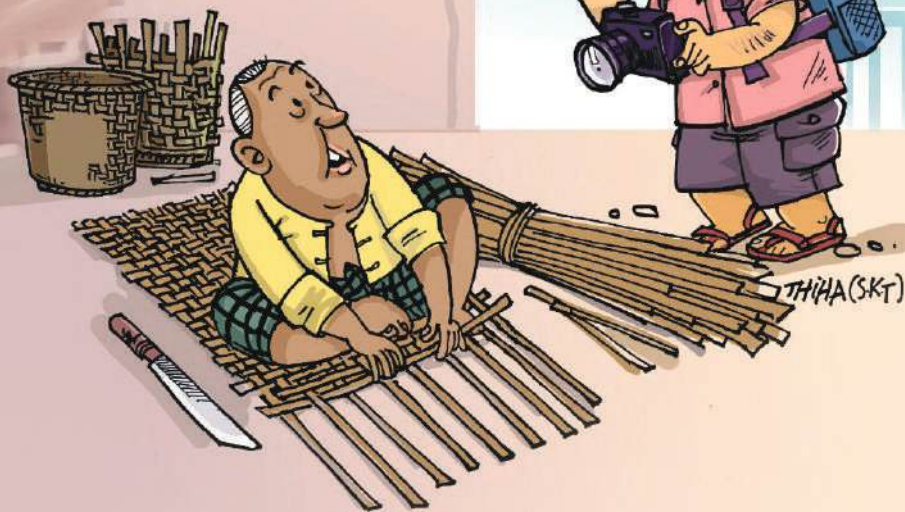


19. Religious sites are subject to strict dress codes

Keep shoulders and knees covered, and remove shoes and socks before entering any shrine, pagoda or monastery.

Be Aware, Be Caring

20. Practice responsible photography
21. Be a child-safe visitor
22. Think before you give
23. Sexual exploitation regardless of age is against the Myanmar law
24. Using drugs is illegal in Myanmar
25. Buy locally produced food, products and services



20. Practice responsible photography

Always ask before taking photos or videos of people, especially of children, homes, ceremonies or sacred sites.

Respect locals and remember not to simply treat them as subjects for your holiday pictures.



21. Be a child-safe visitor

Children are not tourist attractions, so please don't treat them like they are. Think twice before visiting an orphanage. A better way for tourists to support vulnerable children and their families is through vocational training and community based initiatives.

22. Think before you give

Contribute to communities, not to individuals.

Giving directly to children encourages them to skip school and continue begging, locking them into a cycle of poverty.

 [unicef.org/myanmar/protection_24167.html](https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/protection_24167.html)





**23. Sexual exploitation
regardless of age is against
the Myanmar law**

24. Using drugs is illegal in Myanmar

Set a good example. Don't drink excessively and don't use drugs.





25. Buy locally produced food, products and services

The money you spend makes an important contribution to the community.

Spend on fresh produce at daily wet markets, purchase locally produced handicrafts, get a haircut, or buy a newspaper from the corner store.

Think Green

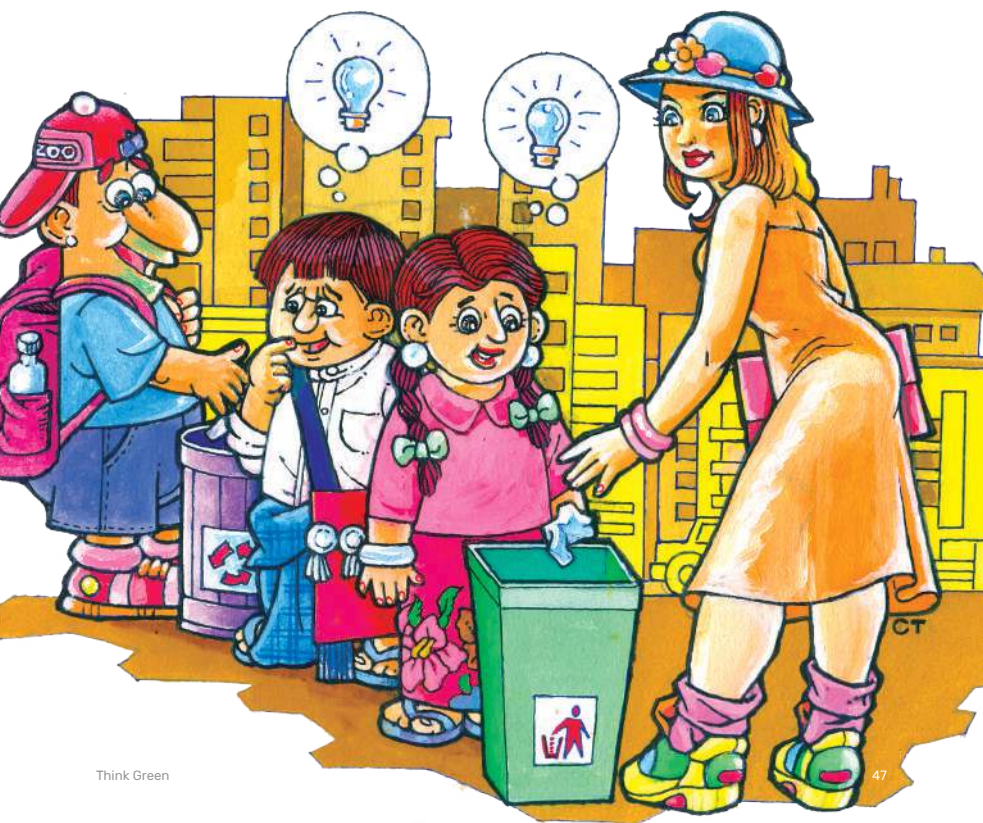
26. Reduce waste
27. Try alternative modes of transport, such as side cars, horse-carts, ox-carts or bicycles
28. Water is a scarce resource
29. Help us protect our Myanmar wildlife by refusing to purchase such products
30. Experience wildlife in the natural environment

