

# Burma's Birds

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

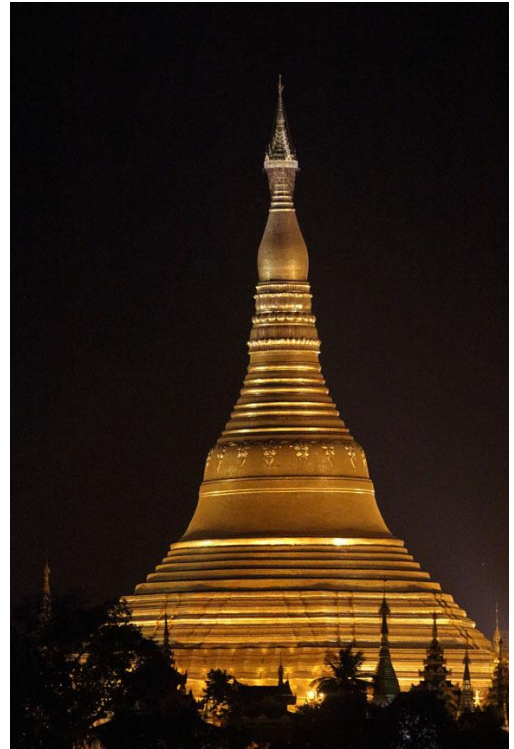
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### Outline Itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Depart London.
<b>Day 2</b>	Yangon (Rangoon).
<b>Day 3</b>	Hlawga Wildlife Park and Moeyungyi.
<b>Day 4/5</b>	Bagan.
<b>Day 6/10</b>	Kanpetlet (Mount Victoria).
<b>Day 11</b>	Bagan.
<b>Day 12</b>	Fly Yangon.
<b>Day 13</b>	Fly London.

### Myeik extension

<b>Day 13/16</b>	Myeik (Nga Won Forest).
<b>Day 17</b>	Fly Yangon (Rangoon).
<b>Day 18</b>	Fly London.



### Dates & Costs

#### 2018

Wednesday 7th February – Monday 19th February 2018

Cost: £3,995

Extension: to Saturday 24th February 2018

Cost: £1,995

#### Single room supplement

£595 (extension: £495).



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**Grading**

A/B. Easy for the most part, occasionally moderate.

**Focus**

Primarily birds, with some culture and other wildlife.

£600 reduction if booked without flights, land-only trip (Yangon/Yangon).



Bagan Temples



White-throated babbler

## Introduction

A 13-day holiday in search of Burma's endemic, near-endemic and wealth of other birdlife, plus a little culture and the chance to look for the endangered Gurney's Pitta and other southern specialities on a 5-day extension to Myeik.

Burma, now officially called Myanmar, is the second largest country in south-east Asia, covering over 670,000 square kilometres and stretching some 2,000 kilometres from the cold, lofty heights of the Himalaya in the north to the humid tropical lowland forests that fringe the Bay of Bengal in the south. With a current list of over 1,060 bird species, Burma is also a wonderfully rewarding country for anyone keen to enjoy its birdlife, not least because there is so much excitement to be experienced in exploring a country whose avifauna is still relatively little-known, access to visiting naturalists having been impractical for a generation or more during the decades of military government. Fortunately, due to recent political reforms, life for Burma's 45 million people is changing and visitors are welcome, the country's thousands of beautiful pagodas and extensive tracts of wildlife-rich forest providing attractions of great potential.



Burmese bush tit

## Day 1

### In Flight

We depart London in the afternoon on an Emirates scheduled flight to Yangon (Rangoon), via Dubai where duty-free shopping is amongst the best and cheapest in the world.

## Day 2

### Yangon (Rangoon)

Having reached Yangon, we visit the city's rich indigenous and colonial heritage. Our day ends with a visit to the spectacular Shwedagon Pagoda which towers over the city, glowing gold. Here we hope to see the sunset and the emergence of a colony of Wrinkle-lipped Bats.

## Day 3

### Hlawga Wildlife Park – Moeyungyi Wetlands

In the early morning we will travel by road to Hlawga Wildlife Park on the outskirts of Yangon in search of Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Racket-tailed Treepie, Black-naped Oriole, the 'white-eyed' form of Striped-throated Bulbul, White-crested Laughingthrush, Olive-backed Sunbird and Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker and many other



species. We will also visit the nearby wetlands, which might well provide our first Oriental Darter or an Asian Openbill.

Later today we continue driving for about couple of hours to the wetlands of Moeyungyi situated in Bago division, about 100 kilometres north of Yangon. Moeyungyi Wetland Sanctuary has an area of 64 squares kilometers and it is a large freshwater lake playing an important role in the life of migratory waterfowls and resident birds. Every year millions of migrated birds coming from the northern hemisphere along the East Asia choose Moeyungyi



Jerdon's Minivet

Wetlands as a stopover to rest and food before flying to south. There are 125 species of waterfowls consisting of 70 species of migrants. We may have the opportunity to see the rare birds in Asia such as Sarus crane, Lesser whistling duck, Painted stork, Asian golden weaver, Purple Swamphen, Pheasant-tailed jacana, Baer's pochard, rare Greater spotted eagle, Whiskered tern, Black-browed reed warbler and especially large flocks of Asian openbill.

