



Pandaw River Expeditions

EXPEDITION No 0

THE MERGUI ARCHIPELAGO

7 NIGHTS

The Mergui Archipelago with its 800 islands is one of those areas that remain almost totally unvisited by foreigners. Though now some live-a-board dive boats and yachts venture with special permission into the southern islands from their bases in Thailand, the bulk of the archipelago has remained unvisited since colonial times. During that period when the archipelago was first charted most of the islands were named after colonial civil servants, a number retain these quaint names to this day.

The local population IS Mokkein, often called sea gypsies and sometimes called pirates. During the Burmese socialist period the Mokkein controlled the smuggling routes and would prey on shipping. Nowadays they have reverted to fishing and fish curing. They are a people with their own language and culture who entirely live on the sea and have evolved a remarkable way of life. We will visit Mokkein islands such as Lampi in the Sullivan Islands.

The ship carries kayaks and snorkelling equipment for free use.

Please Note: The voyage plan shown here is very much a rough sketch and subject to daily changes depending on weather, pilot's instructions and local permissions. We can assure that it will be varied and interesting. The ship carries two Zodiac tenders so we can make various unscheduled expeditions to the islands, beaches and into the coastal ports.

Please note: There is no credit card machine available on the Andaman Explorer due to connectivity issues. Please bring USD cash to settle your on

board bill at the end of the cruise.

Please note: This expedition requires a sufficient level of fitness and agility to climb in and out of tenders from the ship and at shore. Launching and boarding inflatable and rigid tenders can be challenging. Please be aware that the Andaman Explorer has a steep gangway and a good level of fitness is essential to ensure guest safety. There may be rough water which can challenge those with limited mobility. Launching and excursions are dependent on safe weather conditions as deemed by the Master of the Andaman Explorer and sea conditions.

YOUR SHIP - [MY ANDAMAN EXPLORER](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE MY ANDAMAN EXPLORER](#)

Cruise Price Includes: All excursions as stated, entrance fees, guide services (English language), main meals, local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes, crew gratuities, kayaks & snorkelling equipment.

Cruise Price Excludes: International flights, port dues usd 195 per person, laundry, all visa costs, fuel surcharges (see terms and conditions), all beverages except local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes and tips to tour guides, local guides, bus drivers, boat operators and cyclo drivers.

Please note: There is no credit card machine available on the Andaman Explorer due to connectivity issues. Please bring USD cash to settle your on board bill at the end of the cruise.

Please note: Thai citizens enter Burma visa-free but need a pre-arranged visa when visiting Mergui.

Please note: This expedition requires a sufficient level of fitness and agility to climb in and out of tenders from the ship and at shore. There may be rough water which can challenge those with limited mobility.

UPSTREAM ITINERARY

April 2018 onward

DAY 1

KAWTHAUNG

Passengers embark at the border port of Kawthaung. After lunch explore the town of Kawthaung and surrounding area. Sail on evening or morning tide.

[MORE ABOUT KAWTHAUNG](#)

DAY 2

NAUNG WEE ISLAND

Sail on to Naung Wee island to visit a Moken (sea gypsy) village and learn about their extraordinary water bourn life. Sail all night.

DAY 3

SAILING THE ARCHIPELAGO

Sail all day north through the archipelago with a stop to swim and snorkel and explore ashore on an island of interest.

DAY 4**MERGUI**

All day ashore to explore this fascinating colonial port city. Afternoon voluntary trip by car to the rarely visited town of Tanintharyi (Tenasserim), once capital of this region.

DAY 5**LUN LE ISLANDS**

Morning sail to Port Maria to visit the Karen communities there. Swimming and snorkeling off a desert island in the afternoon. Sail all night.

DAY 6**LAMPI MARINE NATIONAL PARK**

Visit the Lampi Marine National Park with its mangrove forests and diverse bird life including the hornbill. We go up river by kayak deep into the mangroves with excellent bird watching and return to the beach to swim or snorkel. Afternoon visit to Mokkein sea gypsy villages.

DAY 7**COCKSCOMB ISLAND**

Sail to Cockscomb Island with its limestone caves and hidden lagoon accessible only on the ship's tenders. In the afternoon we will move round to the South Bay where we can kayak and swim off pristine white sandy beaches and watch the sun go down as cocktails are served on the beach.

