Myanmar

Endemics of Remote Asia

February to May (14 days)

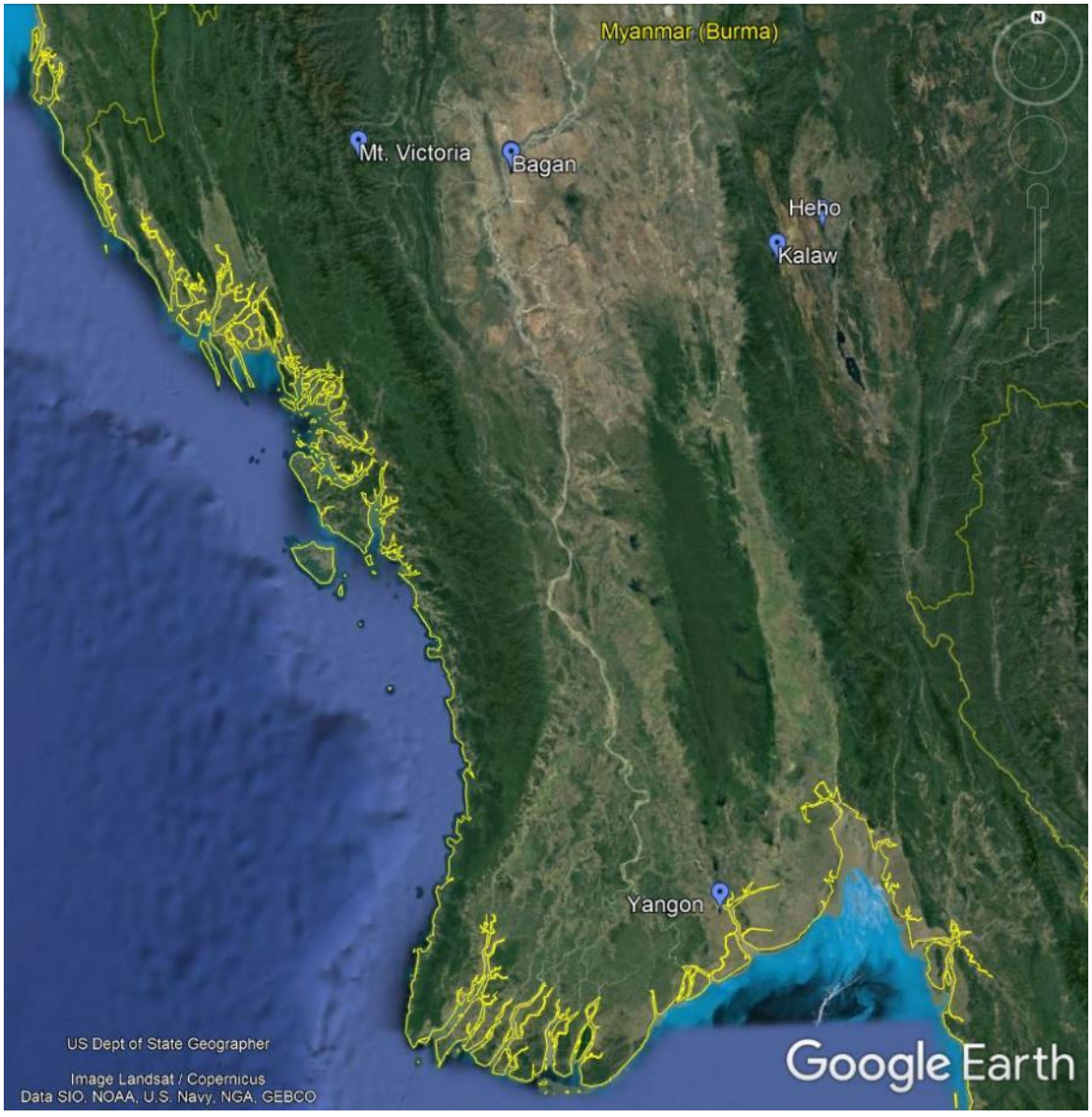


Jerdon's Minivet by Glen Valentine

Myanmar (Burma), saddled between Thailand and India, remains a poorly known birding destination, partly due to the difficulty in obtaining necessary permits for visiting the more interesting birding localities. However, with the help of our local operator, we have obtained permission to visit some of these seldom-visited hotspots, affording us the fantastic opportunity to bird in some of the planet's least explored birding localities! To the north of Yangon (Rangoon) lie the Irrawaddy plains, holding not only important populations of declining waterbirds, but also supporting no less than four endemic species (the striking Hooded Treepie, Jerdon's Minivet, White-throated Babbler and Burmese Bush Lark), which are confined to the dry forest and thorn scrub characteristic of this endemic-rich area. A good proportion of our time will be spent at the southern end of the eastern mountains known as the Chin Hills, in the vicinity of Mount Victoria. These mountains form part of the Eastern Himalayas, another endemic-rich bird region that also sustains several species only seen by a handful of intrepid birders during the past 40 years. These include White-browed Nuthatch, Mount Victoria Babax, Burmese Bushtit, Black-bibbed Tit and Chin Hills Wren-Babbler, among many others. Our final destinations will be in the southern Shan State, situated in the mountains of central Burma. Here we will explore the broad-leaved forests around Kalaw for Burmese Yuhina, another range-restricted species, and a good selection of other hill forest birds. Lastly, we will visit Inle Lake to search for the highly localised Jerdon's Bush Chat and near-endemic Collared Myna, amongst a wealth of interesting wetland species.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Yangon, visit Shwedagon Pagoda**
Day 2	**Yangon, flight to Bagan**
Day 3	**Bagan area**
Day 4	**Bagan to Mt. Victoria**
Days 5 to 8	**Mt. Victoria area**
Day 9	**Mt. Victoria to Bagan**
Day 10	**Bagan, flight to Heho, transfer to Kalaw**
Day 11	**Kalaw area**
Day 12	**Kalaw to Inle**
Day 13	**Inle area, flight to Yangon via Heho**
