

Myanmar 2018 brochure

Myanmar (Burma) Orchid and Culture Tour

First Orchid Tour to Myanmar Open to the General Public

Special Discount - See Below!



Top: wild *Paphiopedilum bellatulum*, Shan State, Myanmar

Bottom: Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon (Rangoon)

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From the ancient, golden covered Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon (Rangoon) that glitters almost as brightly as the sun to the underexplored, orchid rich, jungle-clad mountains in Shan State (eastern Myanmar), this is a memorable journey through mainland southeast Asia's largest and most diverse country (in terms of both nature and people). Prepare to be greeted by genuinely warm, friendly people while discovering beautiful orchid species in the wild as well as peoples' gardens, ancient temples, timeless villages and botanical gardens. You will also get to know the culture of a few of the some 130 ethnic groups which call Myanmar home, such as the Shan, Pa'O and Intha and others.

Orchid species we should see include: *Paphiopedilum bellatulum*, *Paphiopedilum charlesworthii*, *Paphiopedilum parishii*, *Vanda coerulea*, *Thunia alba* and various terrestrials
Dendrobium, Coelogyne, Pholidota and terrestrials



This trip is in the low-tourist season, meaning much less other visitors around and, as most orchid trips to the region take place during the high season (December-March) we will see orchids not usually seen in bloom on tours to east and southeast Asia, such as *P. bellatulum*. The landscape will be a lush, deep green, with virtually all tropical fruits and vegetables in season. Local food will therefore be particularly good at this time. The occasional rains do not occur all the time and therefore will generally not cause us any inconvenience, even though it is the rainy season. Though the variety of orchids in bloom is less than during the dry season, there are definitely advantages of going during the rainy season!



Top: Burmese feast
Bottom: *Rhynchosylis retusa*

Day 1 – Arrive in Yangon (Rangoon)

Upon arriving in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city and home of the legendary Shwedagon Pagoda, you will be checked into your accommodation and allowed to rest until all group participants arrive. Once everybody arrives we will have a meeting, followed by further rest and an organised welcome meal consisting of traditional Burmese specialities.

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Shwedagon Pagoda



Downtown Yangon (Rangoon)



Throne of the last Burmese king in the museum

Day 2 – Exploring Yangon (Rangoon)

After a good, hearty breakfast, we will begin exploring Yangon with the Shwedagon Pagoda, a UNESCO world heritage site and perhaps the most famous attraction in Myanmar. Built over 1000 years ago, its golden clad exterior shines as bright as the sun, whilst the dozens of intricate shrines of both stone and meticulously carved wood that surround it will delight you. Afterwards, we will look at the high trees outside the complex, for they harbour not an insignificant number of naturally occurring *Rhynchostylis retusa*!

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The Strand Hotel, Yangon

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Once we have had a good look at both Shwedagon and the orchids, we will proceed to visit the National Museum of Myanmar. This is an excellent place to learn about Myanmar and its culture, with displays dedicated to many of the country's ethnic minorities. You will be given some free time to wander around at your own leisure to take in the exhibits, which also include original court attire and artefacts once belonging to Myanmar's last king and queen.

Afterwards, we will head to The Strand Hotel in Yangon's downtown for a late 3pm lunch. Opened in 1901 and once run by the legendary Sarkies Brothers, businessmen of Armenian descent who also simultaneously owned the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, it has retained many original features and furniture. You will feel like you have stepped back into the bygone days of colonial Myanmar, when The Strand was known as one of the most luxurious hotels from where the most eminent European and American guests would stay upon disembarking at Yangon's harbour.

After finishing lunch, which will be your preference of either classic British or Myanmar style high tea, we will embark for a general bus tour of Yangon.

As you take in the monumental colonial architecture of the 19th and 20th centuries-Yangon has more colonial heritage than any other major city in southeast Asia - you will also see lesser known gems such as the Armenian church and the Jewish synagogue. The former is surprisingly the city's oldest, even older than Yangon's oldest Protestant church, for Armenian trade and settlement in the region has a history that goes back many centuries.

An optional visit (for those who want to buy souvenirs) will be paid to Bogyoke (Aung San) Market, a beautiful building famous since the colonial days for stocking seemingly everything from every corner of the country. It is certainly one place where you could buy souvenirs.