26. Reduce waste

Bring your own reusable water bottle to help reduce plastic waste.

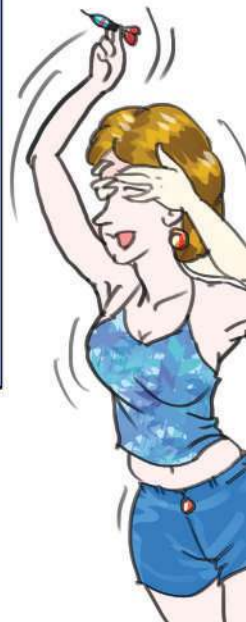
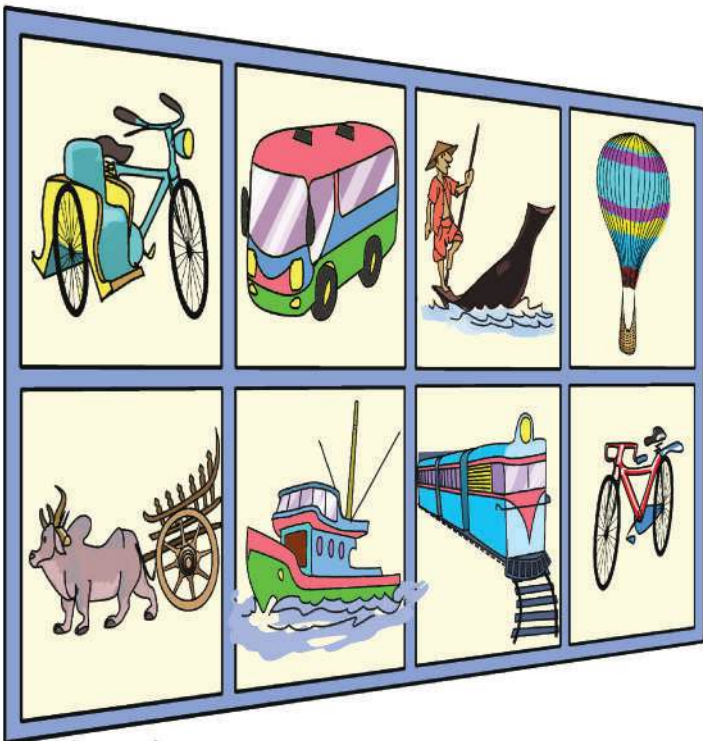
Turn down plastic bags if offered when shopping.

Set an example to the communities that you visit – dispose of rubbish in waste bins, or if not available, take it away with you.



27. Try alternative modes of transport, such as side cars, horse-carts, ox-carts or bicycles

These are sustainable and benefit the locals.



HARILAY
2017

In Yangon, hail a sidecar to whiz through the traffic jams.

In Pyin Oo Lwin, hop aboard the train to cross the highest bridge in Myanmar, the Goteik bridge.

In Mandalay, pedal a bike to explore local villages on the way to U Bein bridge (teak).

At Inle Lake, look for a canoe boat ride as an alternative option.

Hop aboard the local bus to Hpa-An. Join in the onboard karaoke or latest Myanmar soap opera as you pass daily countryside life.

In Bagan, float above the temples in a hot air balloon at sunrise.

At Indawgyi Lake paddle up close to wildlife in a kayak.

Cross the river to Dala from Yangon in the local ferry.

