

# BIKES, BOATS, TRAINS AND CRAFT BEER

Experiences | Yangon



## OVERVIEW

In partnership with Uncharted Horizons, Tour Mandalay bring you Bikes, Boats, Trains and Craft Beer, an action-packed full day tour that incorporates some of the most popular forms of local transport and Yangon region's best off the beaten track sites. Waking at the crack of dawn, we'll cycle from downtown to Dala, crossing the Yangon River using a public ferry. Proceed to explore the satellite township, whilst cycling through luscious green rice paddies, high-fiving excited locals and feasting on snacks at a social enterprise business that specialises in upcycling plastic waste. Pedal your way around an island village that sees few tourists, before embarking upon another boat journey back into downtown and the Uncharted Horizon office. After having recharged your batteries with a slap-up Burmese lunch, transfer to Yangon's central station in time for the next train to Insein. Riding this short section will give you the opportunity to slow down the pace and travel shoulder to shoulder with the commercial capital's everyday commuters. Conclude the day with a thirst-quenching pint of Myanmar produced craft beer at the Burbrit Brewery in North Dagon.



### PACE

Medium



### TOUR PERIOD

Full day



## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Mountain bike through downtown Yangon, Dala and the satellite township's green surrounds
- Enjoy homemade banana cake and light refreshments at Chu Chu, a small social enterprise business that upcycles plastic waste
- Take a short ride on Yangon's rickety-rackety circle line as we travel into the northern suburbs alongside everyday commuters
- Conclude the day with a tasting set of craft brews at the Burbrit Brewery in North Dagon



## **ITINERARY IN DETAIL**

Meet with your guide at the crack of dawn as we transfer you to Uncharted Horizons' office in time for a 07:30 bike fitting and safety briefing. Shortly after this, temporarily say goodbye to your Tour Mandalay guide; for this part of the tour, we'll be handing you over to one of Uncharted Horizons' experienced adventure guides.

Having familiarised yourself with your bike, set out into the heart of downtown for a ten-minute ride to Pansodan Jetty. Whilst the roads are relatively devoid of traffic, cycle past and admire the grandeur of the Secretariat Building, once the administrative seat of British Burma, and the once prosperous office buildings on Pansodan Road.

If you're still feeling sleepy, fear not, arriving at Pansodan Jetty terminal will be sure to awaken the senses. Bustling with thousands of river commuters from dawn until dusk, a visit here's a great way to experience a side of Yangon very few international tourists ever lay eyes on. On arrival, kick back the bike stands and wait for the next public ferry to Dala.

Despite the township being a stone's throw away from Yangon's bustling downtown hub, Dala is still largely rural and undeveloped; this is due to it only being accessible by ferry, or a two-hour car journey. There are plans to build a USD168 million cross-river bridge, which the government hopes to complete by 2021; when this happens, the township's likely to urbanise rapidly.

Once across Yangon River, reconvene with your guide who'll provide a quick low-down on the rules of the road out here; as we pull out of the jetty, traffic conditions are likely to be 'locally hectic', so please make sure you abide by these and stay close to the guide. It won't be long until we're free of the honking and cycling in unison along Dala's quiet backstreets, canals and rice paddy fields. The frantic nature will eventually resume however, when we stop for a stroll through the stalls that make up Dala's bustling morning market; from live chickens to bouquets of flowers, you'll find a range of produce on sale here.

Not long after leaving the market behind, stop for a break at Chu Chu's workshop; hidden on a quiet residential street, this has been partially constructed using plastic bottles and old car tyres. Chu Chu, which got its name from the Myanmar word for a plastic bag, is a social enterprise venture set up by Cesvi, an Italian NGO keen to find treasure in the heaps of trash that litter Yangon's alleys and gutters. By upcycling this discarded material and turning it into colourful crafts, the business aims not only to clean up the streets, but also to provide training, employment and a regular source of income to the otherwise disadvantaged families involved. Knowing this should hopefully help the banana bread and freshly brewed coffee served here to taste extra good.

Continue cycling and high-fiving children (you'll soon find out what we mean by this!) until you reach a small jetty where a boat will be waiting. After loading the bikes and clambering onboard, we'll be shuttled across to the motor vehicle-free paradise that is Seikgyi-kanaungto island. Whilst weaving in and out of humans and livestock, spend the next hour or so exploring the island's narrow alleyways, bamboo groves, street markets and boat repair yards. Having made our way to the other side, take another boat back across Yangon River to Wardan Jetty (located west of downtown).

For the final leg of our tour by bicycle, pedal half the length of Strand Road, home to myriad colonial relics including the New Law Courts (now Rosewood Hotel), the half-bombed Accountant-General's Office (now Yangon Division Court) and the much-talked-about Strand Hotel. For part of this journey, we'll be required to travel alongside the road until it's possible to turn off onto a make-shift bike lane.

