

Simple Guide to Yangon

Money Matters

Current exchange rate is at about 975 Myanmar Kyat for one US dollar. It's easier to think of as 1000 Kyats/USD. Exchange money at the airport. You will get good rate and not get cheated. If you need to exchange more, do so at your hotel or official exchange centers.

You need crisp, clean, unmarked, unstained hundred dollar bills to exchange in Myanmar.

Myanmar kyats are bulky to carry.

Getting Around

Take a taxi or walk.

Taxis are clearly marked and there are plenty. They don't have meters but fares are competitive. Negotiate before the trip begins but recognize that the margin to negotiate is pretty small. It should cost less than 20,000 Kyats to get from airport to the hotel. It should cost less than 5,000 Kyats to get around downtown area.

Taxi drivers speak limited English and can read simple addresses. If you need help, ask hotel concierge to give them directions to the place you want to go. Carry a hotel address card with you for your trip back to the hotel. **Sule** is pronounced *Sue-lay*.

Yangon's roads can suffer traffic congestion from time to time. Plan accordingly. Ask the hotel on how to avoid traffic jams.

Food and Water

Avoid street food, stick to established restaurants and drink bottle water only. **Alpine** is a good brand for bottle water.

Clothing

It is tropical weather and plan accordingly. Religious sites such as temples and pagodas require visitors to dress "modestly"; that is, to cover shoulders and legs. Visitors must remove all footwear, including socks, to enter temples and pagodas.

Admission Fees

Museums and religious sites may charge a small admission fee (\$5-10) to foreign visitors. They usually are payable in dollars.

Travel Guides

Lonely Planet's Myanmar guide, 2014 edition with temples on cover, is the latest. Keep in mind though that things in Myanmar, especially in Yangon, change quickly.

Top 10 Things to See or Do in Yangon

Shwedagon Pagoda

What it is	The most famous religious site in Myanmar and a must-see for every visitor
How to get there	Ask taxi driver to take you to the South Gate of the pagoda, near the elevators. From there, you can either take a lift or walk up the walkway.
What to do there	Appreciate Buddhist architecture and observe Buddhist culture. You can spend about 1 to 2 hours there.
Noteworthy	It's said to be about 2,500 years old. The stupa was built and rebuilt by various Buddhist kings and a queen to the current height.

Sule Pagoda

What it is	Buddhist pagoda at the center of Yangon
How to get there	It's within walking distance from the hotel (Sule Shangri-la). Turn right from the hotel and walk about 2 long blocks.
What to do there	Appreciate Buddhist architecture and observe Buddhist culture. You can spend about 30 to 60 minutes there.
Noteworthy	British designed current city of Yangon with this pagoda at the city's center. Also, it is the only place in the world where you can see a Buddhist temple, a Christian church and a Muslim mosque at footsteps of each other.

Independence Monument and Park

What it is	Independence monument and park in downtown Yangon
How to get there	First, get to Sule Pagoda. The park is in southeast direction from the pagoda.
What to do there	Enjoy colonial architecture of Yangon and observe the locals (people watching). Across the street from the park are Yangon City Hall (north of the park) and regional high court (red European style building east of the park).
Noteworthy	The park was called Victoria Park during the colonial rule but the name was changed to a Burmese name once after the independence. The independence monument reflects the shape of the old Burmese flag, when looked from above, with one big star surrounded by five smaller stars.

Architectural Walking Tour of the City

What it is	Walking tour
How to get there	Two ways to do this. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use Lonely Planet guide and do it on your own.2. Join a guided tour provided by a local non-profit, advocacy group called Yangon Heritage Trust. See below.

What to do there	Enjoy Yangon City as it was laid out by the British during its colonial rule. Connect with the city's past. At the turn of the century, Yangon was a very cosmopolitan city in Southeast Asia and you can still see some of its reflections.
Guided Tour	http://yangonheritagetrust.org/tours
Lonely Planet Guide	Page 54 of the 2011 edition (with fisherman on the cover). 2014 edition should have the same info in Yangon section.

Saint Mary Cathedral

What it is	The largest cathedral in Myanmar
How to get there	Turn left at the hotel exit, turn right on Bogyoke Road. Walk two long blocks east. You can also take a taxi but some drivers may be reluctant to do a short ride.
What to do there	It's a working church. Enjoy the artwork and architecture.
Noteworthy	It was designed by Dutch architect Jos Cuypers, son of Pierre Cuypers. Construction began in 1895 and was completed in 1899. Red buildings next to the cathedral in a separate compound were once famous St. Paul missionary school. It is now a state high school and unfortunately less well maintained than the cathedral.

Bogyoke Market (Scott Market)

What it is	A market of arts & crafts and local merchandise, popular with the tourists
How to get there	On foot. Turn left at the hotel exit, turn left on Bogyoke Road (the hotel is at the corner of Bogyoke Road and Sule Pagoda Road). Walk about seven short blocks. The market is on the right side. Cross the road using one of the overpasses.
What to do there	Buy souvenirs, gems, artwork and crafts. Make a Burmese dress. Prices are negotiated. You can spend about 2-3 hours there.
Noteworthy	The market is officially called Bogyoke Market but everyone calls it Scott Market, its former name from the colonial era.

Sky Bistro at Sakura Tower

What it is	A restaurant with awesome views
How to get there	It's across the street from the hotel. Use the overpass.
What to do there	Have lunch, afternoon tea or dinner
Noteworthy	It is probably the highest floor restaurant in all of Yangon. It is one of the tallest buildings (with 20 floors) in downtown, the other being the Shangri-la hotel.

Cultural Show and Dinner at Karaweik Palace

What it is	Dinner and cultural entertainment
How to get there	Have hotel concierge reserve a table first. Take a taxi to Karaweik Palace at Kandawgyi (Royal Lake). They may try to charge you a small fee at park entrance but have taxi driver tell them that you have a dinner reservation at Karaweik.
What to do there	Enjoy Burmese buffet and a culture show featuring performances from multiple nationalities of Myanmar
Noteworthy	Food is OK but performances are good. It's a convenient way to enjoy cultures of multiple nationalities who live in Myanmar.

Feel Myanmar Food

What it is	Authentic Burmese food experience that foreigners can enjoy
How to get there	Take a taxi to Feel Myanmar Food restaurant at 124 Pyi-daung-su Ave.
What to do there	Enjoy Burmese food.
Noteworthy	They are hygienic and use good ingredients. They have Burmese food in plates you can see before ordering. They have multiple locations with different but similar names so have the driver take you to Pyi-daung-su Ave. location.

High Tea at the Strand

What it is	High tea experience at a colonial-era hotel
How to get there	Take a taxi to the Strand Hotel at 92 Strand Road
What to do there	They serve breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner.
Noteworthy	The hotel was built in 1901 and was considered one of the finest back then, and is still today.

Other restaurants in downtown that are worth trying are **999 Shan Noodles**, **YKKO** (hot pot) and **50th Street Bar & Grill** (expat favorite).