## Day 4

### Yangon – Bagan

We will enjoy the birdwatching in the morning by boat. Later we will return to Yangon and board our flight northwards to the ancient capital of Bagan. We will arrive and transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay.

## Day 5

### Bagan

The temples of Bagan constitute one of the most significant archaeological sites on earth. Here are temples representing many centuries of Burmese history and Buddhist culture. We will visit a selection of them, from the most grandiose and celebrated to the quiet and undiscovered. These will include the busy Nyaung Oo market, Shwezigon Pagoda, the



13th century cave-temple of Wetky-in-Gubyaukgyi, and Ananda Ok Kyaung, one of the few surviving brick monastery buildings from the Early Bagan period.

For the naturalist this is also a fascinating and important area. The Bagan temples are in an endemic Burmese eco-region known as the 'dry zone' which is home to several of the country's endemic birds including White-throated Babbler and the exquisitely lovely Jerdon's Minivet. On the sand-bars of this great Irrawaddy River, birdlife is abundant. Ruddy Shelduck, Indian Spot-billed Duck, River Lapwing, Small Pratincole, Sand Lark, White-tailed Stonechat, Striated Babbler and numerous cormorants, herons, egrets and kingfishers provide the staple fare. Birds of prey, including Spotted Owlet and Laggar Falcon, may also be seen amongst the ruins.

## Day 6

### Kanpalet

Next, we will head for the hills and start our 8-hour drive to Kanpalet. Driving first through a rolling semi-desert and then through dry woodlands, we finally ascend to the village of Kanpetlet, a small settlement situated between 1,600 and 1,800 metres on the lower slopes of Mount Victoria which will be our base for the next five nights.

## Day 7 – 10

### Mount Victoria

We will drive for about two hours on poor roads to the base of Mount Victoria. This is one of the key sites for montane wildlife in Burma and we'll devote four full days to exploring the forest for birds, butterflies, plants and other species. Highlights here may include bamboo specialists including the delightful Buff-breasted Parrotbill and the splendid Slender-billed Scimitar-babbler.

At 3,095 metres Mount Victoria is the highest peak in the Chin Hills, a range of mountains that constitutes a dramatic southward extension of the eastern Himalaya from Manipur in India. This remote area was not visited by ornithologists until the early part of the 20th century and remains largely unexplored even today. The forested slopes of this mountain alter in character according to elevation, with dry deciduous forest found at the lowest levels while stunted oak-rhododendron forest and short grassland is to be found around the four summits. The avifauna here is predominantly Himalayan, sprinkled with some enigmatic regional endemics and several local subspecies. The mornings can be cold and, as soon as dawn breaks, a great frenzy of bird activity commences as the first feeding opportunities of the day arrive, especially when the sun hits the forests. At the higher levels, we will search the gnarled, lichen-covered oaks for White-browed Nuthatch, Burma's best-known endemic and so far only



Pale-backed Sparrow

recorded from here and the Mindat area, a few kilometres to the north. Amongst a host of other irresistible species that we will look for during our exploration of these forests, one of south-east Asia's great ornithological hotspots, will be the endemic Burmese Tit, Broad-billed Warbler, the near-endemic Buff-breasted Parrotbill, Sickie-billed Scimitar-babbler, Spot-breasted Scimitar-babbler, the near-endemic Chin Hills Wren-babbler, Striped, Brown-capped and Assam Laughing-thrushes, Streak-throated Barwing, Grey Sibia and Hume's Treecreeper.



White-browed nuthatch

## Day 11

### Bagan

Today we drive all day back to Bagan, stopping for lunch in Saw. Overnight we will stay in a comfortable hotel at Bagan.

## Day 12

### Yangon

This morning we take a flight to Yangon. Upon arrival, we visit the quaint Yangon old quarter, built during the British colonial era. Many charming historical buildings are still located here. During our stroll through bustling market streets full of merchants and food stalls, we may stop for a tea and snack in the fashion of locals, and enjoy the sights and sounds of Yangon. We continue to one of Asia's architectural landmarks, the elegant Strand Hotel built by the Sarkies brothers. Inside, we visit the River Art Gallery, where the works of some of the most famous and skilled Burmese artists are on display fitting of the grand surroundings. In the afternoon, we visit Bogyoke (Scotts) Market, where hundreds of gemstone, handicrafts, art, clothes and food stores are tucked in a maze of color. We complete the day with a visit to one of the world's most spectacular monuments, the Shwedagon Pagoda, a gold covered bell dome structure that dominates the city's skyline. Legends state that the sacred hairs of the Buddha are enshrined here. The Shwedagon is an iconic symbol of the country, a sight not to be missed. After a farewell dinner, we will be transferred to the airport to board our flight back to London.

## Day 13

### London

Fly on Emirates schedule flight, which departs Yangon at 0150 and, arrives back at London at 1135, via Dubai. (Flight timings subject to final confirmation nearer the time of departure.)

