



"The Grande Dame" of Women's
Adventure Travel Since 1982

2012 ~ Celebrating 30 Years!

DATES

February 15 – 28, 2012

COST

\$5,995 all-inclusive (land and air*) from Bangkok, Thailand, including all internal flights in Burma and Laos (\$800 deposit)

* This all inclusive cost is based on airfare pricing as of March 2011. The cost of this trip may increase based on any included airfare increases.

RATING

Moderate

ACTIVITIES

Archeology, Boat Excursions, Cooking Class, Cultural Exploration, Hiking, Natural History, Sightseeing, Photography

MAIN ATTRACTIONS

- Enjoy the hospitality of the world's friendliest people, where Buddhism permeates all strands of cultural, ethical, and secular life.
- Explore the fabled cities of Mandalay, Yangon, Vientiane, and Luang Prabang, and the ancient ruins of Bagan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Discover the charms of Inle Lake and its "leg rowers" in a magical world of floating villages and gardens, little-touched by the modern world.
- Walk to ethnic and tribal villages to meet and learn about the indigenous hill tribe peoples who live in remote villages.
- Combine the bygone era of two of the most exotic and least-explored countries in Southeast Asia, with luxury hotel accommodations and some of the region's best restaurants.

AdventureWomen is the oldest
adventure travel company for
active women over 30.

BURMA (MYANMAR) AND LAOS

Land of Golden Pagodas and Fascinating Tribes

"This is Burma, and it will be quite unlike any land you know about," wrote Rudyard Kipling in 1898. More than a century later, Burma's lure endures as a place where time stands still. Everywhere you look there are temples and shrines. The air rings with the sound of gongs and chanted prayers. And every hill, tree, and building pulsates with a spiritual connection. Buddhism and nat (spirit) worship influence all aspects of life here.

Burma (now called Myanmar), and Laos are two of the most exotic and least explored countries of Buddhist Indochina. Here we have a rare opportunity to step back in time and experience the Asia of old. Our journey incorporates classic wonders and unique natural phenomena; the magic of Yangon and Mandalay; the ancient ruins of Pagan; shimmering golden-spired temples; the floating gardens of Inle Lake; and fascinating tribal peoples.

Myanmar is the land of a thousand ancient golden pagodas, a deeply religious country with a rich cultural heritage and friendly, open-hearted people. Commercial tourism is in its infancy here, but its sublime beauty makes up for its lack of tourist infrastructure. The county's rural landscape is dotted with serene villages where people still work the land with buffalo and elephants.

Small, landlocked Laos has always been a place apart, as our journey in Southeast Asia continues in this magical, little-visited country. Covered with steep mountains and thick jungle, Laos feels like a setting in a fairy tale. Young monks in saffron robes chant in unison in dusky pagodas; women place vases of fresh flowers in the spirit shrines that guard their homes; children splash and shriek in the shallows of the Mekong River.

Laos may be one of the last truly calm places on earth. There are no bright lights, no shopping malls, no amusement parks; just people going about their lives as their forefathers did. They grow rice and weave traditional cloth, moving through life as slowly as the water buffalo that plod back and forth in their rice paddies.

Once you experience the serene and tranquil beauty of this part of the Asian world, you might not want to leave. With the recent release from house arrest of political activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi in November 2010, tourism in Burma (Myanmar) has already increased, and Burma is now being touted as Asia's next "tourism hotspot."

Join AdventureWomen NOW and beat the crowds on this unique journey. Experience the magic of Southeast Asia, a Land of Golden Pagodas, for yourself

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THIS TRIP

- For Myanmar (Burma). Domestic and international flights as indicated:
 - from Bangkok to Yangon;
 - Yangon to Bagan;
 - Bagan to Mandalay;
 - Mandalay to Helo;
 - Helo to Yangon;
 - Yangon back to Bangkok.
- For Laos. Domestic and international flights as indicated:
 - from Bangkok to Vientiane;
 - Vientiane to Luang Prabang;
 - Luang Prabang back to Bangkok.
- Overnight hotel reservations at the Novotel Airport Hotel, at the Bangkok Airport, for the night of February 23, 2012 (the night between the Burma and Laos portions of the trip).
- Private airport transfers, luggage transfers, and all transportation throughout the trip.
- All sightseeing with a national English speaking guide in each country.
- Admission fees and permits to sites as per the itinerary.
- Private boat cruises, and all other activities and classes as listed in the itinerary.
- All meals as listed in the itinerary (Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner) and throughout the trip.
- 3- to 5-star luxury, centrally located hotel accommodations in twin-bedded, double-occupancy rooms.
- Iced mineral water and cold towels on sightseeing days (2 bottles of water per day).
- One AdventureWomen escort.

HOW TO REGISTER

First, call (800-804-8686) or email (advwomen@women.com) the AdventureWomen office to determine space availability. We will hold a space for you for 5 days while you complete the application process, and make personal and travel arrangements.

Next, complete and sign the Trip Application form included in all of our brochures. We can also fax or mail one to you, or you can get the Trip Application form on our Web site by clicking "Book Now" on our home page. Include with the application the required deposit that can be made by credit card (Visa or MasterCard), personal check, money order, or cashier's check. You can also register over the phone with a credit card. Once we receive your deposit and trip application, we will mail you a package of information verifying your registration. call our travel consultants at Montana Travel, 800-247-3538, and ask for Ciretta to make your airline reservations.

Then, call our travel consultants at Montana Travel, 800-247-3538, and ask for Ciretta to make your airline reservations.

Note: We will only hold your space for 5 days without a trip application and deposit payment!

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE INTO BANGKOK

You need to be in Bangkok, Thailand at the International Airport on February 17, 2012, for an 8:15 AM flight that takes our group from Bangkok to Yangon, Myanmar. Depending on the airline you use and your arrival time into Bangkok, you may or may not need to stay overnight at the Novotel Airport Hotel (located at the airport) on the night of February 16. The Novotel Airport Hotel is the most convenient place to stay overnight in order to arrive on time for our early morning flight out of Bangkok on February 17. Ciretta Green at Montana Travel can help you with these arrangements. 800-247-3538.