Day 14	**Yangon area (Hlawga Park) & final departure**



Birding sites in detail

Shwedagon Pagoda. We begin our tour of the seldom-visited land of Myanmar (previously known as Burma) in the country's capital, Yangon (Rangoon) with some introductory birding and sightseeing at the famous icon of Yangon, the incredible Shwedagon Pagoda. We can expect to see species such as Little Cormorant, Oriental Darter, Indian Pond Heron, Oriental Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Brown Shrike, Common and Dark-necked Tailorbirds and White Wagtail. As the day draws to a close, millions of bats begin to emerge from the temple and fly off into the evening sky to feed. This really is an amazing spectacle to witness and, combined with the backdrop of the Pagoda, it will undoubtedly prove to be one of the highlights of the trip!



Shwedagon Pagoda by Glen Valentine

Bagan area. Bagan is world-famous for their more than 2 000 temples and pagodas that were built between 700 – 1 100 years ago. Birding here will, therefore, give us an opportunity to marvel at these amazing historical structures.

We'll begin with some iintroductory birding in the open, acacia and euphorbia studded savannah around the multitude of magnificent temples that decorate this extremely picturesque area. The dry countryside of the Central Burmese Plains supports four key endemics: Burmese Bush Lark, White-throated Babbler, attractive but elusive Hooded Treepie and Jerdon's Minivet, and we will search hard to find these sought-after species during our time here. We will also be on the lookout for more widespread but no less desirable species, such as Vinous-breasted Starling, colourful Indian Roller, striking White-throated Kingfisher, Jungle and Great Mynas, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Eurasian Collared and Red Turtle Doves, White-eyed and Crested Honey Buzzards, Thick-billed, Yellow-streaked and Dusky Warblers, Tickell's Leaf Warbler, Eurasian Wryneck, Common Iora, endearing Spotted Owlet, radiant Oriental Green Bee-eater, attractive Siberian Rubythroat, noisy Streak-eared Bulbul, Brown and Burmese Shrikes, Plain-backed Sparrow, elaborate Eurasian Hoopoe and also the impressive Laggar Falcon, which often perches atop the pagodas.