Once back at Uncharted Horizons' office, enjoy a cold beverage in an air-conditioned space before meeting back up with your Tour Mandalay guide again. Having surely worked up an appetite, drive to a restaurant of your choosing for lunch (not included in cost). Nearby you have Root Kitchen & Bar, a restaurant that serves Wa-style cuisine; whilst it's geographically part of Myanmar, Wa State is considered a special region with the government being autonomous and the working language being Mandarin. Although the complexities of the politics and history are difficult to get across in a sentence, their spicy cuisine is thankfully much easier to digest. If that doesn't take your fancy, how about stopping at the popular Rangoon Teahouse, which provides one of the best organic and non-oily introductions to Myanmar cuisine around. Your guide will of course be able to recommend alternate options depending on your preference.

After lunch, transfer to Yangon Central Railway Station. The current station was built in 1954, designed by Burmese architect Sithu U Tin, who was also the same person responsible for the of construction Yangon City Hall and the Independence Monument in Maha Bandula Park. With many residents still relying on this 100-year old plus rail network to get from A to B, a step inside is one of the best ways to get a true sense of what life is really like for people beyond Shwedagon Pagoda and the city's crumbling colonial facades.

Once at the station, board the next available train and start your slow and clunky journey around Yangon's surprisingly green suburbs. From children playing chinlone (a traditional sport played with a small wicker ball) to monks enthusiastically conversing on station benches, it's possible to witness an abundance of local life, culture and suburban contrast. It's all rather hypnotic, that is, until one of the local snack sellers loudly announces what goodies he, or she has in stock, whilst continuing to parade up and down the carriage's narrow aisles. With many market sellers also using this as an affordable way of transporting produce, don't be surprised if you're then asked to make some room for a big bag of vegetables.

After travelling for approximately one and half hours, alight at Insein station, home to the prison that gained notoriety for housing thousands of political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, various student leaders, Win Tin and U Tin Oo. The “government” claims that all political prisoners have been released, but according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), in August 2018, 18 still remained and 254 were awaiting trial. Unfortunately, it won’t be possible to stop off at the prison as it’s still operational, but for many Myanmar people, it’s a symbol of resilience, the 8888 uprising, the NLD and the ongoing struggle for a true democracy.

From Insein, continue your exploration of Yangon’s northern suburbs as we drive to Burbrit Brewery in North Dagon (approximately 30-minutes south east of Insein). Here we’ll stop to enjoy a tasting set of their best craft brews ranging from the Rangoon Blonde to the Burma Pale Ale. Any drinks consumed after this will need to be purchased separately.

When you’re ready, return to your hotel in time for dinner.



### INCLUSIONS

- Transportation to/from hotel in an air-conditioned vehicle
- A privately guided Uncharted Horizons ‘Island and Rivers’ tour
- Snacks and refreshments at Chu Chu
- Circle Line train ticket
- A tasting flight at Burbrit Brewery
- English speaking tour guide (for other languages, please enquire)
- Drinking water and hand towel



### EXCLUSIONS

- Any meals



### NOTES

- Uncharted Horizons will provide you with a disclaimer, which you’ll be required to sign in order to carry out the tour. It is recommended that you take out a comprehensive insurance policy to cover you for this activity. On a few occasions you’ll be required to cycle on busy roads. Vehicles aside, there will also be unexpected obstacles such as humans, animals, cracks / holes in pavements and discarded objects lying in the way.
- Life jackets will be provided on the small boats, which we would advise you wear
- The cycling tour with Uncharted Horizons will run from 07:30 to 12:30 (this includes time for bike fitting, guide introduction etc)
- The cycling can be handled by anyone who is healthy, knows how to ride a bike and has excellent road awareness
- The terrain is flat and mostly concrete, with a few dirt paths
- Prior to the tour, we would recommend packing a pair of sunglasses, sun cream, comfortable shoes (no flip flops), shorts, clothing suitable for sweaty conditions (but not too revealing), a bit of local currency (just in case you want to carry out any ethical souvenir shopping at Chu Chu) and a camera
- Please bear in mind that shoulders and knees will need to be covered if you plan to enter any temples, pagodas or monasteries

- A refillable aluminium bottle and water will be provided; this can be filled up at water refill stations as your cycle around
- Lunch is not included, but we'll be happy to escort you anywhere you wish to go
- If possible, we'd recommend riding on the older non-air-conditioned carriages on the circle line, but the government is in the process of phasing these out. They are still possible to board, but the timing's not always convenient. Feel free to discuss options with your guide.
- The cost of this tour includes a tasting flight at Burbrit Brewery; any drinks consumed after this will need to be purchased separately
- If you plan to stay at the brewery until late, please let the guide know and they can go home and help you arrange a taxi

[www.tourmandalay.travel](http://www.tourmandalay.travel)

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