

Discover **BURMA**

including the Annular Solar Eclipse!

January 7-19, 2010

Dear Travelers:

In the bright, pleasant days of winter, we will journey to Burma (Myanmar), one of Southeast Asia's most enigmatic and fascinating locations. Our journey is scheduled to coincide with the **Annular Solar Eclipse, January 15, 2010**, as it passes over Mandalay. We hope you will join us for this very special adventure!

Entering the heartland of Burma is like stepping into the past. Ringed by hills, of the Indian and Thai frontiers, the fertile plains of the **Irrawaddy River** have, for centuries, nurtured a civilization that takes great pride in doing things its own way. Since gaining independence, the Burmese government has pursued a policy of self-sufficiency and isolation. Today this land, rich in resources, remains one of the least "globalized" places on earth.

Dignified and proud, the Burmese people regard foreign visitors as guests in their country and take pleasure in introducing their customs. Men wear lungyis, loose-fitting cotton wraps; young women brush their faces with tanaka, a powder made from ground tree bark, both for beauty and for protection from the bright sun. Ancient traditions that have disappeared elsewhere survive in the valleys of the Irrawaddy.

The Burmese people are devoted Buddhists of the Theravada school. The gilded spires and Buddha images of their temples can be sublimely beautiful, and temples serve as places not just for worship, but where whole families mark life's milestones: young boys are ordained as monks; couples seek guidance according to the day of their birth. The complex of **Shwedagon Paya**, on a hill in central Rangoon (Yangon), is one of humanity's spectacular expressions of religious devotion.

Highlights of our expedition to Burma include **Inle Lake**, the fabled city of **Mandalay**, and the stunning plain of **Bagan** where thousands of temples and pagodas rise from an acacia-covered savanna. At Inle Lake, we will stay in



cottages raised on teakwood pilings, well-offshore in about six feet of clear water.

Many of the most productive, scenic locales on the Irrawaddy plain have, at one time or another, hosted a capital city. **Mandalay** has had four of them, some of which combine exquisite historic architecture with intimate portraits of contemporary rural life, best observed from a small boat or a horse cart on an earthen track.

While Mandalay was Burma's capital in recent centuries, **Bagan** was the power center of antiquity. Thirteenth Century temples and pagodas dot a broad, scenic plain. Other activities in Bagan include a visit to **Mt. Popa**, an exploded volcano cloaked in lush forest, and **Sinluheing** (Elephant Pond) village whose residents subsist by cultivating sesame and tamarind and distilling the fermented sap of toddy palms.

I look forward to returning to **Burma** and will provide commentary and insights during our journey. It will be a delight to explore Burma and see the Annular Solar Eclipse with you!

We hope that you will be able to join us.

Sincerely,

Chris

Dr. Chris Carpenter
Expedition Leader

Itinerary

Days 1/2 Los Angeles to Bangkok

Depart Los Angeles in the late evening on a non-stop flight to Bangkok, Thailand on Thai Airways. Cross the international dateline en route.

Day 3 Bangkok to Yangon (Rangoon)