We return to Bangkok Airport from Luang Prabang, Laos on February 28, at approximately 6:10 PM. If you are returning directly to the U.S. or extending your stay in Bangkok and need to make hotel and other reservations for the night of February 28 or beyond, please call Ciretta Green at Montana Travel. 800-247-3538.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS AND HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Citizens of the United States must possess a valid passport, which must be valid 6 months beyond your intended stay in Myanmar and Laos. If you do NOT have a passport, GET IT NOW! Please don't wait until the last minute. You should always carry 2 extra passport photographs with you in case of emergency (if your passport is stolen or lost.)

Visas

You need a visa to travel to both Myanmar and Laos. You must apply for your Burma (Myanmar) visa by filling out the visa application form and sending it, along with your passport, to the Burmese Embassy in Washington, DC. For Laos, you can get your visas on arrival at the Luang Prabang Airport.

Here is the information you need for both visas:

NOT INCLUDED

- Round-trip international airfare from your hometown to Bangkok. Please call Ciretta Green at Montana Travel (800-247-3538). She can help with:
 - International round trip airfare to Bangkok.
 - Hotel reservations, if you need them, the night before the trip begins in Bangkok (night of February 16) and after the trip (night of February 28).
 - She can also help you set up any additional travel if you want to come early or stay longer in Bangkok or any other area of Thailand.
- Any airport departure taxes within and departing from Bangkok, Burma, and Laos.
- Gratuities to guides and drivers (as a guideline: approximately \$3-\$5 US per person per day for English-speaking guide; and \$1.50 - \$3 US per person per day for each driver, in U.S. dollars or local currency).
- A few meals as listed in the itinerary, and beverages (coffee, tea, extra bottled water, soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquor) with meals.
- Items of a personal nature and any optional activities.
- Visa costs for Burma and Laos. We will send you instructions about visas for Myanmar and Laos at a later date.

BURMA (MYANMAR): ENTRY / EXIT / VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. CITIZENS:

You must have a valid passport and visa to enter Burma. You should apply for your Burmese visa at a Burmese embassy or consulate abroad before you arrive in Burma. On September 1, 2010, the Government of Burma suspended its "Visa on Arrival" program, which had been in effect since May 2010. In Burma, you are required to show your passport with a valid visa at all airports, train stations, and hotels. Security checkpoints are common outside of tourist areas.

To get a tourist visa for entry into Burma (Myanmar):

- Get your Visa Application Form online at: <http://www.traveldocs.com/mm/visat.pdf>
- Fill out, complete and sign the visa application form and the Completed Work History Form (which is attached to the Application Form).
- Enclose 2 Passport-size photographs.
- Enclose a copy of your itinerary for the AdventureWomen trip (call us and we will give you a link to it.)
- Send your passport, completed forms, itinerary, and visa fee (call the Embassy to find out the current visa fee), to the Burmese Embassy in Washington, DC. Call first to verify the information.
- Send all documents by Fed Ex or any other registered mail. Make sure you have return envelopes enclosed with the proper postage for Fed Ex or other registered mail.
- Apply for your visa after November 20, 2011. The tourist visa is valid for entry to Myanmar for three months from the date of issue. We enter Burma on February 17, 2012, so it needs to be valid on that date. The visa is valid for a stay of up to 28 days and is not extendable.

You can get information about entry requirements as well as other information from the Burmese Embassy:

Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
2300 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008
Telephone 202-332-4350

LAOS: ENTRY / EXIT / VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. CITIZENS:

You must have both a passport and visa to enter Laos; your passport must also have at least six months validity remaining. You can get a visa on arrival in Laos if you are traveling for tourism. You need two passport-size photographs and must pay \$35 at the airport on arrival in Luang Prabang.

If you wish to obtain a visa in advance, please contact a Lao embassy or consulate. In the United States, you can get visa and other information about Lao entry requirements from the Embassy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2222 S St. NW, Washington DC 20008, tel: 202-332-6416, fax: 202-332-4923

Here is the link for the Lao visa application (to fill out and take with you): <http://www.laoembassy.com/visa%20form.pdf>

LIABILITY FORM AND FINAL PAYMENT

Part of what ADVENTUREWOMEN, hopes to foster is the taking of more self-responsibility for our own lives, health, and safety. Please read the LIABILITY FORM carefully, sign it, and return it with the remainder of your balance due by **NOVEMBER 19, 2011.**

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS

Notification of cancellations must be received in writing. Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure date, and 50% of the registration deposit is non-refundable.

For cancellations received 60-89 days prior to the trip departure date: 50% of the total trip cost is non-refundable. For cancellations received 1-59 days prior to the trip departure date: 100% of the total trip cost is non-refundable.

You are highly encouraged to purchase trip cancellation insurance to cover emergency situations. Information will be sent to you in your registration packet.

SWITCHING TRIPS

Before your final balance due date, you may change your deposit to another trip within the same calendar year by paying a \$75 fee to switch. You may not switch your deposit to a trip in another calendar year.

NO SMOKING POLICY

Beginning in 1995, our trips became smoke free. Please note that there will be no smoking by any participants on AdventureWomen vacations.

Vaccinations

The only vaccine required by international regulations for Myanmar and Laos is yellow fever. However, proof of vaccination is only required IF you have visited a country in the yellow fever zone within the last 6 days prior to entering either of these countries. The disease occurs only in sub-Saharan Africa and tropical South America, so we assume that no one needs a yellow fever vaccination!

No other special inoculations are required for travel to Myanmar or Laos, but you should be up-to-date on all vaccinations such as tetanus, typhoid, and hepatitis A and B. Please consult your doctor or a travel-medicine clinic.