At the end of the day we will enjoy an optional light meal, with the rest of the evening given over to rest and relaxation as we have an early start the following day.

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Top: Taukkyan World War II Memorial
Bottom: Shan State countryside

Day 3 - Transfer to Shan State

Leaving at 7.30am, we will begin our transfer to Shan State, a vast region of rolling, jungle clad mountains. Immediately to the north of Yangon we will stop at the Taukkyan War Memorial Cemetery. Known as one of the most beautiful war memorials in the world, this stunning yet solemn place houses the remains of thousands of British soldiers who died fighting the Japanese during World War II. Particularly intriguing are the graves and memorials to the many black African soldiers, who constituted not an insignificant number of British troops in Asia.

The rest of the day will be spent travelling to Shan State (which will take around 10 hours in total). There will be plenty of stops and food along the way.



Calanthe triplicata, Shan State



Above: *Malaxis latifolia*, and an obscure white terrestrial orchid in Shan State

Day 4 - Taunggyi

We will explore the countryside around Taunggyi, Shan State's capital, where we will see a selection of terrestrial orchids. These include *Malaxis ophrydis*, *Calanthe triplicata*, various *Nervillea* and others. Many *Dendrobium*, *Coelogyne* and various epiphytes will also be seen, though most will not be in flower. Lunch and dinner will be enjoyed at local restaurants.



Above: traditional fishing at Inle Lake and extracting lotus thread

Day 5 – Inle Lake

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After breakfast we will enjoy a day at Inle Lake, a UNESCO world heritage site one of the most beautiful lakes in southeast Asia. You will tour the lake on boats reserved just for us. We will stop at a lotus textile factory - weaving with lotus being unique in the world to this part of Myanmar - followed by visit to a family run silversmith where everything is handcrafted in the traditional way as it has been for many generations.

You will learn about the Intha, the traditional inhabitants of the lake, and marvel at their lake houses and floating gardens-much of their food is indeed grown in the water! We will also visit traditional lotus thread weavers-unique to Myanmar-and Intha silversmiths. There will be ample opportunities to purchase both kinds of craft.



Discovery of *Paphiopedulum bellatulum*



Kalaw Heritage Hotel

Day 6 – *Paphiopedilum bellatulum* village and transfer to Kalaw

Today we will transfer to Kalaw, a British colonial era town an hour's drive south-west of Inle Lake. On the way we will stop at a village where *Paphiopedilum bellatulum* grows in the wild. At least several individuals should be in flower, so have your cameras ready! Lunch will then be enjoyed in Kalaw town, after which you will have the rest of the day off to rest and explore at your own leisure. Kalaw has retained its old, colonial charm with its large concentration of British style houses, churches and public buildings. You may also visit the railway station, with its still functional original tracks and architecture. Take it easy, and enjoy this home away from home.



Vanda coerulea, pink form



Pholidota species, with an *Oberonia* to the left and *Vanda* to the right

Day 7 – Jungle Stroll

After driving to a beautiful area of jungle that is ringed by striking mountains, we will walk through ancient woodland of huge, tall trees and dissected by clear streams. Countless orchids, both in and out of flower, are abundant. These include *Vanda coerulea*, *Bulbophyllum lobii*, *Thunia alba* and many others. We will go slowly, making sure to take many pictures.

This particular walk is suitable for all, and afterwards we shall enjoy lunch in the field before heading back to Kalaw to rest and enjoy an organised dinner.



Day 8 – Jungle Trek

Today, for those who feel able, will return to the jungle for a full day walk deeper into the forest. More orchid species, including countless *Bulbophyllum*, *Vanda* and others, will be seen. As this walk is harder and lengthier, some level of fitness will be required and it is therefore optional.

A packed lunch will be enjoyed in the jungle, after which we will continue walking.

We will finish and transfer back to Kalaw, where an organised meal awaits.



Top: View from Mandalay Hill

Bottom: Monks strolling near Mandalay

Day 9 - Mandalay

After breakfast we will begin our transfer to Mandalay (a journey of about 5 hours), Myanmar's second city and cultural capital and site of the famous poem "Mandalay" by Rudyard Kipling. A rest, meal and perhaps a gentle stroll (for those who feel up to it) around town will be taken later in the evening.