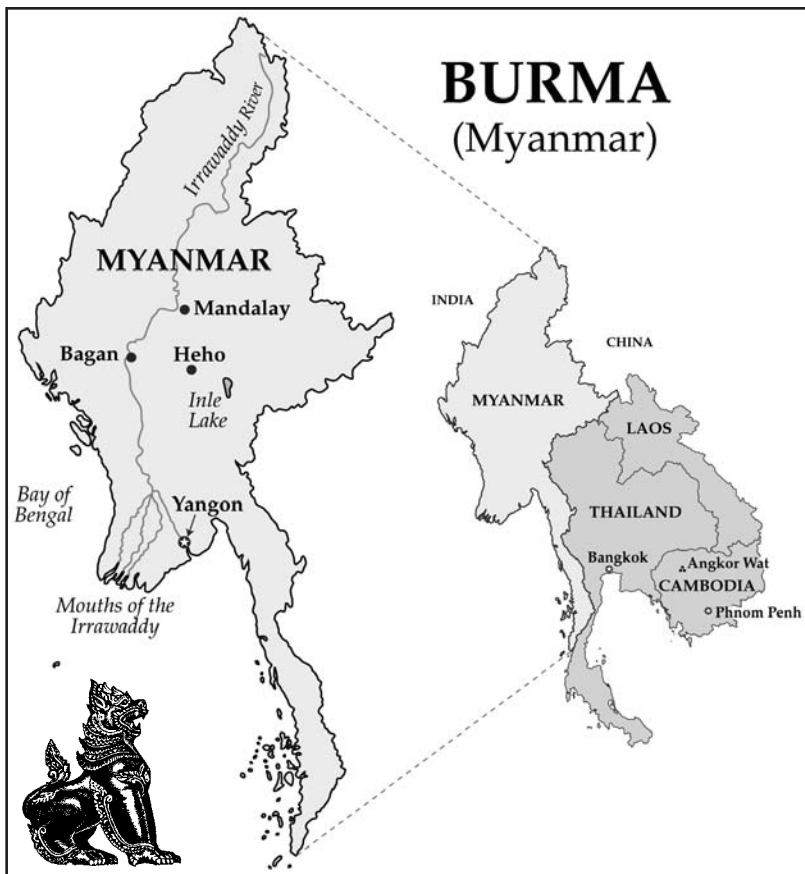
Arrive Bangkok in the early morning and transfer to our connecting flight on Thai Airways to Rangoon (Yangon), Burma's capital city. Transfer to our hotel, an elegant wooden building built on the lakeshore in the center of Yangon. Those who want to rest can relax poolside in our hotel's lakeshore garden. Others can join a guided walking tour around the city center, including Bogyoke Aung San Market (formerly known as Scott Market). In late afternoon, we will visit Shwedagon Paya, a golden pagoda complex that epitomizes Burmese culture to both residents and foreign visitors. Welcome dinner. *Kandawgyi Palace Hotel (2 nights)*. L,D

Day 4 Yangon (Rangoon)

Today we will explore Yangon. Visits will include the National Museum, the Nagar glass-making establishment, and Chaukhtatgyi, a 230 foot reclining Buddha with enormous glass eyes, weighing hundreds of pounds each, which were crafted by the Nagar glass-makers. Lunch at the Green Elephant restaurant will include traditional Burmese fare. Enjoy the vivid, family-oriented street life of Yangon. B,L,D

Day 5 Yangon to Heho

After a one-hour flight to Heho in Shan State, we'll continue by bus to the Pindaya limestone cave complex. The bucolic agricultural landscapes en route are typical of the low hills of central Myanmar and will be a scenic highlight. Stop en route in a village where we may be able to talk to the local people and photograph details of the landscape. Pindaya Caves are beautifully decorated by stalactites of limestone, and they also serve as a shrine for hundreds of revered Buddha images. *Pindaya November Hotel*. B,L,D



Day 6 Inle Lake

This morning we will retrace our route to Heho and onward to the small town of Nyaung Shwe along the northern shore of Inle Lake, traversing an area settled by Nepali people. From the Inle lakeshore, it's a 40 minute, scenic boat trip over clear, shallow waters to Golden Island. We'll arrive in time for lunch. In the afternoon, we'll enjoy a fascinating tour among the stilted villages and floating row-crops of the local Intha people. Some of the villages are built in the lake, far from shore. Blacksmiths and weavers of silk and lotus fiber work in factories elevated above the lake surface. Return to Golden Island to watch the sunset over the hills that encircle Inle Lake. *Golden Island Cottages II, Inle Lake (2 nights)*. B,L,D

Day 7 Inle Lake

Diverse activities on and around Inle Lake will make this a memorable day. Highlights include a local "weekly market" where Pa-O minority people (a branch of the Karen Nation) sell produce from the hills and fish from the lake. The Inle markets convene nearly every day, but the location shifts according to the day of the week. Here, vendors and customers seem to take pride in wearing their local "colors," beautiful hand woven outfits. We'll boat up one of Inle's inlet streams to the Indein stupas, an as-yet unrestored "forest" of weather-beaten but exquisitely carved pagodas. The teakwood "jumping cat" monastery is a fascinating and aptly named place of devotion. B,L,D

