

## Discovering Myanmar | Small Group Tour for Seniors

### Reading List

#### **A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times: Traditions and Transformation**

by Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitrii Aung-Thwin

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, known amongst English speakers as Burma, is often characterized as a place of repressive military rule, civil war, censorship and corrupt elections – and despite recent attempts to promote tourism to this little-known country, few people visit this region of Asia.

In *A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times*, Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitrii Aung-Thwin take us from the sacred stupas of the plains of Bagan to the grand, colonial-era British mansions, revealing the storied past and rich culture of this country. The book traces the traditions and transformations of Myanmar over nearly three millennia, from the relics of its Neolithic civilization to the protests of Buddhist monks in the early twentieth century, the colonial era of British rule and the republic that followed. The authors also consider the present-day life, culture and society of the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia and examine the 2010 elections – its first in over twenty years.

The most comprehensive history of Myanmar ever published in the English language, this book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Southeast Asian history and will surprise, challenge and inform in equal measure.

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#### **The Pandaw Story: On the Rivers of Burma and Beyond**

by Paul Strachan

In 1995 Paul Strachan invited an unlikely assortment of eccentrics and adventurers to join him in an untried new boat that would venture up the Irrawaddy River, the first time foreign tourists had ventured up the mighty Burmese thoroughfare since the Second World War. Against all odds, the trip was a huge success, word quickly spread and before Strachan knew it he was running a business in one of the world's least business-friendly environments. He named it the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in honour of the Glasgow-based company that ran Burma's river transport when the country was an outpost of the British Raj. The company now trades under the name Pandaw, after the Clyde-built paddle steamer it restored in Burma. In turns hilarious, shocking, moving and often highly provocative, this book celebrates the 20th anniversary of the revived Irrawaddy Flotilla Company and the 150th anniversary of the founding of the original Irrawaddy Flotilla. In *The Pandaw Story*

Strachan describes many adventures, successes and mishaps on the rivers of Burma and then, after 2002 on the Kwai, Mekong, Ganges and Rajang rivers all of which he pioneered for river cruising. Few foreigners lived in Burma through these years and this book gives a number of fascinating insights into life in a military dictatorship, offering a uniquely well-informed account of the brutal impasse that for decades has dominated political life in one of the world's least-understood countries. This lively, humorous and anecdotal account gives some insights into the trials and tribulations of doing business in Burma and in South-East Asia more generally, introducing many outrageous and some sinister characters.

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### **Greetings from Myanmar: Exploring the Price of Progress in One of the Last Countries on Earth to Open for Business**

by David Bockino

In just a few years, Myanmar has gone from destitution, dictatorship, and isolation from the international community to being hailed “World’s Best Tourist Destination”—a seemingly impossible transition that led David Bockino, in 2015, on a search to find out exactly what happened, and how. Traversing the country, he encounters a pompous Western businessman swindling his way to millions, a local vendor with a flair for painting nudes, and long ago legends of a western circus. Sensitively written and expertly researched, *Greetings from Myanmar: Exploring the Price of Progress in One of the Last Countries on Earth to Open for Business* is the story of a flourishing nation still very much in limbo and an answer to the hard questions that arise when tourism not only charts, but shapes a place as well.

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### **The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma**

by Thant Myint-U

What do we really know about Burma and its history? And what can Burma's past tell us about its present and even its future? For nearly two decades Western governments and a growing activist community have been frustrated in their attempts to bring about a freer and more democratic Burma?through sanctions and tourist boycotts?only to see an apparent slide toward even harsher dictatorship.

Now Thant Myint-U tells the story of modern Burma, and the story of his own family, in an interwoven narrative that is by turns lyrical, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Through his prominent family's stories and those of others, he portrays Burma's rise and decline in the modern world, from the time of Portuguese pirates and renegade Mughal princes through a sixty-year civil war that continues today?the longest-running war anywhere in the world.

The River of Lost Footsteps is a work at once personal and global, a "brisk, vivid history" (Philip Delves Broughton, The Wall Street Journal) that makes Burma accessible and enthralling.

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## **Myanmar: A Political History**

by Nehginpao Kipgen

Myanmar, since its independence from the British in 1948, has witnessed decades of military dictatorship, a plethora of ethnic and political problems, and an arduous struggle to political normalcy and democracy. Reinventing its place in international trade, diplomacy, and geo-strategy, Myanmar today presents a complex picture and how it engages with its own history plays an important part in this process of transformation.

