

A large, light gray outline map of Burma (Myanmar) serves as a background for the title. The map shows the country's irregular borders and includes a cluster of small circles in the southern region, likely representing major cities or islands.

Report on Tourism in Burma

March 2011



Info Birmanie

74, rue Notre Dame des champs

75006 Paris

www.info-birmanie.org

e-mail : infobirmanie@gmail.com

1. Introduction (p.1)
- 2 . The History of Tourism in Burma (p.2)
3. The issue of tourism in Burma (p.3 to 9)
 - ❖ The Reasons for a Call to Boycott
 - ❖ Tourism in Burma : Illusions & Realities
4. An Analysis of the Junta's Economic Supports (p.10 to 14)
 - ❖ Revenues
 - ❖ Transport
 - ❖ Hotels
- 5 . Accessible Tourist Zones (p.15 to 22)
6. Travel Agencies Ethics (p.23 to 25)
 - ❖ The Absence of Ethics
 - ❖ Which Agency to Choose?
 - ❖ Which Travel Guide to Use?
7. The Official Statistics of Tourism (p.26 to 27)
8. Conclusion (p.28)
9. Practical Advice (p.29)
- Chronology (p.30 to 33)

1. Introduction

'Burma will be here for many years, so tell your friends to visit us later. Visiting now is tantamount to condoning the regime.'

The above statement, which dates from 1999, is a famous quote of Aung San Suu Kyi, Laureate of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize and leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the main Burmese opposition party.

It reminds us that since the call to boycott launched in the mid-90s by the Burmese opponents of the military dictatorship, travelling in Burma remains a moral dilemma that is still relevant fifteen years later. However, some plead in favour of Burmese tourism, forgetting both the opposition's numerous calls to boycott and the terrible situation in which the Burmese people live. In May 2011, the NLD has published a policy paper that put an end to the call for boycott but calls for responsible and independent tourism in Burma. It is also a warning against the negative consequences that a misinformed and injudicious tourism can lead to, as regards to the local populations as well as the environment.

Can one visit a country which suffers as one would visit a museum? What can one see of Burma as a tourist?

The Association Info-Birmanie has decided to publish this report in order to bring clarifications to those who consider going to Burma on the ins and outs of the issue of tourism. We consider that the information furnished by the travel agencies only; insisting on Burma's beauty, the Country "of a thousand and one temples" are insufficient and that it is necessary to have the most amount of information possible in order to decide whether to travel to Burma or not.

The idea is not a call to boycott but to inform as much as we can. In the meantime, what we deplore is the mass tourism as practiced by the tour operators and this is why we wish, via this report to provide the tools needed by the tourists to be aware of their responsibilities.

2. The History of Tourism in Burma

The history of tourism in Burma can be divided into three periods: the parliamentary democracy (1948-1962), the socialist period (1962-1988) and that of the opening up of the tourist market (since 1990).

During the course of the period of parliamentary democracy, Burmese economic policy was orientated towards capitalism. Despite a relatively low number of tourists, a few private travel agencies were opened. The Tourist Information Service (SIT) later called Tourist Burma was charged with informing and guiding tourists. At that time, tourist visas were valid for a month.

In 1962, following the Revolutionary Council's Coup d'Etat, the visas validity was reduced to 24 hours. In conformity with the Socialist Regime's Nationalisation Law, Tourist Burma and the Hotels became State owned. The tourist sector therefore shrank very quickly, in order to protect the traditional values and customs from foreign influences, according to the authorities in place.

At the start of the 1990s the new military government that arrived in power by a coup d'etat, decided to opt for a different strategy than that of the former dictator in opening the market to foreign investments. The Junta thus decided to make the development of tourism one of its economic priorities. In 1992 a Ministry of Tourism and Hotels was set up and it was during this period that the construction of tourism-related infrastructures started. However, it was only in 1996, with the launch of the "Visit Myanmar Year 1996" that the junta officially opened the doors to tourists¹.

This promotional campaign lies on two major objectives:

- Economic necessity: Tourism has enabled the junta to accumulate foreign currencies (notably required for the supply of arms, needed by all military dictatorships in order to stay in power) and the money laundering of the drug trade by recycling it into a legal economic sector.
- To regain prestige: following the annulment of the 1990 election results, won by the democratic opposition and the maintenance of the house arrest of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the Generals wanted to show the International Community another face of Burma, via trips tightly predefined by the government, thereby hiding the disastrous political and human rights state of affairs.

At the start of the year 2000, the entry requirements for tourists were relaxed and the visa validity lengthened, with the aim of facilitating the entry of tourists onto Burmese land as much as possible. In 2004, the Burmese authorities introduced an electronic visa² and as of May 2010 it became possible to acquire a visa (arrival visa) directly upon arrival at Rangoon and Mandalay airports³. An evolution which will have been short lived as of September 1st of the same year the junta decided its suspension, probably in the offing of the November 2010 General Election.

¹ (Source : BIMSTEC-Japan Cooperation in Tourism Development: Myanmar Perspective par Aung Kyaw Oo , Working document # 37) Centre for Studies in International Relations and Development (CSIRD) <http://www.csird.org.in/pdf/DP37.pdf>

² (Source : BIMSTEC-Japan Cooperation in Tourism Development: Myanmar Perspective par Aung Kyaw Oo , document de travail # 37) Centre for Studies in International Relations and Development (CSIRD)

³ (Source : http://www.myanmar-tourism.com/visa01_onarrival.html)

3. The Issue of Tourism in Burma

The issue of tourism in Burma is a reality. On the one hand the National League for Democracy (NLD) and some Human Rights organisations demand the boycott of mass tourism. On the other, the travel agencies encourage tourism. Meanwhile, the criticism aimed at the boycott comes not only from the tourist industry but also from some scholars and journalists. Having seen no difference in their reasoning, we have decided to concentrate on the arguments put forward by travel agencies.

A) The Reasons for A Call to Boycott

The leader of the of the Burmese Democracy Movement and 1991 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has positioned herself against the “Visit Myanmar Year” campaign and called upon foreign nationals not to come to Burma; arguing that tourism legitimises the dictatorship in place and asking tourists to wait until the situation improves.

The argumentation in favour of a moratorium on tourism in Burma is notably based on the following facts:

• Human Rights Violations

Forced Displacement of population

Human Rights abuses are directly linked to the development of tourism. Indeed, to make the country more attractive to tourists, the Burmese authorities have cleaned the areas surrounding historical sites, poor neighbourhoods have been destroyed and their inhabitants re-located in satellite towns where they hardly survive and do not have the means to pay for their travel anymore.

Bagan, “the town of the 200 temples” is a prime example. In 1990, 5200 Burmese who had lived there for generations received the order to leave and were forced to resettle in an arid area deprived of all commodities. Those who dared to protest were imprisoned for four months⁴.

In 1994 at least 500 families have been evicted from their lodgings in Rangoon in preparation of the “Visit Myanmar Year” Campaign. At the time, the government justified its move by declaring that these people were squatters living in insalubrious buildings which would easily risk catching fire⁵. All of them had to go and live in distant suburbs.

At Ngwe Saung, one of the finest beaches in Burma, 16000 villagers saw 65% of their agricultural lands and 80% of their palm plantations confiscated by the authorities. Seine fishing, one of the most important sources of income for the local population, was also outlawed. The economic losses have been considerable for the communities living in Ngwe Saung⁶.

Forced displacements of population have equally taken place, amongst others, in Mandalay, Mamyo and Taungyi which are all important tourist destinations.

⁴ (Source : Economic Mission of the French Embassy in Rangoon, 11/2003).

⁵ (Source : Centre du droit au logement et des expulsions : “*Déplacement et expulsion : migration forcée et droit foncier en Birmanie*”, 11/2007). http://www.cohre.org/store/attachments/COHRE_Burma_Country_Report.pdf (Pages 100/101)

⁶ (Source : Centre du droit au logement et des expulsions : “*Déplacement et expulsion : migration forcée et droit foncier en Birmanie*”, 11/2007). http://www.cohre.org/store/attachments/COHRE_Burma_Country_Report.pdf (Pages 100/101)

Forced Labour

Parallel to the forced exodus from their original lands, men, women and children have been forced on a large majority of the territory to work on the roads, railways and tourist projects in the worst conditions. The massive requisition of workers is one of the Burmese military regime's habits.

In 1994, about 20.000 civilians working alongside the same number of chained convicts had to dig by hand the moats of the Mandalay Palace⁷. In January 1995, the BBC filmed by hidden camera a report on the construction of a 170km railway line linking Ye to Dawei (Tavoy), a building site on which no less than 120.000 men had been forcefully enrolled. There are millions of testimonies of the hard labour inflicted on the Burmese population: road building, airports and infrastructures.