This trip is rated as MODERATE. You should be able to walk/hike 3-5 miles in hilly terrain on day hikes, be able to climb flights of stairs to monasteries, and walk on sightseeing tours within the villages and cities.

You must have your own health insurance, and not have any physical problems or conditions that would be adversely affected by walking at higher altitudes and the rigors of international travel.

POLITICS ASIDE...

You might be asked by others: Why travel to Myanmar when there has been so much controversy in light of the repressive military regime that has ruled the country since 1988? Many believe that staying away signifies a protest to the junta.

However, with the recent release from house arrest of political activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi in November 2010, tourism in Burma (Myanmar) has already increased, and Burma is now being touted as Asia's next "tourism hotspot."

At AdventureWomen, we believe that we as travelers carry torches that can illuminate a country. The people of Myanmar deserve our support, both economic and emotional. A growing number of tourists traveling throughout the country can bring hope and light, friendships and fresh ideas, to the general population. It's the people, not the government, who benefit financially from our tourist dollars - the people who work in restaurants, hotels, crafts markets, travel companies - virtually all of which are privately owned.

A visit to Myanmar can put a human face on what is at stake there, and we cannot help but come away with a deeper understanding of the country and its people.

THE EXCITING ITINERARY FOR OUR MYANMAR AND LAOS ADVENTURE

DAYS 1 and 2, Wednesday and Thursday, February 15 and 16, 2012 U.S.A. to Bangkok

Fly to Bangkok, Thailand on your own. You lose one day, due to crossing the International Dateline, and arrive in Bangkok on February 17, 2012. You may need to overnight on your own at the Novotel Airport Hotel (at the airport) or at a hotel in downtown Bangkok (only if you arrive a few days early and have time to travel into the city).

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

We suggest you book your air reservations with our travel consultant EARLY and soon after registering for this trip!

On this AdventureWomen trip, international airfare is NOT included from the United States to Bangkok. International and domestic airfare IS included from Bangkok to Myanmar and return to Bangkok, and from Bangkok to Laos and return to Bangkok*. In order to facilitate group arrivals and departures into Bangkok, and to make sure that everyone arrives in time to catch our early morning flight to Myanmar on February 12, we ask you to work directly with our travel consultant at MONTANA TRAVEL to make your travel arrangements. Or, if you are booking your own air or using frequent flyer miles to get to Bangkok, please make sure that you have plenty of time to arrive in Bangkok prior to our 8:45 AM departure on the morning of February 17, 2012.

*** This all inclusive cost is based on airfare pricing as of March 2011. The cost of this trip may increase based on any included airfare increases.**

After booking your trip, please call CIRETTA at MONTANA TRAVEL, in Bozeman, Montana, to discuss your airline schedule to Bangkok, and to discuss any extra arrangements that you may want to make (i.e., staying in Bangkok either before or after the trip).

1-800-247-3538
OR FAX 1-406-586-1959
email: ciretta@mttravel.com

CANADIAN RESIDENTS, please call
406-587-1188

(continued on page 6)



DAY 3, Friday, February 17 Meet at Bangkok Airport. Fly from Bangkok to Yangon, then Hit the Ground Running on our First Day!

Our exciting journey begins as we rendezvous at the Bangkok Airport for our 8:45 AM flight from Bangkok to the Burmese capital of Yangon (formerly Rangoon), where we are welcomed and transferred to our hotel.

After a short rest, we're off on a private guided tour of this fascinating city, the most cosmopolitan, interesting, and multi-ethnic city in

(continued from page 5)

When calling, please identify yourself as an ADVENTUREWOMEN TRAVELER. If you leave a message on CIRETTA'S voice mail, she will return your call promptly.

NOTE: The recent trend in travel is for travelers to finalize their plans much closer to departure time than was customary in the past. While we try to be as flexible as possible booking last minute registrants, we must often relinquish hotel space and air reservations 6 to 12 weeks prior to departure! Please keep this in mind when making your travel plans.

Myanmar. We begin with a visit to Sule Paya, the geographic heart of Yangon, where its primary traffic circle is occupied by a 2000-year-old golden pagoda! We walk in the midst of historical colonial architecture and view the city's irregular jumble of commerce, teeming with life and entrepreneurial energy.

On this first day of our adventure, our welcome lunch is at the House of Memories Restaurant, which includes a fascinating talk by a well-known Myanmar historian, Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt. After lunch we visit the art gallery of Myanmar's leading artist, Mr. Min Wei Aung, who often has art exhibitions in New York and London. His watercolor and oil paintings are unique and often depict typical scenes of Myanmar, with its monks and monasteries. We tour his studio and listen to his perspective about his style of painting.

Late afternoon we travel to the most important sight and landmark in Yangon, the awe-inspiring golden Shwedagon Pagoda, an ethereal complex of striking golden spires and a sacred mecca for Burmese Buddhists. According to legend, the original stupa (temple) is 2,500 years old. At dusk, we view a 1000-oil-lamp offering and religious chant as we watch the sun set on our first full day in this stunning city.

Returning to our beautiful hotel, we relax before having dinner at the Karaweik Palace Restaurant. After such a full day, we might find it difficult to stay awake to watch the cultural entertainment of the evening!

(Lunch and Dinner)

Overnight in Yangon in deluxe rooms at the 5-Star Governor's Residence Hotel.

A romantic, colonial-style mansion dating from the 1920s, The Governor's Residence is redolent of the days when it was home to the ruler of Burma's southern states. With its fan-cooled verandas and teak armchairs, this delightful Orient-Express hotel in the elegant Embassy Quarter of Yangon (formerly Rangoon), conjures up a bygone era while offering every modern pleasure. Set in a verdant garden dotted with lotus pools, the hotel is truly magical at the end of a day spent visiting the majestic Shwedagon Pagoda.