In Kalaw lace up your hiking boots and enjoy a hike through the rural countryside of Shan state.





28. Water is a limited resource

Some areas face moderate or severe water shortages. Inquire if there is sufficient water as your activities should not limit the availability of water to local communities.



29. Help us protect our Myanmar wildlife by refusing to purchase such products

Buying or consuming products from endangered species destroys the environment and encourages illegal wildlife trade.

30. Experience wildlife in the natural environment

Be sure to always keep appropriate distance.

Do not feed monkeys or other wild animals.

Take part in active eco-tours that do not disturb nature and wild animals.

Look for encounters that promote animal welfare, and where experts work permanently.



**Relax and enjoy your holiday
in our country!**



Wieder
auf
12



Useful Myanmar Words

Hello

min-ga-la-ba
မင်္ဂလာပါ။

Goodbye

thwa:-meh-naw
သွားမယ်နော်။

Excuse me

saw:-ri:-naw
ဆေးရိုးနော်။

What's your name?

na-meh-beh-lo kaw-tha-leh:
နာမည်ဘယ်လိုခေါ်သလဲ။

My name is...

ja-naw. (m)/ja-ma. (f)
na-meh-ga'.....ba
.ကျတော်/ကျမ နာမည်ကနဲ့ပါ။

Thank you

kyei:-zu:-tin-ba-deh
ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါတယ်

You're welcome

ya'-ba-deh
ရပါတယ်။

How are you?

nay-kaun:-la:
နေကောင်းလား။

I am well.

nay-kaung:-ba-deh
hka-mya: (m)/shin (f)
ကောင်းပါတယ်။ ခင်ဗျား ကော။

Do you speak English?

in-ga-leiq-lo pyaw:taq-tha-la:
အင်္ဂလိပ်လို ပြောတတ်လား။

I don't understand.

na:-ma-leh-bu:
နားမလည်ဘူး။

DIRECTIONS

Where is ...

...beh-hma-leh:
နဲ့ ဘယ်မှာလဲ။

(on the) left

beh-beq-hma
ဘယ်ဘက်မှာ။

right

nya-beq-hma
ညာဘက်မှာ

straight ahead

teh.-deh.
တည့်တည့်

ACCOMODATIONS

Where is ...?

...beh-hma-leh:
နဲ့ဘယ်မှာလဲ။

Guesthouse

te:-ko-kan:
တည်းခိုခန်း။

Hotel

ho-the
ဟိုတယ်။

Do you have a... ?

...shi.-la:
နဲ့ရှိလား။

Single

ta-yauq-hkan:
တစ်ယောက်ခန်း။

Double

hna-yauq-hkan:
နှစ်ယောက်ခန်း။

Twin

ga-din hna-lon:
-pa-de. a-hkan:
ခုတင်နှစ်လုံးပါတဲ့ အခန်း။

How much is it
per night/person?

ta-nya-/ta-yauq
beh-lauq-leh:

တစ်ည/တစ်ယောက်
ဘယ်လောက်လဲ။

EATING & DRINKING

Can you recommend a ...?

...ta-hku. a-jan

pei:-nine-ma-la

နဲ့ တစ်ခုအကြံပေးနိုင်မလား။

Bar

a-yeq-sain

အရက်ဆိုင်

Café

kaw-fi-sain

ကော်ဖီဆိုင်

Restaurant

sa:-thauq-sain

စားသောက်ဆိုင်

I'd like (the)...., please.

pày.ba

နဲ့ ပေးပါ။

Bill

báu.cha

ဘောက်ချာ

Menu

mi.nù

မီနူး

Do you have

vegetarian food?

theq-thaq-luq

sa:-za-ya shi.-la:

သက်သတ်လွတ် စားစရာ

ရှိသလား။

What's the local speciality?

di.myó.h.gá.suh.pe.she.uh.sá.

uh.sa gá.ba.lè

ဒီမြို့က စပယ်ရှယ် အစား

အစာကဘာလဲ။

Cheers!

chi:-ya:

ချီးယား။

EMERGENCIES

Help!

keh-ba

ကယ်ပါ။

Go away!

thwa:

သွား။

Call ...

...kaw-pay:-ba

နဲ့ ခေါ်ပေးပါ။

a doctor

hsa-ya-wun

ဆရာဝန်

the police

yeh:

ရဲ

Where is the toilet?

ein-tha beh-hma-leh:

အိမ်သာဘယ်မှာလဲ။

I'm sick.

nay-ma-kaun:-bu:

နေမကောင်းဘူး။

It hurts here (point)

di-hma na-deh

ဒီမှာနာတယ်။

Where's a ...?

