

## ROAD TO MANDALAY – OCT 2018

### OVERVIEW

Tour Date: 29 October 2018 – 23 November 2018

Tour Duration: 26 days

Tour Cost (\$AUD): \$13,990

Single Supplement (\$AUD): \$3,990

*Road to Mandalay is a remarkable 26-day journey to south-western China and the newly emerging nation of Myanmar, where the pace of change is slow and the traditional ways endure.*

Our journey begins in Kunming, situated on a high, lush plateau in Yunnan Province and famous for its geological wonder, the Stone Forest. From here we move to the ancient and beautiful 'shangri-la' towns of Lijiang and Dali nestled in the Tibetan foothills, where we see traditional market squares and cobbled lanes, crisscrossed by canals and beautiful arched bridges. Joining the 'Old Burma Road' at Dali we travel south through Tengchong, where incredible volcanic landscapes exist alongside ancient villages. After reaching the beautiful border town of Ruili, we cross into the mysterious land of Myanmar (Burma). Unspoilt by mass tourism, the Burmese people are one of the most compelling reasons to visit this country. Entering the country through the remote northern border allows us to explore untouched Shan villages before heading to Maymyo – the former British hill-station. After exploring the cultural heart of Burma, Mandalay, we take a magnificent cruise along one of the world's greatest rivers, and lifeblood of Burma – the Irrawaddy. Next we head to the greatest temple complex on earth – Bagan – before arriving at the beautiful and serene Inle Lake where we see the famous leg-rowers. Finally, we reach Yangon – the garden city of the east – at the end of our momentous tour! *Road to Mandalay* is a stunning journey that encapsulates mystery, beauty and adventure, touching the very heart of two exquisite countries.

Tour Fitness Level: Moderate

# ROAD TO MANDALAY 2018

## TOUR ITINERARY

### 29/10/2018 Australia – Singapore

Depart from your chosen Australian airport for the Singapore Airlines flight to Singapore. On arrival we connect with our flight to Kunming.

### 30/10/2018 Singapore – Kunming (D)

Depart Singapore Silk Air MI 916, 13.55

Arrive Kunming 17.55

On arrival in Kunming we transfer to our hotel. Known as the 'City of Eternal Spring', Kunming is located in Yunnan province and lies some 1,890m above sea level. It is a fascinating city inhabited by a large number of minority groups. Having checked into our hotel, we have time to briefly explore the area before heading off for a special evening of local cuisine.

**Green Lake Hotel**

Kunming

### 31/10/2018 Kunming (BLD)

Kunming's Golden Temple is much more than a temple as we discover on this morning's visit. It features large areas of specialised gardens with some of the best plant collections in China. In the afternoon we explore the beauty of the Western Hills and also visit the glorious garden that was built for the World Horticultural Expo in 1999.

### 01/11/2018 Kunming (BLD)

After breakfast we drive to the magical Stone Forest. A geological phenomenon, the 'forest' was a vast sea millions of years ago. Later the movement of tectonic plates altered the earth's crust, causing the sea to recede and the limestone floor to appear. Due to the constant seeping of rain through the cracks in the limestone, some of the stone formations dissolved and the fissures broadened, producing a mass of strange rock formations.

### 02/11/2018 Kunming – Lijiang (BLD)

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Lijiang.

Depart Kunming Sichuan Airlines 3U 8817, 08.00

Arrive Lijiang 08.50

Located at an altitude of 2,400m, Lijiang is often referred to as China's Shangri-La. Situated amid stunning mountain scenery on the edge of Tibet, the wonderful town of Lijiang is home to the Naxi people, a minority race whose origin is unknown, whose language and way of life is unique and whose rulers are women rather than men. Upon arrival we have lunch and then visit the scenic gardens of Black Dragon Pool before checking into our hotel in the heart of the old town. Later we take a walking tour of Old Lijiang. Here we discover a fantastic warren of traditional houses and shops, market squares and cobbled lanes, criss-crossed by canals and beautiful arched bridges. Not surprisingly, this stunning town has been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

**Wang Fu Hotel**

Lijiang

### 03/11/2018 Lijiang (BLD)

Beautiful as the old city is, it is also surrounded by irresistible natural wonders. Today we visit the Blue Moon Pools and Yak Meadow, which is located in the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain

range. We take a chairlift up the mountain and enjoy a picnic in this beautiful area. In the afternoon we enjoy a walking tour of Long Quan village.

#### 04/11/2018 Lijiang – Dali (BLD)

This morning we drive to Dali and on arrival explore the famous 'Foreigner Street' before checking into our hotel. Later this morning we explore the arts and crafts of this ancient culture. We visit a local market where an amazing array of fruit and vegetables are on offer, as well as meat and fish. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Landscape Hotel

Dali

#### 05/11/2018 Dali (BLD)

Located on the southwestern edge of China on the crossroads to Burma and Tibet, Dali is a small town in an exquisite setting. It lies on a narrow shore between a long lake and a high mountain range. Regarded by many as one of the loveliest places in China, it has a charming village-like atmosphere, and is home to the friendly Bai minority people. After exploring the old part of the town we visit the legendary Temple of the Three Pagodas, whose three towers are situated at the very foot of the snow-capped Cangshan Mountain range. After lunch we take a relaxing boat ride to Jinsao Island.