BURMA (Myanmar)



Day 8 Heho to Mandalay

We'll boat to the mainland in the cool mist of early morning, then catch a short flight from Heho to Mandalay, the historic capital of the Burmese nation. Mandalay is situated on fertile land, set between the placid Irrawaddy river and the Shan Hills. We'll take an afternoon excursion to some beautiful (and nicely shaded) historical sites at the foot of Mandalay Hill. Here, the temple and palace complexes provide a chance to stroll and meet local people. One weather-beaten teak chapel is the sole surviving remnant of a fire that destroyed Mandalay's walled palace during allied bombing of the Japanese who occupied it during World War II. Towards evening, we'll go to Mandalay Hill for a sunset view. *Sedona Hotel, Mandalay (2 nights)*. B,L,D



Day 9 Amarapura & Ava/ Annular Solar Eclipse

In January, Mandalay enjoys sparkling clear skies and will offer the best opportunity to see the Annular Solar Eclipse. With an annular eclipse, the moon is further away from the earth so there will be a ring of sunlight or annulus around the moon during the eclipse which is quite lengthy (approximately 8 minutes). This will be an extraordinary phenomenon!

Later, we will visit Amarapura and Ava, where two of Mandalay's ancient capitals once stood. In Amarapura, a kilometer-long teakwood bridge, more than a hundred years old, offers scenic passage across a shallow, fish-filled lake. Nearby, a photogenic teaching monastery houses thousands of monks. Ava, capital of the Burmese Kingdom longer than any other, spreads across a broad agricultural landscape. This pleasant spot is best accessed by boat and horse cart, from which it is nice to watch the water buffaloes loll and the local children frolic in roadside canals. B,L,D

Day 10 Mandalay to Bagan

Today the tempo of our journey will change with a day-long river trip down the Irrawaddy from Mandalay to Bagan. Our comfortable, chartered vessel is traditional to the Irrawaddy, and was converted from an old teak rice barge. En route, we'll have the chance to enjoy a glimpse of river life. The river is narrow enough to give us a look at the local people who set up temporary residence on clean, riverine sand bars and farm rice during the winter spell of low water. *Bagan Thande Hotel, Bagan (2 nights)*. B,L,D

Day 11 Bagan Plain

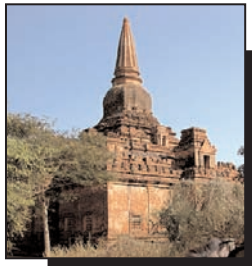
Today, we'll visit a select few of the 3,100 stupas and pagodas that rise from the acacias and toddy palms of the Bagan Plain. The towers of Bagan, many dating back to the 11th to 13th Centuries, are iconic of Burma. In its entirety, the complex rivals Cambodia's Angkor Wat as a historical treasure of SE Asia. The surrounding landscape, too dry to farm, remains sparsely populated, peaceful and hauntingly beautiful. B,L,D

Day 12 Popa Volcano & Sinluheing

This morning, we'll pass through the fertile, well-watered hills that surround Bagan on our way to the forest-covered Popa volcano. Along the way, we'll take time to visit Sinluheing, a village whose residents grow sesame and tend toddy palms amidst stumps of petrified wood. Near Mt. Popa, local people sell flowers and medicines from plants that grow on the volcano's slopes. A nearby tower of volcanic basalt is the legendary home to an assemblage of nats, celestial beings who populate the Burmese folk mythology. Late afternoon flight to Yangon. *Kandawgyi Palace Hotel (1 night)*. B,L,D

Day 13 Yangon to Bangkok & Home

After a one hour flight to Bangkok, take a flight back to the USA, or begin the Angkor Wat Extension.



