

# LIVING IRRAWADDY DOLPHIN PROJECT (FULL DAY)

Experiences | Mandalay



## OVERVIEW

Operated in conjunction with the Living Irrawaddy Dolphin Project, this full day experience will see you set sail north of Mandalay to explore the lower section of the government protected Irrawaddy Dolphin conservation zone; established in 2005, this currently spans 100-kilometres of the Irrawaddy river from the towns of Male to Shwegu. Whilst the purpose of this is not necessarily to spot dolphins, although there's still a chance, we'll learn everything you need to know about this critically endangered mammal and meet with the cooperative fishermen whose lives are mutually dependant. As part of the programme, we'll stop at one of the seven fishing villages that still practise the technique of cooperative fishing and enjoy a substantial locally sourced and prepared lunch.



## PACE

Easy-going



## TOUR PERIOD

Full day



## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Put money into the hands of the cooperative fishing communities who enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the mammals and protect their very existence
- Learn how to communicate with dolphins and cast a traditional fishing net
- Escape the hustle and bustle of Mandalay and leisurely sail up and down the Irrawaddy on a privately hired boat
- Feast on a locally sourced and prepared lunch
- Experience a side of Myanmar very few witness



## **ITINERARY IN DETAIL**

At approximately 07:30, you'll be picked up from your hotel (or a place of your choosing) by a dedicated Living Irrawaddy Dolphin Project guide and escorted to Mandalay jetty; the Living Irrawaddy Dolphin Project is a social enterprise business set up to create benefits for communities and boost nationwide conservation efforts.

No thanks to electric fishing, mercury poisoning, accidental entanglement in fishing nets and habitat degradation, it is no surprise that Myanmar's Irrawaddy Dolphin population is close to extinction; the number is currently estimated to be somewhere in the region of 80. A small handful of organisations including Living Irrawaddy Dolphin Project, are working closely with seven cooperative fishing villages (Singu, Myitkangyi, Sin Kyun, Aye Kyun, Sein Pankon, Myaysun and Intaung) with the aim of increasing awareness on the matter and providing support to the small handful of skilled fishermen that work symbiotically with these precious mammals on a daily basis.

Having arrived at Mandalay jetty, board the colourful Living Irrawaddy boat and make yourself comfortable as your guide runs through some important health and safety information and provides a brief overview of today's arrangements; it's important to stress that these are subject to change as the itinerary is heavily dependent on weather conditions and prior dolphin sightings.

Leisurely cruising upstream, it won't be long until we pass the half-finished Mingun Pahtodawgyi; if King Bodawpaya had completed construction of this, it would have been the tallest temple in the world. However, on the back of an astrologer's advice, the king halted the build in the belief that he would die if it was ever finished. Superstition aside, this worked in the king's favour as, in 1839, a strong earthquake rattled the structure so intensely it left huge cracks along the walls and parts of the corners collapsed. If you're interested and time permits, we can always stop off here before returning to Mandalay later this afternoon.

At approximately 09:00, we'll cast anchor at the village of Sin Kyun, the closest cooperative fishing village to Mandalay; unable to rely on fishing to make a living all year round, the residents of Sin Kyun are also renowned for the sale and production of traditional bamboo hats. Learn about this first-hand and mingle with the villagers as they go about their everyday life.

Returning back to the river, our next stop will be the village of Seinpankon, Myaysun or Aye Kyun (again, this will depend on prior dolphin sightings, weather and river conditions). Being a couple of hours away, and now that we're well and truly in the dolphin conservation zone, this will be a good time to get out your binoculars and start searching for this ever-elusive, round-nosed mammal.

*NOTE: Dolphin sightings cannot be guaranteed, but we'll be working closely with the cooperative fishermen to find them in a sensitive manner.*

Upon arrival at the village in question, meet with your hosts who'll serve up a delicious locally sourced "fisherman's lunch".

With your appetite now satisfied, reconvene with the cooperative fishermen who'll tell you everything you need to know about the Irrawaddy Dolphins, their symbiotic relationship and the ongoing struggle to steer them away from the brink of extinction. The fishermen will then demonstrate how to how to prepare and cast a traditional fishing net, before handing over for you to try. Seeing as the technique takes more time than we have to master, it's likely the experience will provide many laughs and great photo opportunities for all involved.

Wanting to return to Mandalay by dusk, wave farewell to the village and gently cruise back downstream. With no more village stops scheduled, the remainder of the journey is free for you to relax, admire the passing scenery and carry out a bit more dolphin spotting.

Before returning to Mandalay jetty, you'll have an option to stop off at the cracked Mingun temple (Mingun Pahtodawgyi), which we passed by earlier this morning. Construction began in 1790, with King Bodawpaya aiming for it to be the tallest in the world at 150-metres. Equally as grand is the 13-foot tall bronze bell that can be found nearby; weighing 90-tonnes, it has been recorded as the heaviest functioning bell in the world at several times in history.

Once anchored back down at Mandalay jetty, return to your accommodation and freshen up in time for dinner.



## **INCLUSIONS**

- Transportation to/from hotel in an air-conditioned vehicle
- USD5 donation towards the Irrawaddy Dolphin conservation fund
- Private full day use of the Living Irrawaddy boat
- Water, tea and fruit on boat
- Lunch at a cooperative fishing village
- Mingun zone fee (non-refundable)
- English speaking tour guide (for other languages, please enquire)



## **EXCLUSIONS**

- Premium beverages served on-board Living Irrawaddy boat (soda, beer and wine)
- Any meals other than lunch



## **NOTES**

- This tour is operated in partnership with the Living Irrawaddy Dolphin Project, a Travelife-certified social business
- Dolphin sightings cannot be guaranteed, but we'll be working closely with the cooperative fishermen to find them in a sensitive manner
- A life jacket will be provided on the Living Irrawaddy boat. If you are unable to swim, we would advise that you wear at all times. If opportunity permits to ride on a smaller fishing boat, we would like to request that you wear as standard.
- Please do not lean on railings on the Living Irrawaddy Dolphin Boat. Diving off the boat and running onboard is strictly prohibited.
- When getting on and off the boat, a portable rail will be held up by the staff for you to hold onto. Do not attempt to embark or disembark without this.
- We will be outside for most of the day; packing a hat and sunscreen is advised
- It is recommended that you drink plenty of water to stay hydrated; to reduce single-use plastic waste, reusable water bottles will be provided. Do not, under any circumstance, drink water from the sink in the boat's bathroom, or from the wash basins in the village.

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

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