The Governor's Residence, 35 Taw Win Road, Dagon Township, Yangon, Myanmar
Tel: (+95-1) 229860 Fax: (+95-1) 228260 E-mail: info@governorsresidence.com.mm

DAY 4, Saturday, February 18 *Mount Popa and the Ruins of the Ancient City of Bagan*

After an early breakfast at the hotel, we are transferred to the airport for our flight to Bagan, considered to be one of the most amazing sights in all of Asia. Rivaling Cambodia's Angkor Wat in its jaw-dropping scope, this 10th-century archeological wonder contains 3,000 temples from the original 13,000 that once stood.

Upon arrival in Bagan, we first travel by vehicle to Mount Popa, an extinct volcano that was last active 250,000 years ago. It is the most important nat worship (spirit worship) center in the country. Nat worship was an earlier form of belief before the advent of Buddhism in the 11th century. We are fascinated as we explore the area's green fertile plains and lush vegetation, which is caused by the moisture of passing clouds at this high elevation. We also visit toddy-palm villages, observing the hospitality and every day life of the local farmers. We watch peanut oil being extracted by traditional methods from organically grown peanuts and view the process of making palm wine.

Lunch is served in a tropical forest at our home for tonight, the Popa Mountain Resort, beautifully situated at the base of Mt. Popa. In the afternoon we view a display of mannequin-like figures representing the 37 figures of nat gods (a major pilgrimage destination) and walk the surrounding area. A special activity this afternoon is a horseback

riding tour from the resort, where we are treated to a wonderful view of the sunset over the Bagan Plain.
(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Dinner is served at the Popa Mountain Resort.

Overnight at the spectacular, first-class Popa Mountain Resort in deluxe rooms. The hotel is located amidst the beautiful natural setting of legendary Mt. Popa and is comprised of tastefully designed villas that are fully equipped with modern facilities, private balconies, and lavishly furnished interiors.

DAY 5, Sunday, February 19 *The Ruins of the Ancient City of Bagan*

After breakfast at the hotel, we return to Bagan for a full day of sightseeing. Breathtaking Bagan is one of the most important archeological sites in Asia and a truly stunning sight. Scattered over a remote and semi-arid plain near Central Myanmar are literally thousands of temples, stretching as far as the eye can see. They are mostly red brick and date back a thousand years to the glorious Bagan era. Individually, the temples are not spectacular, but their sheer numbers are overwhelming.

We begin our exploration of Bagan with a visit to the Shwezigon Pagoda, supposedly built to enshrine one of the four replicas of the Buddha tooth. Our final visit this morning is to the Htilominlo pagoda, famed for its original fine plaster carvings and glazed sandstone decorations which are remarkably well preserved. The temple stands 46 meters high and houses four Buddhas on the lower and upper floors. Lunch is at the Sunset Garden Restaurant.

This afternoon we spend time at the lacquer ware gallery, enjoying the artist's explanation about this ancient art. Lacquer art is an important traditional art of the Bagan region, and young boys and girls learn this fine and delicate art form under the supervision of an artist who passes the skill down to the next generation.

We continue our exploration of Bagan with a visit to the ancient Bagan temples of the Mingalazedi pagoda, which is one of the few temples in Bagan with a full set of glazed terra cotta tiles. We continue with a visit to the Dhammayangyi pagoda, Bagan's largest temple. This temple is a square, single story, pyramidal temple with six monumental ascending exterior terraces. The brickwork is perhaps the finest that can be found around Bagan.

The day ends with a horse cart ride among the temples and villages, meeting its friendly people and observing

their way of life. Enjoy sunset from one of the most scenic spots in town and return to the hotel in the early evening.

Dinner tonight is at the Nanda Restaurant, which features a night view of the glowing gold Schwezigon Pagoda. After dinner, we are entertained by a traditional and fun Burmese puppet show performance.
(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Overnight in Bagan in deluxe rooms at the Thiripyitsaya Hotel, considered to be Bagan's premier 4-Star hotel. Aside from attractively appointed bedrooms and suites, it offers world-class cuisine and other amenities such as a spa and the biggest outdoor pool and sundeck in the area. Nestled on the banks of the mighty Ayeyarwaddy River, overlooking 800 years of history, this hotel, with its charming collection of villas, is located in one of the finest sub-tropical gardens in Asia.

DAY 6, Monday, February 20 *The Fabled City of Mandalay*

This morning after breakfast we depart the ancient capital of Bagan for our flight to Mandalay.

Often described as the most Burmese of cities, Mandalay is the spiritual, cultural, and traditional capital of Myanmar. Located on the banks of the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River, it is also the commercial heart of the country, and has long been known as a center of skilled craftsmanship. We begin at the landmark of Mandalay, Mahamuni Temple, one of Myanmar's most famous Buddhist sites. The temple's fame comes from its shrine centerpiece, a great gold Buddha statue.

We visit the embroidery gallery and view the fine work of the well-known artist Mr. U Sein Myint who has received awards for his paintings as well as his embroidery work. He owns a collection of ancient Burmese art from the last Kingdom of Burma. His embroidery hangs on the wall of the United Nations General Assembly Hall.

We also visit the Mandalay Cottage Handicraft quarter to watch the very interesting process of gold-leaf pounding before enjoying lunch at the Little Bit of Mandalay Restaurant.

Mandalay was the capital of the last kingdom of Myanmar, so it is historically fascinating to visit the site of the grand Mandalay Palace, which was destroyed in fierce fighting with the Japanese in 1943. Only the huge walls and moat, the base on which the reconstructed palace stands, and a few masonry buildings and

**ABOUT ADVENTURE
TRAVEL TODAY
Please Read Carefully!**

At AdventureWomen, we would like to ensure that all participants understand that our excursions are *adventure travel vacations*, and not "tours." We define "adventure travel" as travel in which one *actively participates*, as opposed to a "tour," in which one is more or less a passive observer. AdventureWomen designs and organizes vacations all over the world for women who want to experience an *active, out of the ordinary vacation, and meet new friends*. Most of all, we want our trips to be fun!

