

# UNCHARTED THANLYIN

Experiences | Yangon



## OVERVIEW

Explore Thanlyin with the help of Myanmar's number one adventure specialist, Uncharted Horizons. Not only is this cycling tour one of the most culturally diverse in the Yangon region, but with Thanlyin township having come to prominence 500-years-ago, it has an unbelievably rich history with tales of Portuguese mercenaries and a tragic love story (involving a crocodile, a prince and a princess) dominating the narrative.



### PACE

Medium



### TOUR PERIOD

Half day



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Mountain bike through Thanlyin, a township overlooked by most international visitors
- Explore the ruins of a Catholic church, the compound of a mosque, a striking Indian temple and a welcoming nunnery
- Enjoy immense contrast between urban sprawl and rural bliss



## ITINERARY IN DETAIL

At approximately 06:30, you will be transferred from Yangon to Thanlyin township where we'll meet with an Uncharted Horizon adventure guide – they will be waiting at the rendezvous point with your mountain bike, helmet and refillable water bottles. En route, your guide will provide you with a brief overview of Thanlyin's history, including the tragic love story of Princess Shin Mway Loon and Prince Min Nandar.

The first stop will be Thanlyin's historic highlight, the elaborately named, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church. Built in 1750, it was commissioned by an Italian missionary, Paolo Nerini, and funded by an Armenian, Nicolai de Agualar. The church is thought to have stood for six years before being destroyed by Alaung Paya, one of Myanmar's three greatest monarchs along with Anawrahta and Bayinnaung – this is due to them being the only three to have ever unified the country. Since then, the red brick ruins have stood almost untouched, making this the oldest surviving example of early European settlement in the country.

*Note: There are in fact records of Europeans arriving as early as the 1400s. The Portuguese adventurer and mercenary, Felipe de Brito e Nicote, also became governor of Thanlyin in 1599 – this was a reward for successfully serving Min Razagyi, a Rakhine king who ruled parts of Myanmar from 1593 to 1612.*

Cycle on through a leafy backstreet, lined with long-neglected, but nevertheless grand, colonial mansions. One can only imagine what these would have looked like in their full, early 19<sup>th</sup> century glory. Thanks to time, many boast wonderfully mature gardens, which look breathtakingly serene when lit with the first rays of golden morning light. At the end of this street is a severely weathered, white-washed Hindu shrine – this is just one of the many monuments we'll see today that showcases Thanlyin's proud religious and cultural diversity.

Continue on via a lake and slightly built-up residential area until you arrive at Paanch Peer Dargah mosque. The resident imams and caretakers are incredible welcoming and would be more than happy to have a casual chinwag should you have the time. Inside the compound is a large cemetery, with an assortment of colourful and glittering tombstones – with some having been crafted out of baking trays, it's well-worth taking a sneak peak inside.

*Note: Only men are able to walk inside the cemetery with bare feet. Apologies in advance to anyone this may offend – this is a long-standing custom which we need to respect.*

Next up, it's time to refuel with some noodles at a popular local teahouse. We'd recommend ordering what's arguably Myanmar's most famous breakfast staple, the tastier-than-it-sounds, mohinga fish broth soup. Unlimited cups of tea can also be enjoyed free-of-charge, or you can purchase a range of premium beverages ranging from fresh coconut to coffee.

Having cooled down and recharged your batteries, pedal a short distance towards Thanlyin's bustling centre. The highlights here are a impeccably restored colonial mansion—now a government office—and the large market. From pungent herbs to exotic fruits, this is the place to come if you're looking to stock up your pantry cupboard.

Leave the thronging vibe of the market behind as we make our way towards Thanlyin's suburbs – here, life is greener, more spread out and reminiscent of Myanmar's central region.

En route, stop to admire the dazzling Jagannath Hindu temple, our favourite of its kind in the region. If the caretaker's around, and assuming no private ceremonies are taking place, the opportunity will be there to open the gates and step inside. Just a stone's throw from here is large yet inviting, nunnery – the resident nun's here are always eager to converse.

*Note: Stops at the religious sites are entirely optional. Should you wish to skip, your guide will be more than happy to continue cycling.*

We'll then cycle on a mixture of roads and dirt tracks until we arrive at the Thanlyin Thabarwa Centre, a non-profit meditation centre that strives to help those most in need. It markets itself as a "home for all", providing food, shelter, education and healthcare to those less fortunate in the community free-of-charge.

Navigate your way back to the rendezvous point, where your Tour Mandalay transfer will be waiting.



## INCLUSIONS

- Transportation to/from hotel in an air-conditioned vehicle
- A privately guided Uncharted Horizons 'Uncharted Thanlyin' tour
- A bowl of noodles at a teashop



## EXCLUSIONS

- Meals not mentioned
- Anything not mentioned



## NOTES

- This ride is approximately 30-kilometres in length;
- In the case of an unforeseen event e.g. a religious festival, or road closure, the routing of the itinerary may change without notice;
- 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;
- We will need to provide Uncharted Horizons with your height in advance so that they can arrange a bike that's suitably sized;
- We'd recommend starting the tour as early as possible to avoid the often-sweltering midday heat – this will mean leaving your Yangon hotel before 06:30 at the latest;
- 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 and a camera;
- Please bear in mind that shoulders and knees will need to be covered if you plan to enter any of the featured religious sites;
- There is a cemetery in the mosque, which only men are able to enter – apologies in advance, this is a long-standing custom which we need to respect;

- A refillable aluminium bottle and water will be provided – this can be filled up at water refill stations as you cycle around;
- From recovering drug addicts to homeless people, the Thanlyin Thabarwa Centre takes care of people from all walks of life. This is a raw, eye-opening experience, but one we feel's important to share with our travellers;
- Lunch is not included, but we'll be happy to recommend some restaurants nearby after the tour with Uncharted Horizons concludes.

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

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