White-browed Nuthatch by Glen Valentine

The surrounding paddy fields and open, scrubby areas may yield Chinese Francolin, Grey-breasted, Plain and Brown Prinias, Rain Quail, Barred Buttonquail, Scaly-breasted Munia and Long-billed, Richard's and Paddyfield Pipits. Depending on conditions, we may also bird a few of the small, seasonal pans that are dotted around this beautiful region, where we could find Common Teal, Asian Openbill, Chinese and Indian Pond Herons, Common Snipe, Wood

Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover, and Red-wattled Lapwing, amongst many other species. In the early evening, we will position ourselves in an area where we have a good chance of seeing Indian Nightjar and Western Barn Owl.



Small Pratincole by Glen Valentine

Irrawaddy River. We take a boat trip in search of the area's special waterbirds and riverine species. The large sandbanks at the river's edge often hold good numbers of Small Pratincole as well as Western Yellow, Eastern Yellow and White Wagtails, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Ruddy Shelduck and a host of waders, including Green Sandpiper, Pacific Golden, and Kentish Plovers, Spotted and Common Redshanks and Temminck's and Little Stints. We will also be on the lookout for the specialised Sand Lark, while stands of tall grass and reeds offer the desirable White-tailed Stonechat (usually in amazingly good numbers here). If we are lucky, we may even find the graceful Pied Harrier, one of the world's most beautiful and striking harriers, soaring over the reedbeds, as well as Striated Babbler, Baya Weaver and Red Avadavat skulking in the undergrowth.

Bagan to Mt. Victoria. Beginning early, we cross the Irrawaddy River at Chauk in our 4WD vehicles and make our way to the remote and seldom-visited Mount Victoria in the Chin Hills. The trip will take us via Nagabwet Forest Reserve, through areas of dry savannah where further chances exist for many of the Bagan species, especially the often-tricky Jerdon's Minivet and the scarce Hooded Treepie - which is undoubtedly one of Myanmar's most impressive but elusive endemics! The route also takes us through dry dipterocarp forest and mixed mid and low-altitude deciduous and bamboo forests that support a host of fabulous and seldom-seen species.



White-rumped Falcon by Glen Valentine

One of the day's very special target birds is the scarce and habitat-specific White-rumped Falcon. Other great birds that we will be on the lookout for in this interesting habitat include Burmese Nuthatch, White-browed Fantail, Small Minivet, Common Woodshrike and Golden-fronted Leafbird. Additional noteworthy species possible today include Crested Serpent Eagle, the scarce and attractive Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle, Asian Barred Owlet, the popular Himalayan Flameback, impressive White-bellied Woodpecker, Pin-striped Tit-Babbler, Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Blue-throated Blue and Taiga Flycatchers, the rare and extremely elusive Pale-headed Woodpecker, Lesser and Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes, showy Rufous Treepie, Rosy and Scarlet Minivets, Hair-crested and Bronzed Drongos, Maroon and Black-hooded Orioles, an amazing five species of Parakeet: Blossom-headed, Red-breasted, Alexandrine, Rose-ringed and the localised Grey-headed – and many more! If we are fortunate enough to find a fruiting tree, we could even be rewarded with an incredible display of beautiful barbets (Coppersmith, Lineated and Blue-throated) as well as Yellow-footed Green Pigeon.

We expect to reach the small village of Kanpetlet by late afternoon, where our villa is situated at about 1 400m (4 200ft) above sea level to the south-east of Mt. Victoria and is the perfect base from which to explore the mountain.