In this spirit, the successful adventure traveler should be a *good-natured realist* and have a sense of humor! *Adventure vacations, by nature, require that participants be self-sufficient, flexible, and able to accept situations as they exist, and not just as they would have preferred or expected them to exist.* The constraints of scheduled group traveling also necessitate that each of us be understanding of and sensitive to others. *Being on time is important, and contributes to the congeniality, success and well being of both individuals and the group!*

tombs remain of the original construction. We walk to the foot of Mandalay Hill to visit the Golden Palace teakwood monastery. From the top of the hill, we watch the sun set on panoramic views of the city.

For a change of cuisine tonight we enjoy a dinner of Thai cuisine at Ko's Kitchen Restaurant.

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Our overnight in Mandalay is in deluxe rooms at the 4-Star Sedona Hotel. Nestled on four acres of landscaped gardens, Sedona Hotel Mandalay is ideally located in the heart of the city and faces the majestic Royal Palace and Mandalay Hill - sights that are a pleasure to behold.

DAY 7, Tuesday, February 21 *The Floating Villages and Gardens of Inle Lake*

After breakfast at the hotel we transfer to the airport for our flight to Heho, and Inle Lake. Arriving in Heho we are welcomed and driven by private vehicle to the jetty on Lake Inle. Our drive to the lake is over winding roads and through luxuriant rolling hills of the Shan plateau, dotted with colorful mustard seed and golden wheat fields.

Once at the lake we board our own private motorboat and are treated to an insider's view of life on the lake. Villages, farms, and even a monastery perch over the lake on stilts and float on pads of reeds and earth. We observe the famous awkward-looking leg-rowers: fishermen who stand at the stern of the boat precariously on one leg and wrap the other around the oar to propel the boat.

Lunch is served on shore before departing for the southwest of the lake and the Indein pagoda complex. We take the small covered path from the Pa O tribe village to a monastery and the very impressive ruins of hundreds of ancient pagodas, some hidden under vegetation. The main stupa-area on the top of the hill offers breathtaking views over the surroundings and into the valley with the lake in the far distance.

Returning to the hotel, tonight's dinner is on our own.

(Breakfast and Lunch)

We spend tonight at the 4-Star Lake View Resort Hotel. The only deluxe boutique hotel on the shores of Inle Lake, the Lake View Resort Hotel is subtly and tastefully decorated with colonial style furniture and soft tropical hues. Each spacious room has a private terrace balcony with a panoramic view of the lake.

DAY 8, Wednesday, February 22 *More of Inle Lake*

After breakfast we have another very interesting private motorboat trip to visit the Shan States tribal market, which rotates through various towns in this region. It is a hodgepodge of bright flowers, flopping fish, exotic spices, and colorfully clothed tribal people.

We visit the landmark Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda, the holiest religious site in the southern area of the Shan State, and pass by more floating villages and gardens, which are built up from strips of water hyacinth and anchored to the bottom with bamboo poles. The gardens consist mainly of tomatoes and beans and have formed over the years into a maze of canals at the south end of the lake.

We stop at the lakeside gallery of the designer Ms. Moe, who produces hand-woven fabrics from the lotus plants

that grow on the lake. She makes everything from monk's robes to stylish shawls for women. High tea is served as we listen to her talk about her works of art.

Lunch is served at a simple local restaurant by the lake before returning to the Heho airport and our flight to Yangon and transfer to our hotel.

Tonight we enjoy a farewell dinner of western cuisine.
(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Overnight at the Governor's Residence Hotel.

DAY 9, Thursday, February 23 Fly to Bangkok and Overnight

After breakfast at the hotel we have a free morning in Yangon before saying good-bye to Burma and departing for the airport for our flight to Bangkok.

Upon arrival in Bangkok we walk to the Novotel at the Bangkok Airport, where we spend the night.
(Breakfast)

Day 10, Friday, February 24 Fly to Laos and Explore Vientiane



This morning we fly from Bangkok to Vientiane, where we begin our exploration of fascinating Vientiane, the new capital of Laos. With a population of approximately 500,000, Vientiane is the second-smallest capital city

in Southeast Asia. Retaining a village ambiance, the city dates back to 1563 when King Setthathirat designated it the seat of the kingdom of Lane Xang. Conquered by Siam and later by France, the city displays many architectural influences.

Our itinerary includes seeing many of the city's major historic sites, including the religious museums of Wat Sisaket, the oldest temple to have survived the Siamese war of 1828. Its cloister contains more than 8,000 Buddha statues. We also visit Wat Ho Prakeo, which contains a collection of Buddha statues, antiques, and artifacts found around Vientiane; Pha That Luang ("The Great Sacred Stupa"), the single most important monument in Laos, which was built to cover the original small stupa that is said to contain a piece of the chest bone of Buddha; and Patouxay (Arch de Triumph), built quite recently in commemoration of those who died during the wars of the past.

We end our day with a cocktail reception at the weaving home-studio of Mrs. Carol Cassidy, an American textiles expert who arrived in Vientiane in 1989 as part of a United Nations project to promote traditional weaving. Carol was so impressed by the quality and diversity of weaving throughout Laos that she set up the Lao Textiles Studio in Vientiane. Today the studio employs over 40 local weavers who create naturally dyed and woven silk pieces reflecting traditional Lao designs. Carol personally escorts us on a tour through her studio where she explains the process of producing silk as well as sharing her life experiences and memories of living in Laos. The visit takes about one hour and finishes with a cocktail in her beautiful garden.

Dinner tonight is at Makphet restaurant with Laotian cuisine.
(Dinner)

Overnight at the Settha Palace Hotel. Built at the turn of the century, the luxury Settha Palace Hotel in Vientiane, Laos, has been restored to its original charm. French colonial architecture, period furniture, and landscaped gardens complimented by modern facilities are some of the features of this historic landmark in the heart of Vientiane.