DAY 8**KAWTHAUNG**

Arrive at Kawthaung in the morning and disembark for your onward journey.

PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

YANGON - HPA AN

Depart Yangon at 7am this morning for a journey by road to Hpa An, the capital of Kayin state.

Along the way, we'll visit Bayin Nyi cave. There is a beautiful monastery here set in front of a sheer rock wall and surrounded by a large natural spring. It's not uncommon to see young monks going for a swim, still clothed in full monk attire.

We will arrive in Hpa An in the late afternoon. As we approach the city, the mountains surrounding Hpa An will slowly come into view. There should be time to drop off your bags at the hotel before heading into town to visit Shwe Yin Myaw pagoda. This pagoda is the perfect spot to watch the sun set across the Thanlwin River.

Overnight in Hpa An, lunch included.

DAY 2

HPA AN

Our guide will meet you at our hotel after breakfast. Today's first stop will be Sadan Cave. This cave will bring out your inner Indiana Jones. Sadan starts off as a typical Myanmar cave, full of Buddah images and even a reclining Buddah. As we make our way to the back of the cave, a natural tunnel comes into view. Follow the row of lights through the tunnel for about 15 minutes to get to the other side. As we reach the end, a magnificent view of a hidden lake and meadow come into sight.

As an optional activity, we can stop and have tea or coffee at the tea shop at the edge of the lake. From here, you'll hire one of the local boat men to take us on a tour around the lake (client's sit on the bamboo floor of the boat as there are no seats) and through another cave accessible only by boat. (the boat is valid from Oct to Apr)

After returning to our car, you'll head toward Lumbini Gardens, where you'll see thousands (1150 to be exact) of identical Buddha statues before going to Kyauk Ka Lat. This natural rock sculpture, surrounded by a manmade lake, offers spectacular views of Mt Zwegabin and the surrounding area.

The next stop on our tour will be Kawgun cave. Every conceivable inch of this cave is covered in Buddah images, many dating back to the 7th century. There is also an option to climb to the top of a large rock formation for great views.

The last stop will be a sunset visit to Bat Cave. Living up to its name, Bat Cave is home to tens of thousands of bats and located along the bank of the Thanlwin River. As the sun dips in the background, the bats come out in droves and is quite a sight.

Just before dark, head back to our hotel.

Overnight in Hpa An, breakfast included.

DAY 3

HPA AN - MAWLAMYINE (MOULMEIN)

After breakfast, we'll begin take a hour drive to the city of Mawlamyine (Moulmein). Before it was established in Rangoon, Mawlamyine was the British capital of Burma. The British influence can be seen in the buildings, churches, and the beautiful Strand road along the river.

Along the way, we'll stop at Kawdoe Kawnat village to visit Kawnat Monastery. This magnificent monastery with beautiful woodcarving was built a century ago by a villager named U Nar Ouat, who was famed in those days for his wealth and generosity. It was because of his donation that this religious site was built nearby his village.

From here, it is a short drive to Mawlamyine. We'll start our tour at Kyaik Than Lan Pagoda, the city's landmark. Built in 875 AD, it enshrines the Tripitaka Buddhist manuscripts as well as a hair relic from the Buddha. The 40 meter high stupa is located on a hill surrounded by 34 smaller Zediyan pagodas. From up here one can enjoy panoramic views over the city and harbor. It is also thought to be the site where Rudyard Kipling wrote his famous poem, Mandalay.

Next you will visit the ancient Queen Sein Don Monastery (locally known as Yada Bonmyint Monastery). This Monastery is more as 100 years old and is famous for its intricate woodcarving and Burmese crafts inside. It was founded by Queen Sein Tone who had to flee Mandalay at the time that Myanmar's last monarch, King Thibaw Min, took power. She became home sick and asked the local carpenters to build a monastery in the replica style of her former palace.

Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch, we'll visit some of the building remaining from Mawlamyine's Colonial period. Included will be a stop at Holy Family Cathedral. Built during the colonial era, this church has a beautiful interior rarely seen by tourists.

We'll also stop at nearby Judson's Church, built in 1827 by Dr. Judson who translated the Bible into Burmese.