In 1998, the Commission of Inquiry of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) concluded that "Civilian and military authorities resort to wide-spread use of forced labour" and underlined that "The army treats the civilian population as an unlimited pool of forced and unpaid labour (...) and the use of forced labour is to encourage private investment in the development of infrastructures, public sector works and tourism"⁸

• Economic Support to the Military Regime

In terms of direct foreign investment, tourism is one of the most lucrative sectors for Burma⁹ and the revenues first and foremost benefit the Generals. According to official figures of the Burmese regime (provided in an economics report for potential investors), the amount of foreign investments in hotels and commercial complexes was 1.120 million dollars in 2007. It is difficult to quantify precisely the percentage that the Generals get. A Burmese ex-tourism Minister estimates it at 12%, and the regime would have announced in its annual budget that the revenues from the tourism industry amounted to 182 million dollars in 2007 and 164 million dollars in 2006¹⁰. Given such numbers, it is sure that the amounts that go directly to the governing bodies of the military dictatorship are considerable.

Moreover, according to a report published by Tourism Concern, a British organisation working for the respect of Human Rights in the tourist sector, numerous hotels are the property of members of the regime or closest relatives, either directly or via the intermediary of a company¹¹, notably thanks to investments in "joint ventures". According to the NCGUB, the Burmese Government in Exile, the small operators and agencies that do not belong to the regime's proxies are often the victims of the Junta's control over their licence, thus reducing their independence¹². The almost exclusive control exerted by the government on the tourist industry leaves little benefit to the local population who, otherwise, could have received definite advantages from the expansion of tourism.

⁷ Source: Karen Human rights Group « *Notes on Burma Tourism* », 10/1995) <http://www.khrg.org/khrg95/1095tourism.html> + (U.S. Department of State " *Burma Human Rights Practices, 1994* ", 02/1995)

http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/democracy/1994_hrp_report/94hrp_report_eap/Burma.html

⁸ http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/reports/boycott_triumph.htm / (Forced labour in Myanmar (Burma), ILO, July 1998)(Source: International Labour Organization: " *Forced Labour in Myanmar* ", 02/07/1998).

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb273/myanmar.htm>

⁹ (Source : <http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/uploads/file/campaigns/How-tour-operators-are-supporting-Burma-regime.pdf> / UNCTAD " *FDI in brief : Myanmar* ", 09/03/2004) Page-2

¹⁰ (Source : <http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/uploads/file/campaigns/How-tour-operators-are-supporting-Burma-regime.pdf> / (Page - 2) / Myanmar Travels and Tours / Government of Myanmar: " *Why invest in Myanmar* ", 2008 (see: www.asean.or.jp/invest/archive/speech/fy08%20myanmar/Ms.KyiKyiAye_part2.pdf)

¹¹ (Source: Tourism Concern « *How UK tour operators are supporting Burma's military régime through tourism* », 16/02/2009) <http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/uploads/file/campaigns/How-tour-operators-are-supporting-Burma-regime.pdf>

¹² (Source : <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/images/uploads/Tourism-4.pdf> *Position of the NCGUB on Tourism*, 14/09/2000)

- **“ Myanmar, Wonderful Country” : An illusion of the dictatorship**

“In Burma, you will be subjugated by this civilization of the *Being rather than that of the Having*”, “despite the difficulties, it breathes serenity”; “this mysterious and enigmatic region which contains some of the most fairylike sites in the world”... such is generally the vocabulary used by the travel agencies and guides to describe the Burmese countryside and which therefore contributes to making Burma a country “apart” : the absence of development is put into perspective in the enthusiasm for a preserved authenticity and a culture which has escaped globalisation. Praise is heaped upon Rangoon’s new modern airport and the opening of commercial centres as a proof of a stable and prosperous country.

Tourism gives the illusion of an open country although the Burmese population lives in “an open sky prison”. The circuits put in place by tour operators carefully avoid the areas which could tarnish the serene image that they sell to their clients. Everything is done so that the visitors, dazzled by the gold of the stupas, do not raise the veil of totalitarianism.

- **Cultural Deterioration**

Cultural degradation is one of the consequences of the development of tourism. The renovation of some monuments is sometimes undertaken very roughly, without real conservational logic nor the taking into account of the historical and sacred character. Old historical buildings are destroyed to make place for concrete buildings. The most striking illustration of this policy is the demolition of the Palace of Keuntung in Shan State to make way for a hotel in 1991¹³.

Another example is the renovation of the Baw Gyo Pagoda near Hsipaw, undertaken by General Khin Nyunt in 1995¹⁴. Burmese culture requires that the names of donators to a pagoda be inscribed on its walls. In their renovation logic, the officials in charge of the project simply decided to repaint its walls entirely, without worrying about this custom.

B) Tourism in Burma: Illusions & Realities

- **Illusion n°1: “Tourism allows the economic development of the country and its inhabitants, the boycott only affects the population”**

Reality: Since the opening of the country to tourism in 1996, the economic situation of the population has not improved.

If, for the last fifteen years or more, foreign tourists can stay in the country, tourism has never been able to become a vector for development. This is explained by several factors:

- **A very low percentage of Burmese citizens benefit from tourism**

¹³ (Source: <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/images/uploads/Tourism-4.pdf> *Position of the NCGUB on Tourism*, 14/09/2000) et *Forbidden Glimpses of Shan State* <http://www.shanwomen.org/file/Forbidden-Glimpses-of-Shan-State-English.pdf> (Page - 10/ Page - 11 : photo)

¹⁴ Shan Women Association (*Forbidden Glimpses of Shan State*) <http://www.shanwomen.org/file/Forbidden-Glimpses-of-Shan-State-English.pdf> (Page – 27)

If we obviously take into account these Burmese citizens and the importance of tourism for them as a means of sustenance, on the rationale presented here analyses the impact of tourism on a national scale. More than 75% of the Burmese population lives in a rural environment and depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Amongst the remaining 25%, only a small minority is in contact with the tourist sector¹⁵. In general, tour operators in Burma offer trips that go to four sites: Rangoon, Bagan, Mandalay and Inle Lake. Those four places only represent a small portion of the territory and a relatively small number of inhabitants when compared to the 50 million citizens living in the country.

- Foreign currencies are siphoned off by the officials thanks to a two rates of exchange system

Foreign revenues and currencies only profit the Generals and not the population as they are siphoned off by the military and have practically no impact on the country's tax revenues.

Burma Economic Watch working Group was the first to reveal in 2004¹⁶ the grave dysfunctions of the Burmese tax system due to the co-existence of two exchange rates: the official rate of 1\$=6 Kyats (the local currency), and the real rate of exchange of around 1\$=1000 Kyats. All the revenues pocketed in foreign currency are integrated into the national Burmese budget using the official exchange rate, a rate of exchange which is thirty years old and which overvalues the Burmese currency by about 150-200 times its actual value. But, in reality, the dollars are valued at the real exchange rate and the difference is simply pocketed by the generals.

Thus, for every 100 dollars paid to the country's authorities, the national Burmese budget only receives 600 Kyats (60 cents), whilst the amount collected by the top officials is 100.000 Kyats. This massive embezzlement of funds (more than 99% of the amounts paid in!) deprives the Burmese population of its tax income which in turn limits the investments that could be done in the health sector, the education sector and the development of public infrastructures.

It should be noted that in parallel, the Burmese population is not allowed to possess foreign currencies and can even be condemned to several years of imprisonment for doing so.

- The development of infrastructures does not generate employment due to the use of forced labour

The development of infrastructures (motorways, airports as well as new tourist sites) should have been a considerable employment reservoir for the population; but the fact that the junta resorts to forced labour has caused this opportunity to vanish and has even transformed it into a burden for Burmese citizens.

Equally, the luxury hotel structures only welcome a foreign tourist clientele, massively importing all equipment materials, food stocks and other consumer goods intended for tourists. Their consumption in the country does not signify that they are suppliers of jobs for the Burmese population as they are most of the time directly imported from abroad.

Finally, the economic benefits serve the junta's monopoly and support the reinforcement of the dictatorship rather than the development of infrastructures that could be useful to the Burmese population.

The biggest obstacle to prosperity in Burma is the Burmese regime itself: a better governance system is what people need more than anything else in order to escape the extreme poverty they have been led into. The regime alone is guilty of the country's social and economic deterioration and its growing poverty. The government economic monopolies, the patently bad financial management of the Burmese economy, the widespread corruption, the money laundering, a very strict and confusing foreign exchange rate, the absence of political reforms and flagrant violations of Human Rights are the main factors which harm the well-being of

¹⁵ <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/campaigns/more-info/tourism/the-cost-of-a-holiday-could-be-someones-life> Burma Campaign UK - The host of a holiday could be someone's life

¹⁶ (Source : Burma Economic Watch 2004. Article de Wylie Bradford : *Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) Estimates for Burma*)
http://www.econ.mq.edu.au/Econ_docs/bew/BEW04-01.pdf

Burmese citizens. In 2008, the Heritage Foundation ranked Burma as one of the least financially free countries: 153rd out of 157 countries assessed¹⁷ !