White-throated Babbler by Glen Valentine

Mount Victoria. We have several days to explore the 180m^2 (470km^2) Nat-ma-taung (Mt. Victoria) National Park, which is home to one of Myanmar's most famous endemics, the splendid White-browed Nuthatch! This park is also one of Asia's most exciting birding destinations and supports a great diversity of habitats. These include mixed Oak and Rhododendron forests towards the 3 110m (10 200ft) summit, montane bamboo, broad-leaved evergreen forest, temperate pine forest, secondary growth with tall grass and scrub, as well as semi-cultivated fields and grasslands. With such a great diversity of habitats, it's not surprising that the park is so exceedingly rich in birdlife.

A further two extremely localised endemics, Burmese Bushtit and Mt. Victoria Babax, are almost exclusively found on the mountain and we will also concentrate our efforts on finding the host of near-endemics (Brown-capped and Striped Laughingthrushes, Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler and Chin Hills Wren-Babbler). While journeying from our accommodation to and from the top of the mountain, we will be on the lookout for some very rare species that could, with much luck, include Mrs Hume's Pheasant, Mountain Bamboo Partridge, and the near-mythical Blyth's Tragopan. All these species have been seen on previous Rockjumper trips to Mt. Victoria, but we would have to be extremely fortunate to see any of these exceptionally rare species!

Mt. Victoria also supports a multitude of other exciting species that we hope to see during our time here. Higher altitude forest specialities include Black-bibbed Tit, Burmese Bushtit, Mount Victoria Babax, Brown-capped and Assam Laughingthrushes, Grey-sided and Eye-browed Thrushes, Darjeeling, Rufous-bellied and Crimson-breasted Woodpeckers, Bar-tailed Treecreeper, White-browed, Chestnut-vented and White-tailed Nuthatches, Streak-throated Barwing, brightly-coloured Large and Vivid Niltavas, Grey Sibia, White-browed and Rufous-winged Fulvettas, stunning Mrs. Gould's Sunbird, extremely scarce but beautiful Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker, Black-eared, Blyth's and rare Black-headed Shrike-Babblers, Blue-winged, Red-tailed and Bar-throated Minlas, the much desired Himalayan Cutia, and understory skulkers such as Chestnut-headed Tesia and both Scaly-breasted and Chin Hills Wren-Babblers. Open areas at higher altitudes offer Blue-fronted Redstart, Black-throated Prinia, Brown-flanked Bush Warbler, Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, Spot-winged Grosbeak, and the exquisite Fire-tailed Sunbird - while we will also keep our eyes peeled for Asian House Martin and Black Eagle overhead.



Streak-throated Barwing by Glen Valentine

Large, dense stands of mid-altitude understory bamboo harbour some very special species, including Black-throated and Spot-breasted Parrotbills and Broad-billed and Whistler's Warblers. Finally, we will also spend some time birding the lower slopes of Mt. Victoria where a whole host of different but equally exciting species can be found. Included in this fantastic suite are Blue-winged and Striped Laughingthrushes, shy and unobtrusive Red-faced Liocichla, Spotted and Pygmy Wren-babblers, secretive and evasive Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler, Hume's Treecreeper, shy Rusty-capped and Nepal Fulvettas, Slaty-backed Flycatcher, furtive Scaly Thrush, Crested Finchbill, Rusty-fronted Barwing and Green-backed Tit. Early morning drives up the mountain are likely to yield Grey Nightjar, and we will also take time out in the evenings to search for Hodgson's Frogmouth, a highly desirable and impressive nocturnal species, with chances also existing for Brown Wood Owl and both Mountain and Collared Scops Owls. Mammals that may be encountered during our time on the mountain include Western Striped and Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrels, Yellow-throated Marten and Burmese Hare; and if we are extremely fortunate, perhaps a Leopard Cat!