...beh-hma-leh:

နဲ့ ဘယ်မှာလဲ။

Bank

ban

ဘဏ်တိုက်။

Internet

in-ta-neq'

အင်တာနက်။

Café

kaw-hpi:-sain

ကဖေး

Market

zay:

ဈေး။

Post office

sa-daiq

စာတိုက်။

Tourist office

to:-ris youn:

တိုးရစ်ရုံး။

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Is this the ... to (Moulmein)?

di-lan: (maw-la-myain)

thwa:-de.-la:

ဒါ (မော်လမြိုင်) သွားတဲ့ နဲ့လား

boat

thin:-baw:

သင်္ဘော

bus

bas-ka:

ဘတ်စ်ကား

plane

le-yin-byan

လေယာဉ်

Train

ya-ta:

ရထား

At what time's the... bus?

bas-ka: beh-a-chein

htweq-ma-leh:

ဘယ်အချိန်ထွက်မလဲ။

One ... ticket to

(Taunggyi), please.

(Taung-gyi:) leq-hmaq ta-

saun pay:-ba

(တောင်ကြီး)နဲ့

လက်မှတ်တစ်စောင်ပေးပါ။

What time does the bus leave?

ba`-sa-ka: beh-a-chein

htweq-ma-leh:

ဘယ်အချိန်ထွက်မလဲ။

Are you available for hire?

ar:-la:

အားလား။

Motorcycle taxi

a-hnga:

maw-taw-hsain-keh

အငှား မော်တော်ဆိုင်ကယ်

Tri-shaw

saiq-ka:

ဆိုင်ကား။

Taxi

taq-si

တက္ကစီ။

SIGHTSEEING

Please take me to

(this address).

di-leiq-sa-go po.-pay:-ba

(ဒီလိပ်စာ) ကိုပို့ပေးပါ။

Please stop here.

di-hma yaq-ba

ဒီမှာရပ်ပါ။



Cultural Festivals

January

Independence Day

January 4

*Celebrating Myanmar's Declaration of Independence from the UK 1948.
(Yangon)*

Manao Festival

January 10, Kachin State Day

*Festival of the New Year and Victory in Battles.
Traditional clothes and dancing.
(Myitkyina, Kachin State)*

February

Chinese New Year

Late January/early February, 1 day

*Big Dragons, Dragon Acrobatics and temple festivals to begin the New Year.
(Kyaingtong, Shan State and countrywide)*

Lisu New Year

February 15 or 16, 1 day

*Colourful and catching festival all across Kachin State. Local competition, handicrafts and trad. clothes
(Myitkyina, Kachin State)*

Shwe Oo Min Paya Pwe

Full Moon February, 1 day

*Festival that comes with local customs as clothes, dances and songs
(Pindaya, Shan State)*

April

Thingyan Festival

Mid-April, 5 days

*Five day bash all over the country. Getting soaked and soaking people is the motto
(Dawei and all around the country)*

July

Martyr's Day

July 19

*Commemorated to assassinated General Aung San + 7 other leaders of pre-independence interim government
(Yangon)*

September

Phaung Daw Oo Paya Festival

18 Days

*The biggest Pagoda Festival of the country.
Attended by several hill tribes. Taking place on the water of Inle Lake.
(Inle Lake, Shan State)*

October/November

Fire Balloon Festival

Full Moon October, 1 day

*Most beautiful yet dangerous display of fireworks throughout SEA, marking the end of Rainy Season.
(Taunggyi, Shan State)*

Mya Tha Lun Paya Festival

October 15 to November 2, Half month

*Lightning of 9000 candles and chanting of almost 2000 Monks in the morning are highlights of this festival
(Magwe, Central Myanmar)*

May I Help You?

General Numbers

Police

199

Fire

191

Ambulance

192

Yangon Tourist Police

01 378 479

10 Pansodan Street (lower block)



Emergency Numbers

General Crime Reports:

0949-555777

0949-555888

or when busy:

067-411316

067-411317

067-411 318

Anti-Human Trafficking / Child Protection:

Nay Pyi Taw

067-411313

Yangon

01-544144

01-8604744

Mandalay

02-67154

For more information go to:

[myanmartourism.org/index.php/ tourist-information/helpful-numbers](http://myanmartourism.org/index.php/tourist-information/helpful-numbers)

myanmarhotlines.com/GeneralHotlines/

We support responsible tourism:



"We warmly welcome those who appreciate and enjoy our heritage, our way of life and who travel with respect."

Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy

Dos and Don'ts for Tourists

Second Edition

Offering a peak into the unique culture of Myanmar, the Dos and Don'ts are designed to help tourists visit Myanmar responsibly, respectfully and more aware.



tourismtransparency.org
hss.de/myanmar/en
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