#### 06/11/2018 Dali – Tengchong (BLD)

Dali lies on the intersection of the fabled 'Old Burma Road' and this morning we start our drive south on this ancient route to Tengchong. Passing through beautiful scenery we cross the Mekong River near Baoshan. Built in just nine months, the old Burma Road stretches 1,154 km from Lashio in Burma to Kunming. 200,000 Burmese and Chinese labourers worked 24 hours a day to finish the so called 'road of life'. After lunch we continue through an ethnically diverse region inhabited by Jingpo, Dai and Burmese people before reaching Tengchong by late afternoon.

Guanfang Hotel

Tengchong

#### 07/11/2018 Tengchong (BLD)

Located on the fault lines of the Indian subcontinent and the Asian continent at an altitude of 1,650 metres, Tengchong's surroundings are dotted with countless volcanoes and numerous natural hot springs. Close to the town is the beautiful village of Heshan. This walled settlement contains 1,000 Qing style houses connected by courtyards and cobbled streets. It is particularly famous for its library which contains around 70,000 books!

#### 08/11/2018 Tengchong – Ruilli (BLD)

After breakfast we start our drive to the 'Oriental Jewellery City' of Ruilli located on the Chinese/Burmese border. En-route we visit the fascinating minority villages of Achang and Lisu near the Dayingjiang River, before arriving at our destination by lunch-time. Revelling in its border proximity, Ruilli is now a booming trading town where Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Burmese nationals wander around the busy markets in traditional sarongs. At the southern fringes of the Chinese empire, Ruilli is a surreal treat for the senses.

Jingcheng Hotel

Ruilli

#### 09/11/2018 Ruilli – Hsipaw (BLD)

The Chinese border towns of Ruilli and Muse are just metres away from each other. Crossing into Burma we effectively enter another world! We start to drive through the picturesque villages

of Shan state as we climb into the mountains of remote northern Burma. Previously closed closed to westerners, this area is still a part of Burma that few foreigners get to see. We pass the towns of Kyutkhine, Hseinni and Lashio and by late afternoon we reach Hsipaw on the Dokhtawady River.

**Riverside Hsipaw Resort**  
Hsipaw

#### 10/11/2018 Hsipaw (BLD)

Hsipaw was once a Shan Royal city, and today the entire area remains completely authentic due to the lack of foreigners and tourists travelling to this northern Shan town. The laid back atmosphere and the warmth of the locals add to the charm that so much of Asia has lost. Today we walk through beautiful and timeless hillside villages where Shan people farm the fields using techniques and tools that have remained for hundreds of years. In the afternoon we visit the English-style mansion of the Shan Palace where a long and tragic history waits to be told.

#### 11/11/2018 Hsipaw – Maymyo (BLD)

After breakfast we drive for one hour to the railway station where we board the train for our four-hour scenic journey towards Maymyo. The train travels at a leisurely pace as we pass through dense forests and wind down into a huge ravine where we see the amazing Gokteik Viaduct. Built in 1901, this is the second longest viaduct in the world. The aging structure creaks as the train edges its way across. At the first station on the other side of the viaduct we disembark and board the coach for the remaining 50kms to Maymyo. A classic British station town, Maymyo provided the British Army with a cool retreat from the heat of Mandalay. Indeed during the summer months, Maymyo became the administrative capital for the army. Today the town is redolent of the British Empire complete with haunted mansions, stagecoaches and Baptist and Anglican churches. This afternoon we explore this wonderful relic of colonial rule.

**Hotel Pyin Oo Lwin**  
Maymyo

#### 12/11/2018 Maymyo (BLD)

The National Gardens of Kandawgyi lie across the lake near the centre of the town. The beautiful gardens were laid out by the British to remind the colonialists of their home and now locals and tourists from all over the world enjoy this extensive wonder. Lovingly maintained, the 435-acre grounds are home to 500 species of flowers, orchids and trees. Deer wander nonchalantly through pockets of forest that also house a butterfly farm.

#### 13/11/2018 Maymyo – Mandalay (BLD)

This morning we make the short drive to Burma's last royal capital and cultural centre, Mandalay. Lying on the east bank of the Irrawaddy River, the city is 150 years old and enjoys the splendour of the golden age. During the Second World War the entire city, including the Royal Palace, was damaged. Famous for its rich and woven embroidery, wood and stone carving and bronze casting, the palace has subsequently been reconstructed. Having lunch on the Irrawaddy we see a hive of activity, with small boats and cargo ships carrying huge logs from the teak forests, heading upriver. Today we spend a full day exploring this great city.

