

BAGAN FROM ABOVE

Experiences | Bagan



OVERVIEW

Images of hot air balloons drifting across Bagan's temple strewn landscape have become synonymous with travel to Myanmar, if not South-East Asia as a whole. With it looking likely that the climbing of temples will be phased out completely, we predict the popularity of this excursion will only increase two, if not three-fold over the coming years, especially whilst there are few alternatives that can provide just as commanding a view. Being one of the lucky few, this experience will see you take to Bagan's skies to put the magnificence of this sacred site into perspective.



PACE

Easy going



TOUR PERIOD

Morning



HIGHLIGHTS

- Whilst waiting for the balloon's canopy to inflate, enjoy a hot beverage and some pastries.
- Learn about the technicalities of a hot-air balloon as a thorough safety briefing is carried out.
- Take to the skies and experience a side of Bagan that's becoming increasingly more difficult to lay eyes on.



ITINERARY IN DETAIL

The operator will contact you the afternoon before the excursion to confirm pick-up time. Depending on location, this will be approximately 05:00.

Shortly after arriving at the launch site, you'll be seated at a makeshift table for a hot beverage and some early morning nibbles. During this time, the pilots and their teams will go about preparing their balloons for inflation.

Due to this experience being one of the most sought-after in the country, do not be surprised if you're joined by lots of other travellers; this is common, and it won't be long until you're split into smaller groups and assigned a pilot.

Once the balloon's canopy has been fully inflated and a comprehensive safety briefing carried out, you'll be invited to climb inside the basket and prepare for take-off. After the balloon has lifted a safe distance from the ground, wave goodbye to the crew and ready your camera for one of the most impressive visual experiences (we hope!) you'll ever witness.

With three companies now operating (Oriental Ballooning, Balloons Over Bagan and Golden Eagle), the first thing you're likely to notice are the groups of red, yellow and green balloons taking off in grand unison. This is a view that never fails to impress, especially when the monuments are blanketed with a light layer of morning mist.

As with any hot-air balloon experience, the direction of the wind dictates the course of your journey. The pilot has the option of climbing or descending into winds travelling in different directions, but they only have so much control over this. One distinct advantage this uncertainty offers is that it helps to ensure that each and every journey is unique; you may end up flying over Dhammayangyi (the largest temple, located in the centre of the archaeological zone), or over Bagan's golf course towards Gubyaukgyi (a temple famous for its well-preserved frescoes and Old Mon calligraphy).

Even if you don't end up flying over the archaeological zone, as is sometimes the case, the seemingly never-ending view of Bagan's surroundings, the glistening surface of the mighty Irrawaddy and myriad local scenes will be sure to keep you enthralled from start to finish.

NOTE: Due to tightened restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Culture, hot air balloons have been advised that they must not take off, or land in any part of Bagan's archaeological zone. This means it is no longer possible to fly as close to the temples and the pilot is required to be extra cautious when it comes to landing. Going off current feedback, it seems to have made little difference, with many client's reporting that this experience was the highlight of their trip.

As viable landing options start to run out, the pilot will start to slowly descend, eventually landing the balloon in a safe clearing. With the crew having followed the balloon for the entire duration, they will be ready and waiting to help control the balloon and pack it away. Whilst this is going on, passengers will be treated to some juice, fresh fruit and a sparkling glass of wine; it is customary for the pilot to pop open a bottle after the successful completion of a flight.

Unless you have subsequent touring planned, you will be transferred back to your accommodation. Those with touring planned will be met by their guide and driver (the hot-air balloon operator's team will communicate with them throughout).



INCLUSIONS

- Transportation to/from hotel in a shared vehicle
- English speaking pilot
- Hot beverage and light snacks
- Glass of sparkling wine



EXCLUSIONS

- Any meals
- Accommodation
- Bagan zone fee
- Any other service not mentioned



NOTES

- This is a shared experience, although it's possible to pay a premium for it to be private.
- Hot-air balloons operate in Bagan from the start of October until mid-April.
- Flights usually start a few minutes after sunrise. The actual take-off time will depend on many factors, including weather conditions, air traffic control permission, local regulations and passenger timeliness.
- Please don't think us rude by asking but it will be necessary for all passengers to provide their body weight at the time of booking. Any passenger that is over 125 kg / 280 pounds will be asked to pay a 100% surcharge on the ticket price. Due to health and safety precautions, there is no way of getting around this.
- Children under the age of 8 years old are not permitted to fly. Children aged between 8 and 16 must be accompanied by an adult.
- In the interest of safety, the hot-air balloon operator reserves the right to cancel or delay flights, and to change launch sites at very short notice.

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