Afterwards, we head to the jetty for a short boat ride to Shampoo Island, known in the Mon language as Ta Kaw Pon Za Lai. The island sits at the confluence of five rivers meet and it was here where the Mon Kings used to hold ritualistic shampooing ceremonies during the local water festival, Thingyan. Spend 30-45 minutes on the island exploring the monastery, nunnery and pagoda.

Finally, return to Mawlamyine and have a chance to stroll down the beautiful Strand road as the sun sets along the river. Tonight, we'll dine at one of the many restaurants along the river. The Burmese consider Mawlamyine the foodie capital of Myanmar. In fact there is an old Burmese saying "Mandalay is for eloquence, Mawlamyaing is for food, and Yangon is for boasting".

Overnight in Mawlamyine, breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

DAY 4

MAWLAMYINE - GOLDEN ROCK - YANGON

Early this morning, depart Mawlamyine and drive to Kyaikhtiyo, the Golden Rock. In late morning, arrive at Kyaikhtiyo base camp (approximately 4 hrs). Travel by local, open-air truck along a winding road (45 minutes) where you will be dropped off a short 5 minutes walk from Golden Rock.

A huge boulder covered by gold leaf and delicately balanced on the edge of a cliff, Golden Rock is one of Myanmar's main pilgrimage sites. The pagoda here is said to hold a hair of the Buddha and Buddhists from across the country come here to pay homage.

Continue the journey to Yangon.

Overnight in Yangon, breakfast and lunch included.

DAY 5

YANGON - KAWTHAUNG

This morning transfer to the domestic airport for your flight to Kawthaung. On arrival, transfer to the Andaman Explorer for your cruise to the Mergui Archipelago.

Breakfast included.



DISCOVER

Burma's Undiscovered South Pre Tour - The Strand

The mighty Salween River and Burma's Southern Land is a region of stunning natural beauty, but decades of restrictions on travel have meant few foreigners have had a chance to see its charms with their own eyes. We are pleased to present this opportunity to explore the many areas of interest around of Hpa An, the Salween River, Moulmein and Pegu before flying to Kawthaung to join the Andaman Explorer on your voyage of discovery to the beautiful undiscovered Mergui archipelago.

Rates include:

Accommodation in a shared twin or shared double room with daily breakfast, meals as mentioned in itinerary, English-speaking throughout guide (no guide for cruising extension to Kawthaung), porter fees at Yangon airport, all transfers and excursions with private air-conditioned vehicles, boat in Hpa An and Mawlamyine, entrance fees for the visits as mentioned in the program, water and refreshing towel, flight from Yangoon to Kawthaung included.

Rates exclude:

International ticket to/from Yangon, meals other than mentioned, Visa arrangements for Myanmar, visits not mentioned in the program, drinks and personal expenses, tips and porters at the hotels, credit card fees (4%) or bank transfer fees for non-cash payments, any other items not mentioned.

Note

- Surcharges or compulsory meals may apply for holiday periods like Christmas, New Year, Water Festival, etc.
- All itineraries are subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control including, weather, road or trail conditions, tour attractions, tours and flight schedules.

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

KAWTHAUNG - YANGON

This morning transfer to the Kawthaung airport for your flight to Yangon (transfer to be arranged by Pandaw River Expeditions).

Upon arrival, you will be greeted by your guide who will accompany you as you transfer to your hotel. Yangon, formerly known as Rangoon, is a relatively quiet and charming city. Its impressive colonial and spiritual heritage makes it one of the most fascinating cities in Southeast Asia.

Overnight in Yangon, no meals included.

Distances and journey time: Yangon Airport to Yangon city centre (20 km): 30 – 60 mins

DAY 2

YANGON - HPA AN

After breakfast at the hotel, depart Yangon at 7am this morning for a journey by road to Hpa An, the capital of Kayin state.

Along the way, we'll visit Bayin Nyi cave. There is a beautiful monastery here set in front of a sheer rock wall and surrounded by a large natural spring. It's not uncommon to see young monks going for a swim, still clothed in full monk attire.