- **Illusion n°2 : “Tourism is a marginal source of income for the Junta”**

Reality: The jackpot linked to the tourism sector is the only valid reason for the junta allowing foreign tourists into the country.

If after fifteen years of tourism expansion the Burmese population’s situation remains unchanged, a small group of people has managed to become considerably wealthier thanks to tourism. They are all close to the military junta, even members of their families. Members of the junta and their proxies are very present in the tourism sector. Tay Za, a businessman close to General Than Shwe, is the owner of an important tourist agency, Woodland Travels Co. Ltd. He also owns Air Bagan, one of the three so-called “private” Burmese airlines . The other two, Air Mandalay and Yangon Airways (whom the owner is a suspected drug dealer) belong in part to the State’s airline Myanmar Airways. Examples such as these are numerous. (see Part 4)

Right from the first expenditure, a part of the tourist’s money goes directly to the junta: Cost of visas and airport Taxes. Then follows taxes claimed to the hotels, travel agencies and travelling sellers (jewellery...) that are very important and deprive independent entrepreneurs of a large part of their income. According to the Lonely Planet Myanmar 2009 Guide, one needs 300\$ to visit Bagan, Inle Lake and Rangoon. Out of this budget, 105\$ will be paid to the government. The example of the Shwedagon Pagoda (the most famous place of worship in Rangoon) proves this: the cost of entry is of 5\$ for foreigners (entry is free for the Burmese) and only payable in dollars. Knowing that a Burmese citizen is forbidden to possess foreign currency, this money goes directly into the junta’s tills. On top of the entry fees in places of worship, transports (see Part 4) equally represent one of the most important revenue for members of the regime and their allies.

The military hold goes beyond of the use of an abusive tax system, it is also supported by the part played by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism who controls and own numerous infrastructures linked to the tourism industry.

Considering such arguments, who would lose the most: the people or the junta? It is impossible to use statistical evidence as they do not exist but everything leads to believe that the important financial manna created by tourism brings more to the junta than travel agencies are willing to admit. What is certain is that the financial benefit for the regime is a reality.

- **Illusion n°3 : “Tourism enables Burmese people to open up to the outside world and to access western democratic ideas”**

Reality: It has been 15 years since the country opened up to tourism and there has been no notable improvement in terms of democratic evolution.

During the 1970s, the development of tourism is not only justified by economic benefits but also by the idea of intercultural exchange and the mutual respect between peoples. In order to expand this notion, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) reminded the humanistic principles of its action in the Tourism Charter of 1980. It praises tourism as being a “peace maker” and respectful of cultures and the environment. Of course, a dictatorship such as the one that ruthlessly rules Burma has no use for the rules inscribed in the UNWTO’s Charter. On the contrary, the way in which the tourism activity was put in place in the country goes against these rules: forced labour, population displacement, degradation of the environment...

The development that would supposedly benefit the population has not taken place and has only served to offer the best possible infrastructures to tourists.

¹⁷ (Source : Heritage Foundation – Index of Economic Freedom 2008) <http://www.heritage.org>

The reply from travel agencies is clear as shown by the remarks of Emmanuel Foiry, CEO of Kuoni France travel agency, published in the newspaper La Croix¹⁸: “Obviously tourism has never brought down dictatorships. It is not its role... tourism contributes to an opening onto the world and to a country’s positive change, and also to ensure an income to a part of the population. On the other hand, a boycott would harm the inhabitants more than their oppressors”.

It is true to say that the role of tourism is not the downfall of a dictatorship but in certain cases such as Burma, it can financially support one (see Part 4). It is important to remember that the tours proposed by travel agencies have all been authorised by the junta as they display the image that the military regime wants to exhibit.

As to “ the opening up and positive change in the country”, tourism is present in Burma since 1996 and no notable progress of the economic nor human rights situation has occurred. Are 15 years enough to underline the naivety of the travel agents remarks on the subject?

It is obvious that tourism can result in positive exchanges between Burmese people and travellers. But this is at times complicated and implies a real sense of responsibility on the part of the tourist. A Burmese person will most probably be questioned after having spoken with a tourist. A note from the Myanmar Tourist Promotion Board (MTPB) illustrates this: it stipulates that the local civil servants have received the order to protect tourists and warn of potential clashes by limiting “all useless contact” between foreigners and Burmese people¹⁹.

These constraints and the experience of the last fifteen years of tourism cannot lead to believe that the tourist is some kind of democracy “representative” who would come and save these oppressed people. Aung San Suu Kyi once said something that perfectly sums up this idea: “The Burmese people know their problems better than anyone. They know what they want – democracy – and numerous people have already perished for it. To suggest that tourists can teach the Burmese people something more about their own situation is not only paternalistic but also racist”.

Despite the fact that a military junta is in place, the opening up of tourism wrongly brings a semblance of credibility and an image of appeasement to this regime. It is a risk of which one must be aware. Forgetting it would only fuel this idea.

Illusion n°4: “Aung San Suu Kyi has changed her mind”

Reality: During all the years that she was under house arrest, Aung San Suu Kyi never declared that she was favourable to tourism. Today, she is free and together with her party, she is elaborating a new policy as regards to this question.

On May 20th 2011, the National League for Democracy published a position paper on tourism in Burma.

This official statement represents a turn in the party’s positioning as it puts an end to the policy of boycott on tourism in Burma demanded by the NLD during the “Visit Myanmar Year” Campaign launched by the military regime in 1996. However, this statement goes back on the reasons for the call for boycott - the forced displacements and forced labour cases linked to the development of the tourism industry – and points out that the human rights situation has not improved since then.

¹⁸ Source : La Croix, 15/01/2010, “Tourisme, faut-il aller partout ?”
<http://www.la-croix.com/article/index.jsp?docId=2410701&rubId=4077>

¹⁹ Source : Tourism Concern, « Burma : Not Black and White » <http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/index.php?page=burma-notblack-and-white>

In this policy paper, the LND insists on the fact that **“such abuses can be stopped only through appropriate political measures and not, as some hope, by an influx of foreign visitors.”**²⁰

However, aware of the economic difficulties that the population of Burma is facing, the party would like to see the development of the tourism industry contribute to the economic development of the country and the improvement of the living conditions of its people.

The NLD therefore welcomes responsible and independent tourism while warning about the negative consequences that a misinformed and injudicious tourism can lead to, as regards to the local populations as well as the environment.

Finally, the NLD underlines that **“Many of the bigger tourism related businesses are still owned by members of the families of those in government or their cronies”** and encourage tourists to practice **“Positive discrimination in favor of businesses engaged in effective outreach programmes and environmental conservation”**²¹.

²⁰ NLD Policy Paper on Tourism, May 20th 2011: <http://www.nldburma.org/media-press-release.html>

²¹ <http://www.nldburma.org/media-press-release.html>

4. Analysis of the Economic Supports for the Junta

A) Revenues

Through taxes, revenues linked to foreign investments and all the inevitable expenses for tourists, the sector represents a financial support to an illicit government, which regularly practices torture, arbitrary executions, and forced labour, violence towards women, political arrests, forced displacements as well as restrictions on the freedom of speech, travel and meetings.

According to SPDC sources, in 2007 tourism revenue totalled 182 million dollars against 164 million in 2006. Still according to the SPDC, foreign investments in tourist infrastructures would amount to 1.151 million dollars (until 2009)²².

Unfortunately, it is difficult to know exactly from where all these revenues come from. The lack of transparency which surrounds the transactions between the regime and private investors prevent precision as to their real impact. General Saw Lwin, former Minister of Hotels and Tourism has advanced the figure of 12% of the revenue from tourism²³. Meanwhile, in view of the income accumulated via the bias of taxes, corruption and the ties that the junta can have with tourism this figure should be reviewed upwards.

B) Transports

The majority of public transport (railways and fluvial system) is state owned, which means they are mainly owned by the regime and their cronies. If the hold on road transport is very important, it is total on the airway transport.

COMPANY	OWNERS	REMARKS
Myanma Airways	Burmese government	Domestic flights only. State company since 1948.
Yangon Airways (not operating anymore)	<i>Myanma Airways & MHE-Mayflower Co.</i>	Domestic flights only. The company was set up as a joint-venture between <i>Myanma Airways</i> and the Thai company Krong-Sombat Co. Ltd, whose shares are now owned by Burmese company MHE-Mayflower Co. In November 2008, after some shareholders of Yangon Airways were suspected of being involved in drug trafficking, the US government imposed sanctions against the company, based on the Kingpin anti-drug law. In February 2008, one of the shareholders of Yangon Airways, Tun Myint Naing (aka Steven Law), who also owns Asia World Co. Ltd., was placed on the US government ban list of people and companies who are considered as being proxies of the regime. Because the company was unable to renew its license, it had to cease its activities in December 2010.