DAY 11, Saturday, February 25 Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

This morning is free until our transfer to the airport for our flight to Luang Prabang, the capital of the first Lao kingdom. Located on the banks of the Mekong River in a great bowl surrounded by mountains, the old

city has many historic Buddhist temples and monuments that date from the 14th century.

Seeing the majesty of Luang Prabang is like stepping back to a period when peace and tranquility were in abundance. Laos itself is quite isolated from Indochina, but Luang Prabang is even more isolated than the rest of the country. Luang Prabang lies in the remote north-central part of Laos astride the Mekong River in a valley of spectacular natural beauty. In 1995 Luang Prabang was listed, along with the Taj Mahal and Angkor Wat, as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Upon arrival in Luang Prabang we are met and transferred to our hotel for check-in.

This afternoon's sightseeing includes many of the city's pagodas and sacred temples in the town and surrounding areas. We visit the National Museum (open from 8:30am to 11.30am and from 1.30pm to 3.30pm daily except on Tuesdays); the main Buddhist temples of Luang Prabang including Wat Visoun, a 16th century temple which serves as a small museum for religious artifacts, Wat Aham, built in the early 19th century temple, and Wat Xiengthong, a 16th century temple which epitomizes all the elegance and grace of Luang Prabang architecture. Take the opportunity to interact with the monks at the Wat Mai temple before ending the day with a climb of 328 steps to the top of Phousi Hill, where we watch the sun set over Luang Prabang town and the two rivers and forested hills which form its natural borders.

Late afternoon, we are invited to take part in a "Baci" ceremony, an integral part of Lao culture. Baci is a ceremony to celebrate a special event, normally a marriage, a homecoming, a special welcome, or one of the annual festivals. The term more commonly used is "su kwan", which means "calling of the soul" and today's ceremony is performed by a local elder.

Dinner tonight is at L'elephant Restaurant, one of Luang Prabang's most elegant Western eateries.
(Breakfast and Dinner)

Our next 3 nights are spent at the hotel Villa Maly in deluxe rooms.

In the heart of Asia's "best preserved city," there is Villa Maly; a residence, an oasis, and a destination unto itself. Once the home of Lao royalty, today Villa Maly is an exquisite boutique hotel, ensconced by a profusion of tropical flora. Its rooms evoke the subdued

elegance and creative flourishes of yesterday's aristocrats. Its wonderful situation, in an enclave of classic old homes, embeds itself in your dreams of Luang Prabang.

DAY 12, Sunday, February 26 *Alms to Monks and Boat Trip on the Mekong River*

This morning we are invited to assist in the predawn giving of alms to the saffron-robed monks in the streets of Luang Prabang, an awe-inspiring site. (You need to tell your guide a day in advance if you wish to make an offering so he/she can prepare some food for you to hand over to the monks). This early morning ritual dates back generations in Laos. Watch the town come to life in the morning, and then return to the hotel for breakfast. (If you do not wish to make an offering, please keep an appropriate distance and observe the ritual in silence. Dress appropriately – shoulders, chest, and legs should be covered).

After breakfast back at the hotel, we are transferred to the pier and embark on a slow boat cruise on the Mekong River to visit the mysterious Pak Ou Caves, home of hundreds of gilded and wooden Buddha statues that are housed inside a towering limestone cliff. On our way back we stop to visit Ban Xang Hai, a village that makes traditional rice liquor and also has textile weaving. Then we cross to the other side of the Mekong River and walk a path through local villages and past traditional houses and old pagodas. We have opportunities to meet and interact with the locals, some of the friendliest people on earth.

Returning to Luang Prabang in late afternoon, we take a scenic drive to the Royal Theater for a front row seat at a traditional Laotian Ramayana play.

Dinner is at 3 Nagas's Restaurant, which features westernized Lao food in lavish surroundings, following the play.

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Overnight Villa Maly Hotel.

DAY 13, Monday, February 27 *Traditional Lao Cooking Class and Hill Tribes*

We begin today with a guided visit with a culinary expert to Phosy market to see typical Laotian produce. Then we travel to a picturesque lakeside pavilion to learn about the "spirit" of Lao food and some of the customs the Lao people have for preparing their food. We learn which fresh ingredients are added to the dishes, and get acquainted with some intriguing and

unfamiliar flavors. Create your own varieties of Jeow, the fundamental Lao spicy dipping sauce; Mok Pa, a popular dish of fish steamed with herbs in banana leaves; lemongrass stuffed with chicken and herbs; Orlarm, Luang Prabang's eggplant based specialty; and a traditional dessert. Taste the fruits of our labor and Laotian traditional cuisine by cooking our own lunch. Then take your recipes home to surprise family and friends.

This afternoon we drive into the surrounding hills to visit a Hmong hill tribe village and a Khamu hill tribe village. About 100 years ago, the Hmong were gradually displaced from their ancestral home in the mountains of southern China and many settled in the hills of Laos. During the Vietnam War, the CIA actively recruited Hmong "warriors" in their secret war with the Pathet Lao communists, and many subsequently fled to Thailand (and the U.S.) after the fall of the Royal Lao government in 1975. Hmong villagers still practice ancient animistic rituals including animal sacrifices, and dress in traditional colorful handmade costumes and silver jewelry. Some are addicted to opium after years of using it medicinally. We have an opportunity to meet with several Hmong families inside their simple bamboo and wood homes, and to experience the fascinating lives of these friendly mountain people.

The Khamu were originally an aboriginal group living in the lower mountains of northern Laos and have a very different culture, language, dress, and religion from the Hmong. We are also able to visit a typical Khamu village.

Back to Luang Prabang for the night, and dinner on our own.

(Breakfast and Lunch)

Overnight at the Villa Maly Hotel

DAY 14, Tuesday, February 28 Fly Back to Bangkok and Home

Today is free until our transfer to the airport for our flight to Bangkok. Depending on your flight departure times to the U.S., you can choose to stay overnight at the Novotel Airport Hotel at the airport if your flight departs early on the morning of February 29. Or, you may decide to extend your stay in the city of Bangkok or travel on to other parts of Thailand.