Myanmar: A Political History examines the politico-historical antecedents of contemporary Myanmar: from colonial rule to the establishment of its first civilian government; the subsequent fall into military dictatorship; and the transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic government. Kipgen weaves in its relations with the United States, Myanmar's political, economic, and military connect with China; India-Myanmar relations in the context of India's Look East policy; and Myanmar's cooperation problems on human rights within the ASEAN. Lucid and well researched, this book is a valuable guide to those interested in the future of Myanmar as well as South and Southeast Asia, to understand the historical knowledge as to how different political actors played differing roles in the country's transition across governments.

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## **Letters from Burma**

by Aung San Suu Kyi

Letters from Burma - an unforgettable collection from the Nobel Peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. In these astonishing letters, Aung San Suu Kyi reaches out beyond Burma's borders to paint for her readers a vivid and poignant picture of her native land. Here she celebrates the courageous army officers, academics, actors and everyday people who have supported the National League for Democracy, often at great risk to their own lives. She reveals the impact of political decisions on the people of Burma, from the terrible cost to the children of imprisoned dissidents - allowed to see their parents for only fifteen minutes every fortnight - to the effect of inflation on the national diet and of state repression on traditions of hospitality. She also evokes the beauty of the country's seasons and scenery, customs and festivities that remain so close to her heart. Through these remarkable letters, the reader catches a glimpse of exactly what is at stake as Suu Kyi fights on for freedom in Burma, and of the love for her homeland that sustains her non-violent battle. Includes an introduction from Fergal Keane 'Aung San Suu Kyi has become a global symbol of peaceful resistance, courage and

apparently endless endurance' Guardian 'A real hero in an age of phony phone-in celebrity, which hands out that title freely to the most spoiled and underqualified' Bono, Time Aung San Suu Kyi is the leader of Burma's National League for Democracy. She was placed under house arrest in Rangoon in 1989, where she remained for almost 15 of the 21 years until her release in 2010, becoming one of the world's most prominent political prisoners. She is also the author of the collection of writings Freedom from Fear.

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## **Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know**

by David Steinberg

No country in Asia in recent years has undergone so massive a political shift in so short a time as Myanmar. Until recently, the former British colony had one of the most secretive, corrupt, and repressive regimes on the planet, a country where Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was held in continual house arrest and human rights were denied to nearly all. Yet events in Myanmar since the elections of November 2010 have profoundly altered the internal mood of the society, and have surprised even Burmese and seasoned foreign observers of the Myanmar scene. The pessimism that pervaded the society prior to the elections, and the results of that voting that prompted many foreign observers to call them a "sham" or "fraud," gradually gave way to the realization that positive change was in the air.

In this updated second edition of *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know®*, David I. Steinberg addresses the dramatic changes in the country over the past two years, including the establishment of a human rights commission, the release of political prisoners, and reforms in health and education. More than ever, the history, culture, and internal politics of this country are crucial to understanding the current transformation, which has generated headlines across the globe. Geographically strategic, Burma/Myanmar lies between the growing powers of China and India. Yet it is mostly unknown to Westerners despite being its thousand-year history as a nation. Burma/Myanmar is a place of contradictions: a picturesque land with mountain jungles and monsoon plains, it is one of the world's largest producers of heroin. Though it has extensive natural resources including oil, gas, teak, metals, and minerals, it is one of the poorest countries in the world. And despite a half-century of military-dominated rule, change is beginning to work its way through the beleaguered nation, as it moves to a more pluralistic administrative system reflecting its pluralistic cultural and multi-ethnic base.

Authoritative and balanced, *Burma/Myanmar* is an essential book on a country in the throes of historic change.

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## **Under the Dragon: A Journey through Burma**

by Rory MacLean

The memory of a brief visit to Burma had haunted Rory MacLean for years. A decade after the violent suppression of an unarmed national uprising, which cost thousands of lives and all hopes for democracy, he seized the chance to return. Travelling from Rangoon to Mandalay and Pagan, into the heart of the Golden Triangle, he hears stories of freedom fighters, government censors, basket weavers, farmers and lovers -- ordinary people struggling to survive under one of the most brutal and repressive regimes in the world. *Under the Dragon* is a perceptive and heartbreaking portrayal of contemporary Burma, a country that is shot through with desperation and fear, but also blessed -- even in the darkest places -- with beauty and courage.

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