Spectacled Barwing by Glen Valentine

Heho to Kalaw. We will make a few stops on this drive that could yield Black-collared Starling and the sought-after and near-endemic Collared Myna. With a lot of luck, we could even connect with the rare and localised Rufous-winged Buzzard and migratory Grey-headed Lapwing. After another delicious lunch in town, we will then venture into an area of secondary forest, grassland, scattered bushes, and pine forest that hugs the hills around town in search of some interesting species such as Spectacled Barwing, Rusty-cheeked and White-browed Scimitar Babblers, White-browed Laughingthrush, Brown-breasted and Flavescent Bulbuls, Crested Finchbill and Chestnut Bunting.

Kalaw area. We will spend time birding an area of pine forest, secondary growth and adjacent fields and thickets, as well as a delightful patch of mid-altitude, broad-leaved forest near town. Specialities that we will be on the lookout for in the early morning include White-browed Laughingthrush, eye-catching Daurian Redstart, Black-collared Starling, Striated Grassbird and Black-tailed Crake, while Slender-billed Oriole, Eurasian Jay and the localised Black-headed Greenfinch will be sought in the nearby pine forest. Our walk up into the hills passes through stands of tall, weedy grass and thickets and here we will search hard for the difficult Spot-breasted Parrotbill as well as Hill and Brown Prinias.



Chin Hills Wren-Babbler by Glen Valentine

The main focus of the morning though will be a beautiful and luxuriant grove of hill forest that is probably the best and most accessible site on earth to see the extremely range-restricted and

elusive Burmese Yuhina. Besides the Yuhina, other noteworthy species we will also be on the lookout for include Streaked Spiderhunter, sensational Orange-bellied Leafbird, iridescent Black-throated Sunbird, fast-moving Yunnan Fulvetta, Rufous-capped and Golden Babblers, White-throated Fantail and the secretive Silver-eared Laughingthrush. In the afternoon, we will visit another nearby forest patch in search of any species we may have missed this morning, as well as Spot-throated Babbler, Grey-crowned Warbler, Dark-backed Sibia and Black, Mountain and Puff-throated Bulbuls.



Collared Myna by Glen Valentine

Yay Aye Kan Reservoir. After a brief drive to a nearby monastery in the early morning, we will embark on our walk to the Yay Aye Kan Reservoir, which is surrounded by excellent mid-altitude broad-leaved forest, our main focal point of the day. The walk is not very far and is easily negotiated along a wide, gravel road. The track passes through pine forest, thickets and paddy fields and interesting birds that we may see along the way include Red-billed Blue Magpie, Hill Prinia, Oriental Turtle Dove, Scaly-breasted and White-rumped Munias, Slender-billed Oriole, Eurasian Jay, Black-headed Greenfinch, Daurian Redstart and Greater Flameback. We hope to arrive at the area of broad-leaved forest in the early morning to maximise our chances of seeing the area's many special birds.

The forest edge here harbours White-browed Scimitar Babbler, Spectacled Barwing and Dark-backed Sibia, among others. The trail then continues through the luscious forest interior and this is where we will focus our efforts on trying to find Ashy, Black-crested, Mountain and Black Bulbuls, beautiful Silver-eared Mesia, the rarely seen Black-breasted Thrush, Maroon Oriole, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Black-throated Bushtit, Oriental, Japanese and Chestnut-flanked White-eyes, White-bellied Erpornis, Scarlet-faced Liocichla, Hill Blue Flycatcher, handsome White-crowned Forktail and the secretive Slaty-bellied Tesia. Streaked Wren-Babbler and Asian Stubtail are also found in the area, although both species are rare and tough to see. In addition, the region hosts further exciting species, including Red-headed Trogon and Silver-breasted and Long-tailed Broadbills although these desirable species appear to be rather rare, elusive, and unpredictable here. We also hope to locate a good selection of wintering or migrant warblers, including Martens's and Grey-crowned Warblers, as well as Hume's and Davison's Leaf Warblers, while further chances exist for Burmese Yuhina.



Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler by Glen Valentine

Upon exiting the forest at the reservoir, we may encounter the smart White-capped Redstart, Grey Wagtail and Green Sandpiper, with Red-rumped Swallow and Himalayan Swiftlet overhead and if we are very fortunate, Black-

tailed Crake could reveal itself at the edge of the rank stream-side vegetation.



Jerdon's Bush Chat by Glen Valentine

Inle Lake. We will head out for a boat ride on the famous Inle Lake, where one cannot help but admire the Inle boatmen standing on one leg, the other leg wrapped around the oar and paddling, while the hands were held free to manipulate and manoeuvre the fishing net – quite an amazing sight indeed! The lake is situated on the Shan Plateau at about 900m (3,000ft) above sea level. Here we will be searching for the highly localised and habitat restricted Jerdon's Bush Chat and Collared Myna. Several other noteworthy reed-dwelling specialities also occur, and these include Black-browed, Oriental and Clamorous Reed Warblers, Greater and Lesser Coucals, Striated Grassbird, Bluethroat, skulking Chestnut-capped Babbler and Yellow-bellied Prinia, with an outside possibility for the secretive Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler. Species occupying areas of shallowly flooded grass include the striking Citrine Wagtail, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas and Cotton Pygmy Goose, while the vast open waters of Inle could yield several migrant waterfowl such as Lesser Whistling, Indian Spot-billed, Tufted and Ferruginous Ducks, Ruddy Shelduck, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Garganey and Common Teal. Thousands of Brown-headed Gulls and a few Black-headed Gulls usually follow the boats as we motor along, while both Eastern and Western Marsh Harriers are likely to be seen soaring low over vast expanses of reed-beds.



Hodgson's Frogmouth by Glen Valentine

Hlawga Park. This area of mostly dry, mixed lowland forest and scattered small wetlands is home to a wide array of interesting species, many of which will be new for us on the trip. Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters perch up in the open while understory species include Black-naped Monarch, Puff-throated Babbler, shy Racket-tailed Treepie, White-crested and Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes, White-rumped Shama, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Stripe-throated Bulbul, Forest Wagtail, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Green-billed Malkoha, Indochinese Cuckooshrike and with much luck, the scarce, nomadic, and highly sought-after Pale-capped Pigeon. We might also see the beautiful Finlayson's Squirrel along with introduced Wild Boar, Rhesus Macaque, Sambar, and Hog Deer. Mixed flock species that we hope to see include Rosy Minivet, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, Black-naped Oriole and Greater Racket-tailed Drongo; while the small, open wetlands could produce Asian Openbill, Oriental Darter, White-breasted Waterhen, Osprey, Cotton Pygmy Goose and Green Sandpiper, amongst others.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

This tour is made available through our Tailor-made tours department. To explore this offering further for pricing, precise day to day itinerary, inclusions & exclusions, or to tailor the tour to your personal requirements, please contact our Tailor-made team on tailormade@rockjumper.com

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- A fair amount of time is spent in vehicles, and we do also undertake 3 internal flights, as we do have to cover fair distances to get to the best birding areas. The more luggage you pack, the less room there is in the vehicle (plus you may also have to pay for overweight luggage on flights!), so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lbs) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lbs) for hand luggage.
- Leeches do occur in some of the reserves; encountering them really depends on how much recent rain there has been. If you do have leech socks, it might, therefore, be a good idea to bring them along; otherwise, tucking your long pants into your socks is usually sufficient to deter them from latching on.
- Fitness: This Myanmar tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health as most of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. However, this will generally be done on flat, easy trails and downhill along quiet backroads. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure. Please also note that for much of the tour you will be far away from modern medical facilities.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts with lunch on day 1 followed by afternoon birding at the spectacular Shwedagon Pagoda. We recommend that you arrive on the previous day. The tour will conclude after lunch on day 14 in Yangon.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Yangon International Airport, Yangon (IATA: RGN), is the main port of entry for international flights in Myanmar.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.