(Breakfast)

CLIMATE AND WEATHER IN FEBRUARY

Our visit to Myanmar and Laos takes place during the dry season (November through May). Temperatures vary according to the elevation. In the humid, low-lying Mekong River valley, temperatures can range from 59°F to 100°F, while in the mountains the temperatures can drop to 32°F at night. The month of February is generally considered the best time to visit this region, as it rains least and is not too hot. During this season it is best to bring a lightweight jacket in case the weather becomes very cool at higher elevations.

MONEY MATTERS

Myanmar's unit of currency is the Kyat. As of March 28, 2011, 1 U.S.D. was worth 6.41 Myanmar Kyats.

The unit of currency in Laos is the Laos Kip. 8,010 Laos Kips was equal to 1 U.S.D. as of March 28, 2011.

You can check the following website to find out the current rate of exchange: <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

The best way to handle money in this part of the world is to bring U.S. Dollars. Bring cash in smaller bills (not \$100s and \$50s). Credit cards are not widely accepted in most shops, towns, or villages. You can exchange U.S. cash at hotels and in airports. Each day, make sure that you have enough small bills in local currency for your daily needs (snacks, shopping, etc.). Our national guide can advise us as to the most current exchange rate upon arrival.

In Bangkok, Thailand, you can pay for most anything with a credit card.

FOOD/MEALS/WATER

Burmese cuisine is an amazing blend of various influences, including Chinese, Indian, Bamar and Mon. Rice is the mainstay of a Burmese meal, and it is eaten with a choice of mild curry dishes with fish, chicken, prawns and lamb. Not much beef or pork is eaten because Buddhists and Hindus abstain from eating most meat from 4-legged animals. One of the culinary highlights of Burmese food (or Bamar food) is undoubtedly light, spicy salads made with raw vegetables or fruit tossed with lime juice, onions, peanuts, and other spices. Noodle dishes are often eaten for breakfast or as light meals during the day. We also have available Western food in many of the hotels, along with traditional Bamar food. All the hotels and restaurants where eat serve wonderful food!

In Laos, the emphasis is on simple, fresh ingredients coarsely blended into rustic dishes – or Thai food! We eat very well in Laos, and in many of our restaurants there is a French/European influence.

Unboiled water is NOT safe to drink anywhere in Burma and Laos, and never use tap water even for brushing your teeth. Stick with bottled and sealed water and drinks. Depending on the restaurants where we eat, our guides let us know about using ice and eating uncooked vegetables. Always peel your fruit.

WHAT TO BRING

Three words of packing advice: LIGHT, LIGHT, LIGHT! It is best to condense your luggage into one manageable suitcase with wheels and one daypack or backpack (carry-on size). Also, a spare, very light duffel bag or day pack rolled or folded into your wheeled suitcase is useful to have to transport souvenir items home. There are wonderful handicrafts and weavings available in Myanmar and Laos.

We suggest you use your daypack as your carry-on bag during your flights. In it you should have all valuables and essentials: medications, passports and all important documents, cameras and film, a day's change of clothing, lightweight sleepwear, and toiletries.

Put luggage ID tags on the outside AND inside your baggage. If your bag is lost and the outside ID tag and baggage stickers are dislodged, the airlines may open the bag to search for an ID inside your bag. (AdventureWomen sends you 3 tags for the outside of your bags.)

Pre-Departure Tasks

- Obtain or renew passport.
- Obtain necessary visa for Myanmar and Laos. Forms are sent to you at the appropriate time.
- Evaluate and obtain trip cancellation, baggage, and medical insurance.
- Consult with physician for physical examination, immunization, and prescription medicine recommendations.

Clothing

- Clothing should be lightweight, quick drying and be able to breathe. Pay special attention to sun protection needs. Long sleeves and wide brim hats are highly recommended.
- Underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry.
- Sleepwear.

- Shirts: Long-sleeve, synthetic or cotton shirts because they are featherweight, durable, wrinkle-resistant, and dry quickly. Those with multiple, closed (velcro or zipper) pockets are excellent.
- Short-sleeve synthetic or cotton T-Shirts. Those with multiple, closed (velcro or zipper) pockets are excellent.
- Sweater/Jacket: Medium-weight sweater or jacket made of synthetic fabric (fleece) for cool evenings.
- Vest: A lightweight, multi-pocket, photo journalist-type vest is excellent for day use (use it to store film, cameras, binoculars, etc.).
- Pants: Full-length pants, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric with many zippered pockets. Convertible pants that convert from long pants to shorts save room and are very convenient for use during a long day.
- Hiking shorts, preferably of a synthetic fabric and to the knee (modesty is respectful here). You rarely see shorts in urban areas.
- Bathing Suit.
- Sun hat with a wide brim, preferably with a chin strap to keep it from blowing off.
- Gore-Tex rain/wind parka and/or sturdy poncho to protect day pack and camera gear from rain or water spray. (This can be your jacket, as listed above, as long as it is waterproof).
- Athletic socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for your lightweight hiking boots/or walking shoes.
- Sturdy, properly fitting footwear can make your trip much more comfortable and enjoyable. Good ankle support and good traction are critical. Lightweight hiking boots are excellent, OR very comfortable, lightweight walking shoes are another option.
- Sandals for boats, water, and for walking around towns (Teva-type sandals or similar: Merrill's, Keens, etc., or any thing that can get wet and dry fast).
- 3-4 cotton bandannas.
- One or two sets of nice, casual city clothes that are dressier for evening restaurants or social activities (maybe a lightweight skirt to be included).

Personal Items

- Passport.
- 2 passport photos for Myanmar visa, and 3 photos for Laos visa.
- 4 spare passport photos to bring on the trip (in case of lost passport/visa).
- Battery operated travel alarm clock.
- Extra batteries for cameras, alarm clock, etc.
- Small flashlight with extra batteries and bulb.