²² Tourism Concern <http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/uploads/file/campaigns/How-tour-operators-are-supporting-Burma-regime.pdf> (Page-2) / Council of the European Union, Council Regulation 194/2008, 25/02/2008 et Ministry of Hotels and Tourism Union of Myanmar http://www.tourism-myanmar.org/download/dht_flyer_2009.pdf

²³ (Source : Rapport de la Confédération Internationale des syndicats libres « *Traiter avec la Birmanie* », 01/2005) <http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/Burma-ICFTUReport-January.pdf> (Page -13)

Air Mandalay	<i>Air Mandalay Holdings Pte Ltd.</i> (Singapour) <i>& Myanma Airways & Premier Airlines Pte Ltd.</i> (Malaisia)	Domestic flights only. <i>See the description of Myanma Airways above</i>
Air Bagan	<i>Tay Za, Htoo Trading Co. Ltd</i>	Domestic and international flights, going to and coming from Chiang Mai (Thailand) et Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). Tay Za is a business tycoon close who is very close to Than Shwe, the former head of the military junta. Rumour has it that he would also be his son-in-law. CEO of Htoo Trading Company, he is a major actor in the tourist industry, the logging industry, the real estate and arms industry. Via another company called Myanmar Avia Export, he would have helped the dictatorship to buy arms, helicopters and fighter planes from Russian companies. Tay Za and Air Bagan are both listed on the US and European sanctions. Sources : http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=3225&page=5 http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/tayza_02062008.pdf http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:210:0038:0069:EN:PDF
Asia Wing	<i>Tay Za & Sun Far Travels and Tours Co., Ltd.</i>	Domestic flights only. In January 2011, launched a second airline managed by a partner company called the <i>Sun Far Travel and Tour Co., Ltd.</i> , in order to prevent Asia Wing from encountering the same problems as Air Bagan, its other airline company targeted by the sanctions. Source : http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19673
Air Inlay (company being launched)	Aung Ko Win	Most probably for domestic flights only. Aung Ko Win is notorious for being close to Vice-Senior General Maung Aye, the junta's number 2. He also owns the <i>KanBawZa Bank</i> . He is targeted by EU sanctions and British government sanctions. According to some sources, the family of former Industry Minister Aung Thaung would be linked to this new company. Sources : http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:210:0038:0069:EN:PDF http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/burma.htm
Myanmar Airways International Co., Ltd. (M.A.I.)		International flights only, going to and from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

C) **Hotels :**

The hotel sector also represents an important source of income for members of the regime and their proxies. Below is a list of hotels owned by the regime and their allies (according to the information we have collected):

HOTEL	CITY	OWNER	REMARKS
Mya Yeik Nyo Royal Hotel	Rangoon	Aung Thet Mann	<p>Son of former n°3 of the SPDC, he is director within the company <i>Htoo Group</i>, owned by Tay Za. His brothers and him are part of the new generation of Burmese businessmen.</p> <p>He is on the US Treasury Department sanction list.</p> <p>Source: http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/tayza_02062008.pdf http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=10189 http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14151&page=3 http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/burma.htm</p>
Eden Hotels and Resorts	Naypyitaw	Chit Khaing (Chit Khine), <i>Eden Group</i>	<p>Owner of <i>Eden Group</i>, one of the most important construction company in Burma. He is close to General Maung Aye.</p> <p>Source: http://burmadictatorwatch-eng.blogspot.com/2007/11/boycott-these-businesses.html http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14151&page=5</p>
The Tingaha Hotel	Naypyitaw		
Eden Hotels and Resorts - Marina Residence	Rangoun		
Aye Thar Yar Golf Resort	Taunggyi		
Yuzana Resort Hotel	Ngwe Saung	Htay Myint, <i>Yuzana Co., Ltd.</i>	<p>Owner of <i>Yuzana Co., Ltd.</i>, Htay Myint has interests in the following industries: transports, construction, hotel, palm oil production, rubber plantations. He is one of the richest businessmen in Burma.</p> <p>Htay Myint is on the sanctions list of the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control because of his close links with the regime. The European Union also added him on its sanctions list.</p> <p>He was also a candidate of the USDP, a party set up by the junta to participate in the 7th November 2010 elections.</p> <p>Sources : http://www.bnionline.net/news/mizzima/9358-usdp-nominates-building-tycoons-as-poll-candidates.html http://www.bnionline.net/news/mizzima/9441-junta-crony-uses-influence-to-cut-voters-power-bills.html http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:20</p>
Yuzana Garden Hotel	Rangoon		

Yuzana Hotel	Rangoon		09:210:0038:0069:EN:PDF
MMS Hotel	Chaung Tha Beach	<i>MMS Company</i>	Myaw Myo Nyunt, is the son of a former Army General and retired Minister called Nyunt Tin. Myaw Myo Nyunt owns shares of this company. He is on the EU and Swiss sanctions' list. Sources: http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/rs/946_231_157_5/app3.html http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:118:0010:0042:FR:PDF http://burmadictatorwatcheng.blogspot.com/2007/11/boycott-these-businesses.html
Dusit Inya Lake	Rangoon	<i>Nay Aung, IGE Co., Ltd.</i>	Nay Aung is the son of former Industry Minister Aung Thaung. He and his brother Pyi Aung founded <i>IGE Co., Ltd.</i> , which is active in the wood and gas trade and building materials. His brother and him are banned from travelling to Australia or the European Union, but have managed to avoid becoming targets of US sanctions. <i>Myanmar Hotel & Tourism Service (MHTS)</i> would have put him in charge of managing his own hotels. Source: http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14151&page=3 http://www.bur.irrawaddy.org/index.php/news/5506-----ige--
The Strand	Rangoon		
Thamada	Rangoon		
Myanmar Treasure Resort Hotel	Bagan	<i>Tay Za, Htoo Trading Co. Ltd.</i>	Tay Za is a business tycoon who is very close to the junta and his leader Than Shwe. He would also be his son_in-law. He is the CEO of Htoo Trading Co. Ltd and is a major actor in the tourism industry, the forestry plantation, real estate and arms trade. He would have helped the regime to buy arms, helicopters and fighter planes from Russian companies via another of his companies called Myanmar Avia Export. Tay Za is targeted by EU and US sanctions. Sources : http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=3225&page=5 http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19733 http://www.treasury.gov/resourcecenter/sanctions/Documents/tayza_02062008.pdf http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:210:0038:0069:EN:PDF http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/rs/946_231_157_5/app3.html
Myanmar Treasure Resort	Inlay		
Amata Resort & Spa	Ngapali		
Aureum Palace Spa & Resort	Ngapali		
Myanmar Treasure Beach Resort	Ngwe Saung		
Myanmar Treasure Resort	Bagan		
Aureum Palace Hotel & Resort	Bagan		
Popa Mountain Resort	Popa		
Malikha Lodge	Putao		

Kandawgyi Hill Resort / Lodge	Pyin Oo Lwin		
Myanmar Treasure Beach Resort	Thandwè		
The Palm Beach Resort	Ngwe Saung	Win Aung, <i>Dagon International Ltd.</i>	<p>Together with former army captain Thein Win, Win Aung founded <i>Dagon International</i> company which obtained numerous real estate development contracts and is involved in wood trade and import-export. He is targeted by EU sanctions.</p> <p>Sources : http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14151&page=6 http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/burma.htm http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:210:0038:0069:EN:PDF</p>
Central Hotel	Ngwe Saung		
Central Hotel	Rangoun	<i>Union of Myanmar Economic Holding Limited</i>	<p>The company falls under the direct control of the Defense Ministry. It is involved in the gems trade, the building and bank sectors. <i>Union of Myanmar Economic Holding Limited</i> is targeted by EU and US sanctions.</p> <p>Source : http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/02/07/us-myanmar-sanctions-fb-idUSTRE7161LC20110207 http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:210:0038:0069:EN:PDF</p>

5. Areas accessible to tourists

The junta limits tourist access to some areas of the country because of ongoing conflicts with various ethnic minorities.

