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Myanmar's Legendary Irrawaddy River

Cruising the Road to Mandalay

From fields dotted with ancient pagodas to farmers tilling the land with oxen and wooden plows, the scenes along the Irrawaddy River transport you back in time. Unchanged by the swift progress of our modern world, fisherman still leg-row their small skiffs as harvesters work the paddies beneath the shadows of rice paddy hats. Explore the 2,500-year-old civilization that sprang from these shores as you journey the fabled 'Road to Mandalay.'

Mandalay, an evocative city immortalized in the poem by Rudyard Kipling, is at the head of Myanmar's great natural highway: the Irrawaddy River. Once a jewel in the crown of colonial rule, this important waterway, in what was once called Burma, was a key trade route between India and China. In a bygone century, this focal point of Burmese life was coveted by the British for its direct access to the east as well as its handsome production of rice exports.



The Irrawaddy River Looking South, Myanmar; Francisco Anzola, Flickr

Among the ancient cities that line the banks of the Irrawaddy is the fabled port of Yangon, known as Rangoon under British rule. Here, along eight miles of riverbank, thousands of Buddhist pagodas pepper the fields. Like golden mushrooms, their spires and pinnacles dot the landscape. It was believed that building religious monuments was auspicious for the Burmese king, so skilled artisans set about flowering this small plot of earth in A.D. 849 with what may originally have been upwards of 10,000 structures. While many were destroyed by fire or earthquake, nearly 4,000 pagodas remain in one of the world's most impressive sites.

Belmond's Road to Mandalay is an opulent small-craft riverboat that cruises this legendary waterway. Each sailing offers the best in luxury service and Burmese hospitality—as well as access to many sites accessible only from the shores of the Irrawaddy.

For more information, call your travel agent or a Travcoa Journey Consultant at 1-800-992-2003, email info@travcoa.com and be sure to check out our private itineraries and small-group tours to Myanmar.

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