WHAT TO BRING—(continued on page 13)

WHAT TO BRING—(continued from page 12)

- Sunglasses, case (90% - 100% ultraviolet and some infrared protection).
- Contact lenses, cleaner, saline solution, extra eyeglasses with safety band.
- Money belt.
- U.S. Cash and credit cards
- Address book, writing paper, or journal, pen/pencil.
- Daypack (also serves as an airline carry-on bag).
- Water bottle. We recommend the 22 oz. Nalgene Everyday OTG Tritan Bottle. Made of Eastman Tritan™ copolyester, the bottle is completely BPA-free. Tritan™ copolyester provides excellent impact resistance and is suitable for both warm and cold beverages.
- Locks for your suitcase and duffel bag (when left in rooms).
- Ziploc-type bags for packing shampoo or other liquids, or wet, dirty clothing.
- 1-2 heavyweight plastic garbage bags.
- Washcloth (not used in most hotels).
- Personal toiletries in small leak-proof bottles.
- Biodegradable bar soap (can double as laundry soap).
- Tampons or sanitary napkin supply (not always widely available).
- Thread, needles, safety pins for minor repairs.
- Insect repellent with the percentage of DEET recommended by your travel medicine physician. It's important that you bring an ample supply of good quality repellent. If you use DEET, try to wipe it off your hands before touching plastic surfaces such as your binoculars or cameras (DEET damages some plastics).
- Wash & Dries (or other antiseptic wipes) for hand washing and emergency toilet paper.
- A mini-sized English – Burmese & English – Lao, English phrase books/dictionary.
- Lonely Planet books on Myanmar (Burma) and Laos.

Camera Equipment

Since Burma and Laos are a photographer's paradise, you should bring twice as many memory cards and camera batteries as you think you might need, and zip lock plastic bags for dust protection. We suggest you bring the following:

- Digital camera, lots of memory cards and extra batteries, battery charger, and adapter. You can charge your digital batteries in hotels. For Burma, bring wall outlet plug adapters #1, #5, and #6. For Laos, bring #1, #3, and #6. Most digital cameras have a built in converter so you only need to bring

an adapter. Adapters can also be bought while in country.

Personal First Aid Kit (bring in small amounts and in small containers)

- Foot powder for moisture absorption; cloth, not plastic Band-aids; about 10 individually wrapped alcohol pads; and a small tube of Neosporin or other antibiotic cream.
- Aspirin/ibuprofen, etc.
- Cold-symptom relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops.
- Adequate quantity of sweat-resistant sun screen with at least an SPF 15 rating or higher, and lip balm with sunscreen.
- Tweezers.
- Ace bandage.
- Antibiotics.
- Prescription medicines in their original bottles.
- Acidophilus enzyme (available in capsules in health-food stores). This often helps your digestive system get in shape for "new" flora.
- Immodium, Lomotil, or similar anti-diarrhea medicine.
- Pepto-Bismol tablets and/or liquid (in leak-proof bottle).

Optional

- Small, lightweight binoculars.
- Pictures of your house, pets, and family (local people love to see this!).
- Reading material.
- Extra, lightweight duffel bag (empty, and packed inside your suitcase).

Last-Minute Reminders

- Make photocopies of your airline tickets and the first two pages of your passport, plus your visas (if they are stamped inside your passport) and put them in different locations (suitcase, carry-on bag, etc.).
- Bring your 4 additional passport size photos to use in emergencies.
- Your valuables should be insured for the duration of the trip, but better yet, leave them at home (don't wear expensive gold and diamond jewelry).
- Remove extra credit cards, driver's license, and personal items from wallet or purse.
- Make sure passport, tickets, and visa are valid and in the correct name.
- Check with airline to reconfirm reservations and departure time (most airlines want to hear directly from the client for confirmations).

Some Extra Items to Add to your "What to Bring" List

We are updating and adding the following items for all international trips. With more than 29 years of experience flying around the world, we think these items help make your long airline flights much more comfortable and even more bearable:

- Neck pillow** - Inflatable neck pillow for blissful support and deep sleep. For packing, it folds into itself. Self-sealing valve means nothing to close. Soft microfleece cover removes for washing.

Eagle Creek® Large Inflatable Travel Neck Pillow at TravelSmith.

- Sleep mask /Comfort eye shade** - Ultra lightweight and comfortable, the Comfort Eye Shade screens out light and distractions for a cozier flight. Ultra-soft micro fleece for comfort. Adjustable elastic strap for a perfect fit. Made of Molded Polyester Micro Fleece.

Eagle Creek® Comfort Eye Shade at TravelSmith.

- Travel compression socks** - Reduce ankle and leg swelling and reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis. These doctor-designed socks stimulate circulation through gradual compression that stops swelling and guards against (DVT). Made of coolmax®-lycra®-nylon. The TravelSox® cushion Walk Socks have extra-padded soles and are made of moisture wicking SoftPrim®.

TravelSox® Cushion Walk Sock™ at TravelSmith.

- Noise canceling headphones** - Block out unwanted sounds of children crying and airplane engine drone, and/or enjoy great audio sound. Reduce distortion and increase perceived loudness so you can enjoy sound at a lower volume. Get the around the ear design, which is very comfortable.

Bose Quiet Comfort 2 - List Price: \$199.99. Oval shaped around-the-ear design, an iPod fits nicely in the center of the case between the headphones. You can get the next generation of Bose Quiet Comfort 3, but the cost is \$349.00.

Audio Technica ATH-ANC7- List Price: \$219.95 Excellent sound quality and above average noise cancellation. Comfortable leather cushioning around the ear and can be worn for long periods of time with no discomfort. Excellent headphones with a reasonable price tag. Comparable in quality to the Bose Quiet Comfort 3.

*Thank you for choosing to travel with AdventureWomen!
If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call, write or email us.*

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