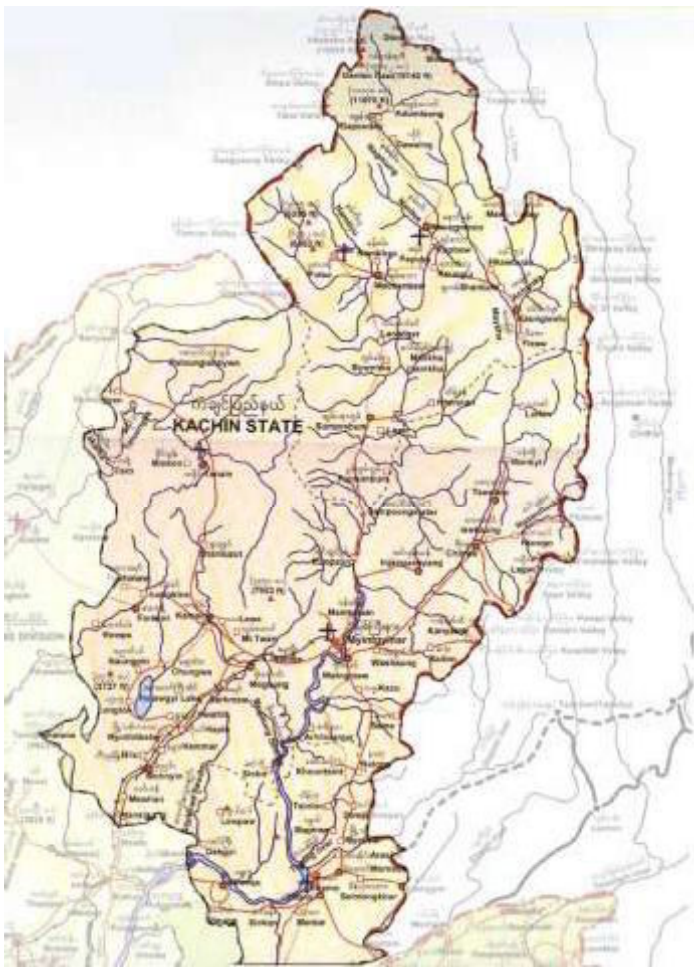
It is sometimes possible to obtain a permit or to get accompanied by a military escort, like in Karenni State for example. But currently more than half of the territory is closed to tourism.

(See the map below).

Burma is divided into seven regions (or divisions): Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) Bago Region (Pegu), Magway Region (Magwe) Mandalay Region, Sagaing Region, Tanintharyi Region (Tenasserim) and Yangon Region (Rangoon), and seven States: Kachin State, Kayah State (Karenni) Karen State (Kayin), Chin State, Mon State, Rakhine State (Rakhaing) and Shan State.

Most of the time, tour operators take tourists to Yangon (former capital of Burma until 2005), Mandalay (second largest city), Bagan (Central Burma) and Inlay Lake (eastern Burma).

One can identify three categories of tourist areas in Burma: open areas, areas requiring a permit (or a military escort) and closed areas. It is important to note that the information below has been collected by Info Birmanie and that the restrictions imposed by the junta are subjected to change.



Kachin State

Permission will not be required to travel to Bhamo and Myitkyina (capital city). Myitkyina is accessible by all routes despite some difficulties, including the navigability of the Irrawaddy River depending on the season. In the case of transport by road, one should be in possession of many photocopies of passport. Beyond Myitkyina, it is possible to go up to Myitsone without a permit.

Hpakant (Farkent), located at 150 km west of Myitkyina, is accessible but only accompanied by a military escort, which is very expensive.

Putao is the largest city in the northern part of the country that it is possible to visit. But there are no other options than flying to reach the place. One should know that prices are very high up there, and a permit is required.

Sagaing Region (Sagaing Division)

The South of the Division is open, including Sagaing (city), Monywa and Shwebo. No difficulty should be encountered to get to Shwebo. This is not the case for Monywa, accessible by train or taxi. By Bus (from Mandalay), drivers will be more or less reluctant to take foreigners in their car, and it is impossible to go there by boat. As for Kalembo, flying is the only way to access this place.



Chin State

This state is closed to tourism. The only small area where you can go is Mount Victoria and in some Chin villages around, but a very expensive permit will be required.

Shan State

In southern Shan State, accessible areas are Kalaw, Inle Lake (Nyaung Shwe) and Taunggyi. To get there by road, one must necessarily pass through Thazi, Kyaukme, Aungban and Nyaung Shwe. It is also possible to fly from/to Heho.

Pindaya can be accessed by tourists without permit, like the Inle Lake. However, a permit is necessary to go to Inn Dein and Saka (Inle Lake area), and Katku, a Pao ethnic village, near Taunggyi.

In northern Shan State, the proximity with the China border limits the access to tourists. Lashio is the limit. But generally, the tourists stop before, in the cities of Hsipaw and Kyaukme.

In the opposite direction, a costly permit and a guide approved by the Government are the only way to travel on the road between Ruili (China) or Muse (Burma) and Lashio, without being allowed access to Namhkam and Nansang.



Kengtung, Maung La, and Tachileik Regions

Kengtung (Kyaing Tong) is accessible only by air and without permit, but one will be needed to leave the city.

Air travel is also the only way to access Tachileik except from Thailand. From there, the entry point by road is Mae Sai. However, going through this point does not provide access to towns other than Maung La and Kengtung. A two weeks only visa is given at the border. In all cases, a permit will be required.



Mandalay Region (Mandalay Division)

Mandalay (2nd largest city in Burma), Bagan, Nyaung U (near Bagan), Amarapura, Inwa (Ava), Meiktila, Myingyan, Paleik, Kyaukse and Maymyo (Pyin Oo Lwin) are open to foreigners. To go to central and northern Burma, it is possible to travel by road through the new capital Naypyidaw, with its empty shops and museums. The city is accessible, but few people stop here, despite the regime's efforts to attract tourists.

Further north, in Mogok, also called " the land of ruby", access is prohibited.

Magway Division

Magwe (capital), Pakokku Chauk, Salay, and Aungmye are accessible to tourists. Despite this, the number of foreign visitors remains very limited, especially in Magwe and Chauk.

Thayetmyo District is closed to foreigners, probably because the Thayet prison is located there, where several political prisoners are incarcerated.



Rakhine State (Rakhaing) - (Rakhine State)

Sittwe, capital of Arakan State, is accessible by air. From this city, the boat is the only mean to access Mrauk U. Ngapali, the most popular beach in Burma, is accessible either by plane from the airport of Thandwe (Sandoway) or by land, by the Taunggyok – Thandwe road.

Boothitaung and Maungdaw are forbidden to foreigners.

Bago Region (or Pegu) - (Bago Division)

Pegu (Bago) is the capital of Bago Division. Close by Rangoon (1h30 to 2h by car), Bago is easily reachable for foreigners, as well as Pyay (Prome) and Taungoo.



Ayeyarwady Division

The Ayeyarwady Division is divided into 5 main districts: Patheingyi, Hinthada, Myaungmya, Maubin and Pyawbwe. There are 26 municipalities and 29 cities. However, only Patheingyi, Chaungtha (beach) and Ngwe Saung (beach) are accessible.

Yangon Division

Yangon (former capital) and some close suburbs are accessible to tourists, as Thanlyin, Kyauktan, Twante, Dala (located across the river) and Taukkyan (located just outside of Rangoon on the northern highway).

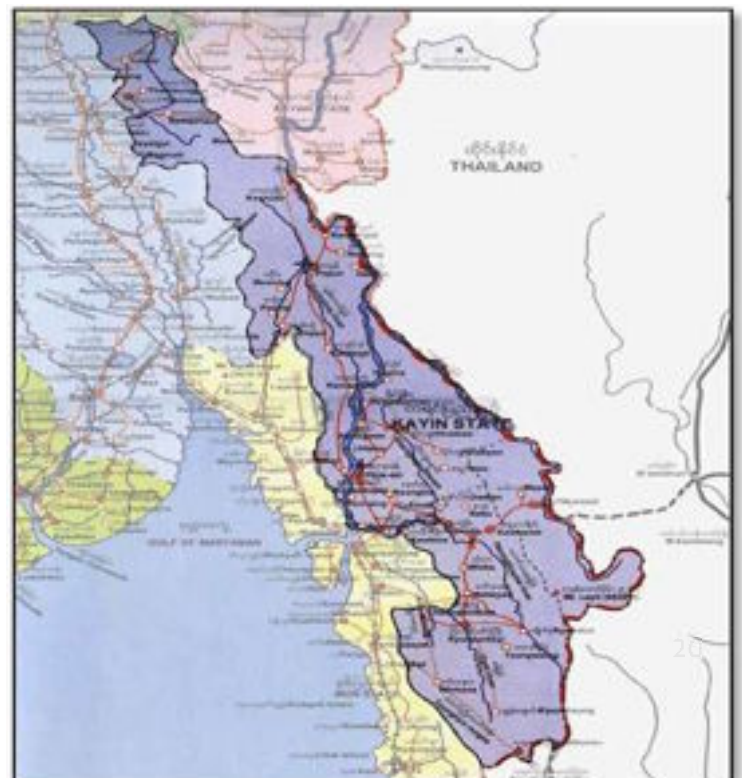


Kayah State (or Karenni State)

Due to conflicts between the Burmese army and the Karenni ethnic group, the entire state is closed to foreigners, except the capital Loikaw and a few surrounding villages. However, its access requires a very costly permit, and a military escort.