Top: Kandawgyi National Botanical Garden, modelled after British botanical gardens

Below: *Paphiopedilum charlesworthii* in Shan State

Day 10 – Pyin Oo Lwin

The morning will see us go on a day trip to Pyin Oo Lwin (Maymyo). Established by the British as a colonial “hill station” in the 19th century, Pyin Oo Lwin quickly increased in both size and importance to become their summer capital every year when the heat in lowland Yangon got too oppressive. Much old charm remains, with the town is still dominated by striking British style houses and public buildings, complete with horse drawn carriages which can be ridden (for a price).

Our star attraction here will be the Kandawgyi Botanical Garden in the town, a 177-hectare site full of floral treasures. Like the town, the botanical garden was established by the British and has continuously housed an indigenous Burmese orchid collection from the outset. Hundreds of Burmese orchid species are now housed in the collection, including favourites such as *Paphiopedilum charlesworthii*, *P. parishii*, *Vanda coerulea* and many others. We will admire these specimens, as well as countless other plant species from both Myanmar and the world.

Once we have had plenty of time to look around the gardens, we shall soak in the old charm of Pyin Oo Lwin’s streets before going to a dinner. Afterwards, we shall return to Mandalay.



Stone temple at Inwa (Ava)

Day 11

Our last day will be one of gentle sightseeing, notably going to the ruins of Inwa (Ava) just outside Mandalay. Inwa was the capital of Myanmar from the 14th century until its destruction by a catastrophic earthquake in March 1839, prompting the construction of modern Mandalay nearby. Many of its grand temples and public buildings are still well preserved, and you will have an opportunity to soak in the atmosphere of this ancient place and its bygone era. We will also explore Mandalay from our coach and enjoy a stroll around its centre.

A final farewell dinner will follow.



Sunset over the Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon

Day 12 - Transfer

Those not joining on any of the post-tour trip or staying longer in Myanmar will transfer with the coach back to Yangon. Here you will check into your hotel, enjoy free time and rest in preparation for your onward journey. An airport pickup will be arranged from your hotel the next morning.

THE END

Special First Time Tour Discount: first 5 people to book get 20% off!

What is included:

- Airport transfers
- No charge for single room occupancy
- High quality accommodation
- Breakfast on all days
- Lunch and evening meals on most days where specified
- Minibus transport with air-conditioning
- Guides, tours and admission fees to various attractions and historic sites
- Vegetarian meal options

What is not included:

- Flights
- Personal insurance
- Spending money
- Visa fees (easy and quick to obtain online-turnaround of 3 days!)

Dates: 23 July - 4 August 2018

Price per person: £2200 (An option to pay in instalments is available; please get in touch for more details)

£200 non-refundable deposit is required to secure your place, and final payment must be received **no later** than one month prior to departure.

Please note: The above itinerary is fixed, and we are going at the peak of the orchid flowering season. However, absolute guarantee that every single species/variety/hybrid will be in flower cannot be promised, due to possible freak weather occurrences etc.

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About Me



My name is Dino Zelenika and I was born in Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina in 1991. I spent the entire 1990s war until its end in 1995 in the Balkans and emigrated with my mother and English stepfather to the United Kingdom in 1999. Plants have been a passion for me since I could walk and talk, and orchids have fascinated me ever since I saw a white *Phalaenopsis* for sale in my native Mostar at the age of 6! I have an undergraduate and MA degrees in history from the University of Bristol. Since my first trip to Myanmar in December 2014, I have been enchanted by the country and its nature, especially orchids. In 2017 my Burmese friend in Yangon, Thant Sin, and I joined forces to start a conservation project and botanical tours to the country.

An accredited British Orchid Council judge since 2013, contributor to The Orchid Review and speaker at the 21st World Orchid Conference in Johannesburg, I currently maintain a collection of over 300 orchids, mainly species. I have been researching wild orchids of Bosnia & Herzegovina since I was 18 years old, as well as its history and culture. From late 2014 I spent 6 months working in orchid conservation in Laos, significantly broadening my horizons and taught me many lessons for my work and research in Myanmar. My other passions in life are good food and travel. I also speak Mandarin Chinese.

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