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## Myeik extension

The extension is on offer to the little known ornithologically interesting Myeik in far southern Burma of the Tanintharyi region in search of endangered Gurney's Pitta and many other additional species. More than 800 islands, varying sizes are dotted throughout the Andaman Sea will provide a close look to the little know fauna.

(The minimum number of people required to run this extension is five; however, we may decide to operate it with fewer people, at our discretion, with local guides.)

## Day 13 – 15

### Myeik – Nga Won Forest

This morning we will take a flight to Myeik. Upon arrival, we will drive about 100 miles, 5 hour drive, along the Myeik – Kawthaung highway until a small village named Khae` Chaung. On the way, we will stop for lunch in Tanintharyi, a small town located beside Tanintharyi River. At the Khae` Chaung Village, we will leave the highway and continue driving for about 20 miles along the hilly off-road path to the base camp in the Nga Won Forest. (The driving time along the off-road path depends on the condition of the road and in raining days, this path cannot be accessed by car.)

Nga Won Forest is located near Lenya National Park. Nga Won Forest has not been designated as a protected area yet. During these two full days, we will explore the forest and the main purpose of coming to the southern Burma is to look for the endangered Gurney's Pitta and other avian specialities in Nga Won Forest.

## Day 16

### Myeik

Today, we drive back to Myeik.

## Day 17

### Yangon

This morning we take a flight to Yangon. Upon arrival, we will visit Sin Phyu Daw Park (White Elephant Park) & Kyauk Taw Gyi Pagoda. It is said that the white elephants represents peace and wealth and they are also a sign of the good future awaiting our country. Myanmar believe that white elephants bring peace, stability and prosperity to the nation. Some characteristics of white elephants are the pearl eyes, white hoofs, the back which hangs down like the bough of a banana tree, the white hairs on the body and tail. When the white elephants were discovered they were brought to this park to be protected and visited by the public. The Kyauk Taw Gyi pagoda is located near the park and we can see the marble stone Buddha inside. Time permitting, we will also visit the colossal reclining Buddha Chaukhtatgyi Pagoda and the beautiful Kandawgyi Lake. Our tour finishes with a visit to the Botahtaung Pagoda. After a farewell dinner, we will be transferred to the airport to board our flight back to London.

## Day 18

### London

Fly on Emirates schedule flight, which departs Yangon at 0150 and, arrives back at London at 1135, via Dubai. (Flight timings subject to final confirmation nearer the time of departure.)

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## Grading

This is a wildlife tour. The walking is easy for the most part, occasionally Moderate.

## Weather

The weather in January and February should be pleasant and dry, with daytime temperatures in the region of 15-30°C or more, dropping to around 7-12°C at night. It will be warm in the afternoons – sun hats, sun cream, cotton clothes and shorts will all be necessary during this season. In Mount Victoria you would also require warm clothes. Rain is possible but unlikely to be prolonged at this time of year. In some areas it is possible it will be cold in the mornings – a jacket, hat, gloves, fleece and several layers are all advisable.

## Food & Accommodation

These are all included in the price. Please note that all services and accommodations on this tour including extension are rustic and simple with private facilities.

## Flights

We use the scheduled service of Emirates for this tour to Burma. This airline offers an excellent all-round service and for this tour we take flights from London to Yangon via Dubai on the outbound journey and from Yangon to London via Dubai on the return (inbound) journey. If you would prefer to travel Business or First Class, please call us for competitive quotes. There are no direct flights to Yangon from the UK.



## Clothing

A full list of items we suggest you take is included in the pre-departure information, which will be sent to you on receipt of your booking. Take lightweight clothing for daytime wear and warm clothes for early mornings and evenings when it can be slightly cold. Khaki and other 'bush' colours are recommended, since bright colours can often scare the animals. A wide-brimmed hat is essential for protection against heatstroke and sunburn.

## Safety & Security

You have chosen to travel to Burma. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel) or telephone 0870 6060290 regularly prior to travel.

## Entry Requirements

All UK passport holders and most other nationalities require a visa for Burma, which is obtainable in advance from your nearest High Commission or Embassy. No vaccinations are mandatory for entry, but as recommended in our brochure we think it is wise to be protected against TB, polio, typhoid, tetanus and hepatitis A and take malaria prophylactics. Above all, it is essential that you consult your GP or local Travel Health Clinic about your individual requirements as soon as possible before travelling.

## Important information required to visit Myeik region (on extension)

We have to obtain a permit from the local authorities to visit the nearby islands in Myeik region. For the permits, we need to apply in advance and require the following personal detail at the time of booking.

1. Your passport copy with photo page (in color).
2. Your father's name.
3. Your occupation (if retired, your earlier occupation).
4. Date of any previous visits to Burma.
5. International arrival and departure flight details, if not booked through Naturetrek.

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## How to book your place!

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.

Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

**Please provide us with your passport details (passport number, date of issue, date of expiry and your date of birth) at the time of booking.**

Images provided by

Sujan Chatterjee