Karen State (or Kayin State)

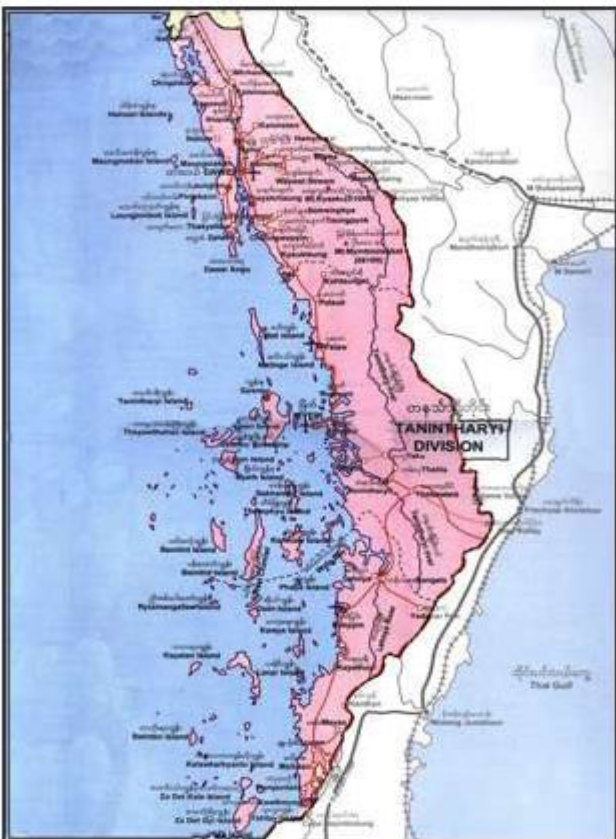
In Karen State, the military regime allows foreign nationals to visit the capital Hpa-An as well as Thamanya (near Hpa-An, famous for being runned by a Buddhist monk).



Mon State

Three northern areas of the region are open to tourists: Kyauktiyo (Golden Rock), Thaton and Mawlamyine. No specific information will need to be provided.

The last accessible town (without permit) is Thanphyuzayet, famous for its railway, called the "Railway of Death", built during the Japanese colonization by thousands of prisoners of war and Asian carriers. The area located at the south of this city is completely closed to foreigners, including the town of Ye and the Three Pagodas Pass.



Tanintharyi Region (Tenasserim Division)

Generally, this area is only accessible by air via Dawei (Tavoy) Myeik (Mergui) and Kawthoung (deep south), even if it has been accessible in the past by boat via Thailand till Dawei or Myeik.

It is also possible to organize a cruise in the Andaman Islands in the Myeik Archipelago, but only through a travel agency (which will ask for a permit). The border area is inaccessible. Only the coastal zone of Mergui is opened.

6. Ethics of Travel Agencies

• Lack of Ethics

The main role of a travel agency is to inform about a destination, about touristic as well as cultural or political matters. This requires a good general knowledge of the country conveyed with honesty and ethics, in particular to ensure travelers 'safety.

The following example shows that the definition of ethics may vary according to different agencies. During the "Saffron Revolution", which took place in September 2007 - mainly in Rangoon but also all over the country- a Swiss travel agency, has broadcasted information via its website about the situation in the country. The information have been provided by a "local correspondent" himself director of another travel agency. These statements have been proven false very quickly and eventually released purely for the sake of profit.

This statement included a mention to a return to calm, more than anticipated, and incentives to travelers not to cancel their trip in Burma. This statement also mentioned "advanced talks" that were taking between the government and the opposition, when in reality, the regime was orchestrating a bloody repression, conducting mass arrests in order to eradicate the movement.

Here are some excerpts:

- **September 27, 2007, 11am, Rangoon:** *"First I want to reassure you ... no incidents against foreigners are to be deplored, the Burmese people are very happy to see few foreigners in the country."*
- **September 28, 2007, 11am, Rangoon:** *"We ask people and companies not to boycott Burma. The Burmese people need the support of the international community more than ever. "*
- **September 29, 2007, 9:30 am, Rangoon:** *"The Internet is working again, it means that things are moving ... it seems that this government is no longer united, and that negotiations are going well."*
- **1st October 2007, 5pm, Rangoon:** *"Yangon is almost back to normal. Although the police is always present, the military is no longer on the streets as obviously as before ... This clearly means that the government is currently negotiating with various parties in the country ... The Burmese people need us more than ever, and being here myself, I can guarantee you that they let us know. "*
- **October 3, 2007, 6pm, Rangoon:** *"Nobody has demonstrated over the past two days. This let us suggest that there is an improvement of the safety ... Customers wishing to cancel their trip may do so, knowing that this is not the will of the Burmese people. "*
- **October 5, 2007, 2pm, Rangoon:** *"We first wanted to let you know that the Burmese government has officially announced last night ... that negotiations with the various parties would start soon. We expect the arrival of several international delegations in Yangon... Once again, we say NO to the boycott of the country. We encourage people to come ... especially with the aim of supporting the Burmese people who more than ever need moral support and sources of income generated by tourism. "*
- **October 10, 2007, 11am, Rangoon:** *"... I can now confirm that negotiations are underway between the government and the opposition ... To date, there is no need to cancel a visit in Myanmar."*

In addition to remarks reported by an employee of this agency, their website has also published an excerpt from an interview with a Swiss academic.

After being presented as an "expert" and a "relay of the voice of international experts," he was repeating what had already been said on the website of the agency, that tourists, by their presence, would "*support the local*

population" , who is described as "*indigenous*". He also confirms that "*numerous conversations*" had been conducted between the regime, the opposition and the international community.

This professor went even further by saying that "*a boycott was appropriate when the dialogue was paralyzed*" and ended his interview by stating his support for the agency.

These words are more than a distortion of a reality as dramatic as what has been the "Saffron Revolution"; they took the people of Burma hostage in the sole objective of launching a mercantile business.

Another example of a French travel agency shows once again how easy it is to use news to encourage tourists to visit Burma. Upon the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, on November 13th 2010, this agency published the news through its newsletter, concluding:

"... We want to believe in an ineluctable willingness of opening from the government, the future will tell us. Perhaps another reason for you to choose this destination at a turning point in its history!"

At the same time, the entire international community, including the UN, welcomed this news but called for caution, noting in particular the sham elections that took place the week before the release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

• Which agency to choose?

To go further into the study of travel agencies in France offering trips to Burma, a member of our team, concealing the fact that he is working for Info Birmanie, spoke with several of them to obtain information on the various trips offered. The aim was to talk about tourism, cultural and basic political issues, but also to check the veracity of the information conveyed by the agencies.

The information provided by the three agencies visited was almost similar - we will not mention their names because the goal of this report is not to make the trial of anyone but to inform potential travelers. Here are some excerpts:

- Tourists have a complete freedom of movement
- The population is keener on talking about politics than before
- Military are less present in recent times
- There would not be any conflict in Burma at present
- One of the reasons given to justify the closed areas is the conflict between ethnic groups (not between the army and ethnic minorities)
- Taxes paid by tourists are not different from those paid in France
- There is no specific surveillance in Burma

Compared with the information provided in this report, there are many contradictions, often dangerous, especially on the freedom of speech of the Burmese people on political matters, which might put some people at risk of being imprisoned. The responsibility of an agency would be to warn tourists of the risks incurred by the local population.

If there is one area where their speech was the most hesitant, it is the economic impact of tourism in Burma. Indeed, the three agencies were particularly proud of using 'private' airlines to travel inside Burma (see below *Analysis of financial backing for the junta*). They asserted the complete independence of these companies, just as they did for the hotel sector.

Moreover, on the question of what represents the financial impact of a tourist, their answers were evasive and sometimes false. “2% of the expenditure of tourists in Burma would go into the pockets of the junta “, to end on a clumsy comparison between Burmese and French taxes.

The only notable difference between their speeches lies in the proportion of areas closed to tourists, ranging from 10% to 50% of inaccessible areas in the country.

But opinions converge again when dealing with the political question. People we spoke to consider that aside from the 2007 Saffron Revolution, the situation in Burma is very quiet, omitting the arbitrary arrests, torture and all sorts of human rights abuses that occur on a large scale in the country. We were confronted with similar omissions when talking about issues such as ethnic minorities, particularly due to a lack of knowledge about their cultural diversity.

Facing so much ignorance makes one wonder whether these aberrations are the result of a commercial dishonesty or a total lack of interest in Burma.

It is therefore important not to rely solely on a commercial brochure or an agency website when planning a trip to Burma, but to begin a real process of information. You are the only one able to judge the seriousness and professionalism of an agency. Start by learning about the names of the hotels or airlines that are on offer.

But remember that traveling with an agency is not necessarily an added value!

