

WILD BURMA

Experiences | Ngapali



OVERVIEW

When people think of hot air ballooning in Myanmar, it's likely that the Bagan experience springs to mind. Although there's no denying this is still one of the best classic experiences on offer, due to the large number of tourists it attracts, it may not appeal to those looking for something more personal and exclusive in nature. In late 2015, Oriental Ballooning expanded their services to include flights over Ngapali, a destination perhaps more famous for its seafood restaurants, white sand and emerald blue waters. Set up by the same pilots that helped the BBC capture overhead jungle footage for Wild Burma, a three-part documentary released in 2013, those lucky enough to do this will get access to a splendidly remote side of Myanmar fewer than 0.1% of travellers will ever lay eyes on. Thought Ngapali was just about sun, sea and sand? Think again.



PACE

Easy going



TOUR PERIOD

Morning



HIGHLIGHTS

- Transfer to the launch site using remote roads – this provides a great sense of adventure.
- 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 Myanmar very few will.
- Land in a random spot, thus ensuring you'll return home with your very own story to tell.



ITINERARY IN DETAIL

At the crack of dawn, long before breakfast, Oriental Ballooning's shuttle bus will pick you up from the hotel. Depending on the location of the launch site, you will be driven for approximately 30-45 minutes to a remote spot close to Thandwe town.

On arrival, a member of Oriental Ballooning's crew will provide a friendly introduction before carrying out a comprehensive health and safety briefing. They will then prepare the balloon for flight, leaving you to enjoy a hot drink and some light snacks. As soon as the balloon's ready, you'll be summoned into the basket to prepare for take-off.

One of the highlights of this experience is that the landscape is ever changing and you won't know which route the balloon's headed until the day of the flight; this will depend on the direction of the wind. You may fly towards the coast, adjacent to it, or perhaps further inland towards the region's vast jungle.

The area is also home to a small number of hilltop stupas, which look particularly picturesque when surrounded by patches of mist. As we hope you'll agree, the symmetry of the design is much better appreciated when viewed from above.

Birdwatching enthusiasts may get the chance to identify some rare and exotic species; these are usually possible to spot as the balloon drifts low towards the jungle's canopy. In the past, there have even been sightings of wild macaque, although they're typically found much deeper inside.

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.

Transfer back to your hotel in time for a late breakfast and some relaxation.



INCLUSIONS

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



EXCLUSIONS

- Any meals
- Accommodation



NOTES

- Oriental Balloon's baskets and canopies are made by Cameron Balloons Ltd. Bristol (UK). All of the pilots have UK-issued licenses.
- This is a shared experience, although it's possible to pay a premium for it to be private.
- Hot-air balloons operate in Ngapali from the start of November until mid-March.
- 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, Oriental Ballooning reserves the right to cancel or delay flights, and to change launch sites at very short notice.

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