**Hotel on the Red Canal**  
Mandalay

#### 14/11/2018 Mandalay (BLD)

After breakfast we visit the largest Buddhist monastery in Burma where more than a thousand monks worship. Here we witness an astonishing sight as monks carrying bowls line the whole street, waiting in total silence for their meal. We then step into the Kuthodaw Pagoda where an

amazing 729 stupas sit together. Each stupa contains a marble slab with a page from Tipitaka – the Buddhist equivalent of the bible. Added together these slabs create a book that is bigger than a two storey building – making it the largest book in the world. After lunch we head out to the nearby district of Amarapura to see the sunset at the world famous U-Bein bridge. Made entirely of teak, this extraordinary structure stretches 1.2km over the Taungthaman Lake. As the sun sinks below the horizon, monks and locals scurry across the bridge creating an exotic and wonderful vista.

#### 15/11/2018 Mandalay – Cruising the Irrawaddy River (BLD)

This morning we head down to Saigaing jetty to board our riverboat, the Irrawaddy Princess 2, for the cruise down the majestic Irrawaddy River to Bagan. The river affords unforgettable views and a chance to visit a small pottery village that is untouched by the modern world. The ever-changing scenery is filled with views of distant mountains, riverbanks dotted with temples, and small fishing boats passing by. As night falls, we moor in the tranquil waters near the river bank. Under the evening sky, the Irrawaddy is illuminated by the moon and stars creating a mystical atmosphere.

#### Onboard Irrawaddy Princess 2

#### 16/11/2018 Arrive Bagan (BLD)

Bagan was founded in 849 on the banks of the Irrawaddy River. The 11th century archaeological site is thought to be the richest and most visually stunning in Asia. The former capital of the first Burma empire, it covers an area of 42 square kilometres and contains thousands of ancient pagodas, stupas, shrines, ordination halls and monuments. Marco Polo described it as 'one of the finest sights in the world'. In the afternoon we visit Ananda Temple, a whitewashed masterpiece of Mon architecture with four standing Buddhas, and the adjacent brick monastery from the early Bagan era with superbly preserved murals.

#### Bagan Thande Hotel

Bagan

#### 17/11/2018 Bagan (BLD)

Before sunrise we have the opportunity to view Bagan from a unique perspective as we enjoy what is possibly the world's greatest hot air balloon flight! During the ride we have a bird's eye view of this fantastic kingdom as we float serenely over thousands of ancient temples and the great Irrawaddy River. Shortly after the sun rises above the distant mountains, our balloon descends gently to the river bank.

#### 18/11/2018 Bagan – Heho – Inle Lake (BLD)

This morning we board our flight to Heho.

Depart Bagan Air Bagan W9 141, 07.55

Arrive Heho 08.35

On arrival we drive the short distance to magnificent Inle Lake.

#### Aureum Hotel

Inle Lake

#### 19/11/2018 Inle Lake (BLD)

Today we take a boat out on to the lake. A photographer's dream, its calm waters are dotted with floating vegetation and fishing canoes while the surrounding mountains provide a breathtaking backdrop. We also have the chance to see the lake's unique 'leg rowers'. These are the Intha people who row standing up with one leg wrapped around an oar. We pass endless floating gardens where fruit and vegetables are grown and farmers paddle up and down tending their crops. At the spectacular stilt village of Nampan, we visit traditional handicraft

shops where silk weaving is done on wooden handlooms. Reaching the western fringes of the lake, we start to enter a labyrinth of canals that afford us access to remote river villages.

#### 20/11/2018 Inle Lake – Heho – Yangon (Rangoon) (BLD)

After breakfast this morning we have some free time before transferring to Heho airport for our flight to Yangon.

Depart Heho Air Bagan W9 129, 16.55

Arrive Yangon 19.10

On arrival we transfer to our hotel.

Kandawgyi Palace Hotel

Yangon

#### 21/11/2018 Yangon (BLD)

Yangon was founded in 1755 by King Alaungpaya. Meaning 'End of Strife', Yangon was renamed Rangoon when the British annexed the country in 1885. Today the city balances tradition, culture and modernity, making it a fascinating melting pot. Known as 'The Garden City of the East', Yangon is home to stunning lakes, shady parks and verdant tropical trees. Today we explore Yangon on foot starting at the famous Strand Road. We then reach Yangon Port to see the bustling harbour area before passing through busy markets into the Jewish and Indian quarters. We then continue into Shwe Bontha – perhaps the most photogenic of all streets with leafy sidewalks, pavement tea-shops and fantastic colonial buildings. Yangon is widely renowned for possessing the most extensive assortment of urban colonial architecture in Asia. We have lunch on the beautiful Inya Lake within 200 metres of Aung San Suu Kyi's house where she spent 15 years under house arrest.

#### 22/11/2018 Yangon – Singapore (B)

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight home.

Depart Yangon Silk Air MI 522, 16.20

Arrive Singapore 20.50

In Singapore we connect with the flight to our chosen Australian city.

#### 23/11/2018 Arrive Australia

Today we arrive back into Australia.