- **Which travel guide to use?**

To go further, we studied the major guidebooks on Burma, and unlike travel agents, it was possible to find significant differences between them. Unfortunately we did this research on French guidebooks.

Depending on the guidebook, the human rights and economics issues are raised in a more or less important and in-depth way.

7. The Official Tourism Statistics

The junta releases official yearly statistics on tourism in Burma, via the website of the Council of Tourist Promotion of Burma (Myanmar Tourism Promotion Board), posted by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. Below are excerpts from the years 2010, 2009 and 2008:

Number of visitors by country in 2010

N°	Country	2010		2009		2008	
		Visitors	%	Visitors	%	Visitors	%
I	ASIA	212 454	68,38 %	161 133	66,24 %	128 279	66,36 %
1.	Thailand	59 692	19,21 %	49 010	18,26 %	27 311	14,13 %
2.	China	46 141	14,85 %	39 192	14,61 %	30 792	15,93 %
3.	Korea	18 930	6,10 %	13 890	5,18 %	12 369	6,40 %
4.	Japan	16 186	5,21 %	14 856	5,54 %	10 881	5,63 %
5.	Malaysia	16 186	5,21 %	10 208	3,80 %	8 268	4,28 %
6.	Taiwan	14 856	4,56 %	13 301	4,96 %	11 472	5,93 %
7.	Singapore	12 114	3,90 %	11 386	4,24 %	8 599	4,45 %
8.	India	9 849	3,17 %	8 916	3,32 %	7 173	3,71 %
9.	Hong-Kong	3 081	0,99 %	2 907	1,08 %	2 410	1,25 %
10.	Bangladesh	1 441	0,46 %	1 260	0,47 %	1 001	0,52 %
11.	Others	14 664	4,72 %	10 949	4,08 %	8 003	4,14 %
II	WESTERN EUROPE	59 817	19,25 %	55 862	20,82 %	37 156	19,22 %
1.	France	13 143	4,23 %	12 179	4,54 %	8 217	4,25 %
2.	Germany	11 082	3,56 %	10 949	4,08 %	8 947	4,63 %
3.	United-Kingdom	7 340	2,36 %	6 786	2,53 %	5 397	2,79 %
4.	Italy	7 169	2,31 %	7 149	2,66 %	3 030	1,57 %
5.	Spain	5 812	1,88 %	5 003	1,87 %	2 588	1,34 %
6.	Switzerland	4 168	1,34 %	3 767	1,40 %	2 482	1,28 %
7.	Belgium	2 411	0,77 %	2 085	0,78 %	1 386	0,71 %
8.	Austria	1 896	0,61 %	1 737	0,65 %	1 212	0,63 %
9.	Others	6 796	2,19 %	6 207	2,31 %	3 897	2,02 %
III	EASTERN EUROPE	6 118	1,97 %	5 485	2,05 %	3 729	1,93 %
1.	Russia	2 757	0,89 %	2 468	0,92 %	1 726	0,89 %
2.	Others	3 361	1,08 %	3 017	1,13 %	2 003	1,04 %
IV	NORTH AMERICA	18 911	6,09 %	17 440	8,10 %	15 229	7,88 %
1.	United-States	16 504	5,31 %	16 120	6,00 %	13 195	6,83 %
2.	Canada	2 407	0,78 %	2 382	0,89 %	2 034	1,05 %
V	CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA	1 669	0,54 %	1 400	0,52 %	929	0,48 %
VI	OCEANIA	8 695	2,80 %	8 005	3,29 %	6 079	3,14 %
1.	Australia	7 693	2,47 %	7 504	2,80 %	5 374	2,78 %
2.	New Zealand	993	0,32 %	882	0,33 %	691	0,36 %
3.	Others	9	0,01 %	13	0,00 %	14	0,01 %
VII	MIDDLE EAST	2 208	0,71 %	1 985	0,74 %	1 379	0,71 %
VIII	AFRICA	816	0,26 %	828	0,31 %	539	0,28 %
TOTAL		310 688	100 %	268 336	100 %	193 319	100 %

Sources: http://www.tourism-myanmar.org/download/dht_flyer2010.pdf

In comparison with the same documents studied since 2003 and taking the example of French tourists in Burma, we noticed that their numbers increased until 2006 (15,498), but fell in 2007 (10,889) - year of the "Saffron Revolution" - and the following year (2008: 8217), before rising again in 2009 (10,458).

Categories of tourists in 2010 (all sources):

Their mode of travel:

- 8% in group travel (through agencies)
- 57% as independent travelers
- 18% business travelers
- 17% of others

Their age:

- 5% aged 1-20 years
- 55% aged 21 to 50 years
- 40% aged over 51 years

Sex:

- 62% men
- 38% women

Note that since 2006 the percentage of tourists using the services of a travel agency has substantially decreased from 24% to 8%, in contrast to independent travelers who have risen from 46% to 57%. Figures for age groups and genders have not undergone significant changes.

8. Conclusion

It is undeniable that the issue of tourism in Burma is a controversial subject. And the inability of Aung San Suu Kyi, under house arrest for 15 of the last 21 years, to regularly express her position has resulted in intensifying the debate and especially to see her words distorted, and this often for commercial opportunism.

The argument that tourists bring democracy in their luggage is a comforting illusion. For some Burmese people, tourism can be a window to the outside world, but in no way can it be seen as a catalyst of the aspirations to democracy in the country. As during the Saffron Revolution, the Burmese people have repeatedly shown they know how to rise to assert their rights. As foreigners, however, we can support this movement. In the words of Aung San Suu Kyi, we can use our freedom to promote theirs.

Being a spectator? Yes, but aware and informed. Being a witness cannot be improvised. Visiting a country ruled by a military regime implies a commitment that it would be irresponsible to ignore. Ignorance cannot be a way to unload this responsibility, on the contrary, it encourages the illusion that the military junta has put in place. It is therefore necessary to first find and think of a way to talk about what you have seen upon return.

Will you see the same things if you are informed? Of course not. Knowing that the military dictatorship is not always in uniform will probably help you to be aware of the presence of intelligence agents in plainclothes. This way you can avoid getting a Burmese person in trouble in raising issues deemed hazardous in the country. Furthermore, being aware that the regime massively uses forced labor throughout the country may allow you to see "workers" building roads with different eyes.

Knowing the abuses perpetrated in ethnic areas where it is forbidden to go will help you realize that it is impossible to grasp the situation of the country in its entirety. What the regime will let you see is only a small part of the reality.

The debate on tourism not only consists in confronting mass tourism to independent tourism, making a blind praise of the latter. Going through the same circuit, sleeping in the same hotels and taking the same airlines alone rather than in an organized group will not change anything.

Your stay will not help to open up the country but by avoiding governmental structures and by going off the beaten track, you might be able to see the country differently.

Is it Burma as a country and culture in its own right that you want to visit or the image sold by agencies? This question could be a good start to preparing your journey.

9. Practical Advice

These pages were designed to explain to a potential tourist issues and impacts of a trip to Burma. In case you decide to go, here are some facts to help you minimize the negative consequences of your trip and make it more accountable.

- **Refusing to economically support the military regime by avoiding the tourist enterprises run by the junta or their cronies.** These includes hotels, restaurants, transport, tourist agencies and guides ... All the companies recommended by Myanmar Travel & Tour, controlled by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, are obviously to avoid. Support local artisans and merchants, and street vendors is one thing to encourage.
- **Going towards the people, not necessarily those directly involved in tourism, is a means to better understand their daily lives.** It is obviously important to be careful not to discuss sensitive issues like politics or the situation of their country. This will incur significant risks, mainly because of a rule of the Myanmar Tourism Board which called tourism officials to limit "unnecessary contact" with foreigners.
- **To break away from the artificial picture painted by the junta, it is important to talk about your trip when you come back to your home country.** Photos are also an easy way to convey an idea or an atmosphere, but it is not advisable to give money to children who wish to be photographed. Remember that it is not the tourist who chooses where he goes but the junta that lets you see what it wants.
- **In case you want to help the Burmese people, you can support a community project or donate to NGOs.** Giving money directly to individuals is not recommended, however you can always offer a meal or bring some items from your home country or buy it locally (newspapers, books, soaps, toothpaste ...).
- **If you want to continue to support the Burmese people once back home, you can raise awareness around you, share what you saw and support the fight for freedom and democracy in every way possible.**

Be responsible, do not put Burmese people at risk, open your eyes and share your experience when you come back.