We will arrive in Hpa An in the late afternoon. As we approach the city, the mountains surrounding Hpa An will slowly set off from view. There should be time to drop off your bags and take a break for lunch at the hotel before heading into town to visit Shwe Yin Myaw pagoda. This pagoda is the perfect spot to watch the sun set across the Thanlwin River.

Overnight in Hpa An. Breakfast and lunch included.

DAY 3

HPA AN

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As an optional activity, we can stop and have tea or coffee at the tea shop at the edge of the lake. From here, you'll hire one of the local boat men to take us on a tour around the lake (client's sit on the bamboo floor of the boat as there are no seats) and through another cave accessible only by boat. (the boat is valid from Oct to Apr)

After returning to our car, you'll head toward Lumbini Gardens, where you'll see thousands (1150 to be exact) of identical Buddha statues before going to Kyauk Ka Lat. This natural rock sculpture, surrounded by a manmade lake, offers spectacular views of Mt Zwegabin and the surrounding area.

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The last stop will be a sunset visit to Bat Cave. Living up to its name, Bat Cave is home to tens of thousands of bats and located along the bank of the Thanlwin River. As the sun dips in the background, the bats come out in droves and is quite a sight.

Just before dark, head back to our hotel.

Overnight in Hpa An. Breakfast included.

DAY 4

HPA AN - GOLDEN ROCK

Early this morning, depart Hpa An and drive to Kyaikhtiyo, the Golden Rock. In late morning, arrive at Kyaikhtiyo base camp (approximately 4 hrs) and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Travel by local, open-air truck along a winding road (45 minutes) where you will be dropped off a short 5 minutes walk from Golden Rock.

A huge boulder covered by gold leaf and delicately balanced on the edge of a cliff, Golden Rock is one of Myanmar's main pilgrimage sites. The pagoda here is said to hold a hair of the Buddha and Buddhists from across the country come here to pay homage.

Overnight in Kyaikhtiyoe. Breakfast and lunch included.

DAY 5

GOLDEN ROCK - YANGON

Today the journey continues at 08:00. After breakfast, return to base camp by open-air truck and begin the return journey to Yangon.

Breakfast included.



DISCOVER

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We are pleased to present this opportunity to explore the many areas of interest around of Hpa An, the Salween River and Pegu after flying from Kawthaung following your voyage on the Andaman Explorer to the beautiful undiscovered Mergui Archipelago.

Rates include:

Accommodation in a shared twin or shared double room with daily breakfast, meals as mentioned in itinerary, English-speaking throughout guide (no guide for cruising extension to Kawthaung), porter fees at Yangon airport, all transfers and excursions with private air-conditioned vehicles with drivers except Kyaikhtiyo (transfers by open non-air conditioned vehicles), boat in Hpa An, entrance fees for the visits as mentioned in the program, water and refreshing towels.

Rates exclude:

International ticket to/from Yangon, domestic flights, meals other than

mentioned, Visa arrangements for Myanmar, visits not mentioned in the program, drinks and personal expenses, tips and porters at the hotels, credit card fees (2-3%) or bank transfer fees for non-cash payments, any other items not mentioned.

Note

- Surcharges or compulsory meals may apply for holiday periods like Christmas, New Year, Water Festival, etc.
- All itineraries are subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control including, weather, road or trail conditions, tour attractions, tours and flight schedules.

River Conditions Warning!

The rivers you will sail on are subject to seasonal rises and falls of water level, in some places as much as 30 metres. Water levels can change dramatically overnight and a sudden rise can impede our progress upstream considerably and even prevent us from passing under certain bridges. A sudden fall can result in our being unable to get into certain places or go as far upstream as we would hope. Groundings on sandbars are not infrequent and are part of the excitement of any Pandaw expedition. Published itineraries are indicational only and subject to sudden change. In such events alternative itineraries will be provided and we do our best to ensure that if a stop is missed we make up for it with another stop. Passengers are thus forewarned and expected to be flexible and patient. River cruising in Asia can be a dramatic and adventurous experience - not like cruising the controlled waterways of Europe or America. Note also that we operate in areas with little or no developed infrastructure and subject to the strictures of local officialdom. Be prepared for this and it is all more the fun!

Useful Links

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[General Information & Life on Board](#)

[Visa Information](#)