

# VIA - Myanmar Tour, October 2016

## ***See a democratic Myanmar on VIA's study tour Sept. 29-Oct. 16, 2016***

The election in Myanmar in November 2015 produced the first freely and fairly elected government, the National League for Democracy or NLD, since 1990. Aung San Suu Kyi's party won by a landslide but under Myanmar's constitution, she is prevented from serving as president. The NLD government will take office April 1 and Daw Suu Kyi's role remains unclear, although she has stated she will be "above the President."

What happens next in Burma will play out over the next six months. VIA has scheduled its fifth trip to Myanmar for Sept. 29 to Oct. 16, 2016, so travelers can assess the situation themselves. We will meet with leaders and activists for their take on what the political jockeying means for Myanmar, rich in natural resources yet torn by ethnic clashes for half a century, making it the world's longest-running civil war.

This trip also will explore Myanmar's largest state, Shan State, with its ethnically diverse population, remote mountains, and long borders with China's Yunnan province and Thailand. We will trek in Kalaw, enjoy the environmentally fragile beauty of Inle Lake, visit Taunggyi (Shan State's capital) and fly to Kyaing Tong where we will pick from daily hikes to different ethnic villages in the area. We will end our trip in Chiang Mai, the unofficial capital of Burmese exiles in Thailand for several decades.

In Yangon, our guides will be the promising young students of the Pre-Collegiate Program, who await acceptances from colleges in the United States and Southeast Asia. In Mandalay, known for its many Buddhist monasteries, we will visit historic sites and the inspiring Phaung Daw Oo monastery school, which offers free education through high school to 6,000 poor residents of Myanmar's second largest city. Along the way, we will meet with VIA fellows.

VIA's civil society and grassroots development tour is not your average packaged tour of Myanmar. We will have meals in the homes of our Burmese hosts, visit the countryside, stay in nice but not elegant three-star hotels and travel by bus, boat, taxi, airplane and foot as we familiarize ourselves with Myanmar's rich and varied cultures.

**Cost:** \$1,000 VIA donation + \$3,800 trip fee + \$1,135 group airfare (estimate) from SFO = **Total: \$5,935 (estimate)**



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