10. Chronology

1824-1886	The British Empire annexes Burma through three Anglo-Burmese wars.
1930s	Urban-based Burman nationalists begin looking for Asian support for an armed resistance movement against the British. Student leader Aung San receives training from the Japanese.
1941	Aung San and the Thirty Comrades invade Burma with the help of the Japanese to drive out the British. In August 1943 Burma is declared independent but Burmese leaders are dissatisfied with the Japanese, who see Burma as their colony.
27 March 1945	Resistance movement to drive out the Japanese from Burma begins, led by General Aung San who has gained support from Allied troops.
15 June 1945	Japanese troops are driven out of Burma.
1946	Aung San returns to civilian life as President of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, and Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council of Burma.
27 January 1947	Aung San Attlee Agreement: The British government led by Prime Minister Attlee accepts to give independence to Burma within one year.
3-12 February 1947	Panlong Agreement: The Shan, Chin and Kachin agree, under principles of equality, voluntary participation and self-determination, to join Ministerial Burma in the Union of Burma to gain independence from Britain.
April 1947	AFPFL win election
19 July 1947	Assassination of Aung San and fellow cabinet members by a political rival.
4 January 1948	Burma becomes independent.
1948-1958	Burma's first experiment with democracy. The elected government of Prime Minister U Nu and the AFPFL party face communist insurgency and armed struggle by some ethnic groups, notably the Karen, who are dissatisfied with the implementation of the Panlong agreement. The government is very active and respected in international affairs.
September 1958	First coup by General Ne Win. The General is one of the Thirty Comrades, and headed the Burma Army after Independence.
February 1960	Elections. U Nu's party, now an AFPFL faction renamed Union Party, is reelected.

- 12 March 1962** **Second coup by General Ne Win.** The General rules through a Revolutionary Council, and proclaims the “Burmese Way to Socialism”, nationalizing all foreign owned enterprises and effectively sealing the country from external influence.
- 7 July 1962** **Student protest against Ne Win rule is crushed.** Over 100 students from Rangoon University are killed, and the students’ union building is destroyed by the Army.
- 1974** A new constitution instating a one-party system and a unitary state is drafted. Attempts by the Chin to suggest a federal union are repressed. Ne Win continues his rule as a civilian leader of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP).
- 1987**
16 March 1988 **Burma is designated a “Least Developed Country” by the United Nations.**
Red Bridge incident. A student protest in Rangoon against the Ne Win rule is crushed in a bloody repression near Lake, and dozens of students are murdered by the authorities. The event sparks sustained student protests throughout the spring, calling for the end of BSPP rule and multi-party democracy.²⁴
- 23 July 1988** **General Ne Win announces his resignation.** He calls for a nationwide referendum to decide on whether to maintain one-party rule or change to a multi-party system, but the BSPP refuses to endorse the proposal.
- 8 August 1988** **8888.** Tens of thousands of people peacefully take to the streets across Burma to demand genuine democracy and respect of human rights.
- 18 September 1988** **State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) is established following a military coup.** While it announced that multi-party elections would be held, SLORC continued to kill demonstrators. It is estimated that over 10,000 were massacred by the new regime.²⁵
- 27 September 1988** **The National League for Democracy (NLD) is founded.** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of independence hero General Aung San, becomes General Secretary.
- 20 July 1989** **NLD General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD Chairman U Tin Oo are put under house arrest, amidst the election campaign.**
- 27 May 1990** **Parliamentary General Election is held.** The NLD wins 392 of the 485 parliamentary seats.²⁶
- 27 July 1990** **Elected representatives cannot form a government until a new constitution is drafted.** SLORC announces through Declaration No. 1/90 that it will continue to rule the country by martial law until the elected representatives write a new constitution.²⁷

²⁴ The source for all preceding events is Christina Fink (2001) [Living Silence: Burma Under Military Rule](#)

²⁵ ABSDF (June 1998) [To Stand and Be Counted: The Suppression of Burma’s Members of Parliament](#), p. 15

²⁶ ABSDF (1998) [To Stand and Be Counted: The Suppression of Burma’s Members of Parliament](#), p. 19

²⁷ Working People’s Daily (29 Jul 1990) State LORC Declaration No. 1/90 of July 27, 1990

- 28 July 1990** **NLD adopts an interim constitution.** To allow a smooth transition from a single-party to a multiparty system, the NLD adopts an amended version of the 1947 constitution, replacing the defunct 1974 Constitution. Provisions regarding ethnic nationalities are suspended until detailed consultations with them can take place.²⁸ SLORC refuses to recognize any temporary constitution.
- 9 October 1990** **SLORC Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw announces to the UN General Assembly upcoming constitutional talks.** “A broadly-based national convention will be convened to discuss all factors that should be taken into account in drafting the new constitution”.²⁹
- 9 January 1993** **Opening of the National Convention.** The Convention meets sporadically over the next 4 years to draft “Detailed Basic Principles” for a new constitution.
- 10 July 1995** **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is released from house arrest.**
- 28 November 1995** **NLD pulls out of the National Convention.** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi explains the boycott is due to the Convention’s undemocratic process.³⁰ The next day the junta expels all of the NLD delegates.
- 1989-1995** **The SLORC signs ceasefire agreements with 14 armed opposition groups.**
- 31 March 1996** **The National Convention is adjourned to an unspecified date.**³¹
- 23 July 1997** **Burma is admitted as a member of ASEAN.**
- 15 November 1997** **The SLORC is renamed State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).**
- 22 September 2000** **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi put under house arrest for attempting to travel outside Rangoon.**
- 2000-2002** **“Secret Talks” between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the military regime take place. No**
- 6 May 2002** **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is released from house arrest and allowed to travel.**
- 30 May 2003** **Depayin Massacre.** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is imprisoned at an undisclosed location following an SPDC-sponsored attack on her convoy, where it is estimated that 282 were killed and hundred more arrested, as part of a general crackdown on the NLD.³²
- 30 August 2003** **Gen Khin Nyunt, newly appointed as Burma’s Prime Minister, announces a democracy roadmap.** The first of seven steps is the “Reconvening of the

²⁸ Sachsenroder, Wolfgang and Ulrike E. Frings (Eds.) 1998 .*Political Party Systems and Democratic Development in East and Southeast Asia. Vol.I Southeast Asia.* Aldershot: Ashgate. P. 101

²⁹ Chronology of Statements by Burmese Military Spokesmen on Multi-Party Elections, a New Constitution, The National Convention, Transfer of Power, etc. (available online: <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Statements.htm>)

³⁰ Reuter (29 Nov 1995) Burma Opposition Pulls Out of Constitutional Talks

³¹ Burma Press Summary (Vol. X, No. 3, Mar 1996) National Convention Closing Address

³² Altsean-Burma (Nov 03) Arrested: Report Card Burma 1 Apr – 30 Jun 2003

National Convention that has been adjourned since 1996.”³³ No timeframe for the roadmap is given.

- 17 May 2004** **National Convention is reconvened.** The NLD and eight other major ethnic political parties refuse to participate because of the regime’s refusal to amend the undemocratic objectives and processes of the convention.³⁴
- 9 July 2004** **National Convention is adjourned for an undetermined period.**³⁵
- January 2009** The fate of Rohingyas, a muslim ethnic group oppressed by the Burmese authorities, makes international headlines when Thailand decides to send back to sea several Rohingyas boats that accosted on Thai shores. The scandale that followed forced Thailand to provide an official explanation and to grant access to the United Nations’ High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to meet the survivors.
- 29 April 2009** At the end of its first general meeting in over a decade, the NLD sets the conditions for participating in the 2010 elections: release of all political prisoners, review of the constitution, and “inclusive free and fair” elections “under international supervision.”
- 13 May 2009** SPDC authorities transfer Daw Aung Suu Kyi to Insein prison to face trial for allegedly violating the conditions of her house arrest following the 3 May intrusion of an American man into her compound.
- 13 August 2010** The military junta announces that general elections will take place on November 7th. The USDP, a party created by Prime Ministry Thein Sein is already the front-runner of an electoral process from which the LND (AUNG San Suu Kyi’s party) has been excluded.
- 7 November 2011** The elections take place, as planned. Numerous electoral frauds, irregularities, threats, intimidation and harassment cases as well as a lack of independent control were reported on the day and on previous days. The USDP, made up of members of the junta, wins over 80% of parliamentary seats.
- 13 November 2011** Aung San Suu Kyi is freed from house arrest. She spent 15 of the past 21 years being deprived of her freedom.
- March 2011** Setting up of a new « civilian » government composed of 80% of military or former military. Thein Sein, former Prime Minister of the junta, becomes President. A new parliament is set up. 76% of MPs are military or former military. The 2008 Constitution, written by the military without any real consultation with the democratic opposition or ethnic groups, comes into force. It legalizes military rule and does not recognize any political or cultural rights or autonomy to ethnic minorities.

³³ NLM (30 Aug 03) Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt clarifies future policies and programmes of State

³⁴ Asian Tribune (2 Jun 04) Burma: A National Convention in the Absence of Representatives-elect

³⁵ Irrawaddy (5 Jul 04) Burma’s NC to Take an Intermission



Info Birmanie

74, rue Notre Dame des champs

75006 Paris - France

www.info-birmanie.org

email : infobirmanie@gmail.com