Optional Angkor Wat Extension
\$1,195 per person twin share
January 19-22, 2010

Day 1 Bangkok to Siem Reap & Angkor Wat

Transfer to the airport for an afternoon Bangkok Airways flight to Siem Reap in Cambodia, for a visit to the extraordinary site of Angkor Wat. Arrive Siem Reap and transfer to our *Hotel (3 nights)*, situated just a few minutes away from the ruins. D

Day 2 Prasat Kravan & Ta Prohm

Our introduction to the Angkor complex will begin with a visit to the unique brick sculptures of Prasat Kravan. We will also see Ta Som, Neak Pean (a fountain built in the middle of a pool and representing the paradisaical Himalayan mountain lake), and Preah Khan, a place of towered enclosures

and shoulder-hugging corridors. One of the area's most beautiful temples, Ta Prohm has been relatively untouched since it was discovered and is still surrounded by jungle. B,L,D

Day 3 Angkor Wat

In the morning, visit the most famous of all the temples on the plain of Angkor: Angkor Wat. The temple complex covers 81 hectares and is comparable in size to the Imperial Palace in Beijing. Its distinctive five towers are emblazoned on the Cambodian flag. It is considered by art historians to be the prime example of classical Khmer art and architecture. Enjoy sunset at Angkor Wat and a special dinner with Cambodian dance show. B,L,D

Day 4 Siem Reap to Bangkok & USA

Depart Siem Reap on a return flight to Bangkok, then fly onward to Los Angeles. Arrive the same day. B



Reservations #1106

Yes! I/We want to join the **Burma & the Annular Solar Eclipse Expedition, January 7-19, 2010** offered by **Betchart Expeditions Inc.** Please reserve _____ space(s). As a deposit, I/we have enclosed a check for \$_____ (\$500 per person) payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) _____ Age _____ Sex _____

_____ Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Home (_____) _____ Work (_____) _____

Email Address _____

Membership: _____

Accommodations Preference:

Twin Single Twin Share with a friend *or* assign a roommate
 Nonsmoker Smoker

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Please Mail To: Burma Annular Solar Eclipse Expedition
 Betchart Expeditions Inc.
 17050 Montebello Road
 Cupertino, CA 95014-5435**



BURMA!

including the Annular Solar Eclipse!
January 7-19, 2010

Costs & Conditions

Trip Fee: \$3,795 per person (plus air fare of \$1,395 + tax from Los Angeles to Bangkok and Yangon, round trip) + \$225 in-tour flights.

Expedition Fee Includes: Land transport; airport transfers; tips to drivers and local guides; accommodations; all meals in Burma; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

Expedition Fee Does Not Include: Air fare (quoted separately); visa fees; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, sodas, snacks; personal insurance; foreign airport departure taxes.

What to Expect: This expedition is planned for travelers who would enjoy discovering the cultural heritage of Burma (Myanmar) and the Annular Solar Eclipse with excellent leadership. The group will travel on short flights within Burma plus by motorcoach and boat. On traveling days, we will take time for both planned and spontaneous stops to walk, photograph, and talk with local people.

This program is **Moderately Active:** fast pace, substantial distances covered, considerable walking and stair climbing. Food will include varied international, Burmese, and Cambodian menus.

Weather is pleasant, with midday temperatures in the 70s to 80s. We'll be there in the winter dry season when weather is very pleasant. This expedition will be a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure who would enjoy a chance to explore the cultural heritage of Burma. We will have a grand adventure of

discovery. (No smoking in vehicles, during lectures, or meals, please.)

Air Fare & Airline Ticketing: Air fare quoted is based on a group fare from Los Angeles to Bangkok and Yangon, round trip on Thai Airways. *Please phone Taunya at Betchart Expeditions, (800) 252-4910 for further information.* AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Accommodations: Are in comfortable, scenically situated hotels, nearly all of which reflect a sensitivity to local architectural styles and building materials, based on twin share. Single accommodations are available for a supplement of \$695.

Reservations, Deposits & Payments: To reserve a place on this expedition, please mail a deposit of \$500 per person with the completed reservation form to: **Burma Annular Solar Eclipse, Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435.** Balance of land fee is due 60 days before departure.

Cancellations & Refunds: The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of \$100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the \$100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.



Questions?

Please call **Betchart Expeditions Inc.**

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Look on the Web:

www.betchartexpeditions.com

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Illustrations by April Milne. CST#2036304-40