

## AT A GLANCE

**Official name:** Republic of the Union of Myanmar

**National flag:**



**Capital city:** Naypyidaw

**Population:** The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has a population of over **54 million (2016)**. Myanmar is an ethnically diverse society. There are over one hundred ethnic groups in Myanmar that can be roughly divided into four: **Tibeto-Burmese, Mon-Khmer, Karen** and **Thai-Chinese**.

The first group includes the main Burmese people of Myanmar called Myanmar or Bama and more than 30 smaller tribes.

The other three groups are less diverse, but certainly not homogeneous. For a long time the ethnic variety of Myanmar has been the cause of many conflicts, which has also hindered economic development.

Approximately 2-3 million Karen live in Myanmar today, forming **the third biggest ethnic group** in the country. The Karen are mainly farmers and most of them live in the south-east, near the border with Thailand, and in the west of Myanmar, near the Indian border.

The women of the **Padaung tribe**, which is a **subgroup of the Karen**, are known for **wearing heavy rings of brass around their necks** and are called **“giraffe women”** since the heavy rings push down the shoulders and elongate the neck.

The Shan consist of various tribes and their history in Myanmar dates back to the 3rd century BC. They are found today in the border regions of the north, north-west, east and on the borders with Laos and Thailand. Most of them are Buddhists, although animism still plays a significant role in everyday life.

The Mon, today found mainly in the regions around Mawlamyine and Bago, had a big impact on arts and culture. They are Buddhists and have their own language. Today, approximately **1.3 million Mon** live in Myanmar.

The **Kachin** live in the remotest northern state. They include about 62 different tribes, some Christians and some animists. They have a unique way of constructing their wooden houses.

**Religion:** Myanmar is a **multi-religious country**. There is no official state religion, but the government shows **preference for Theravada Buddhism**, the majority religion with almost 80 percent of Myanmar's population as followers

**Time zone:** **GMT/UTC +6.5**

**Electricity:** Myanmar uses **220V**, and a mixture of flat 2-pin, round 2-pin or 3-pin plugs. It is recommended to bring a universal plug adaptor.

**Dialing code:** +95

**Emergency numbers:** Police **199**, fire **191**, ambulance **199**

**Internet:** International phone calls can be arranged at the Central Telephone & Telegraph Office at the corner of Ponsodan and Mahabandoola Streets in Yangon. International Direct Dial calls are also available at most hotels and at many public call offices (often a phone in a shop), but they are expensive. **The only mobile telephone network is the MPT GSM network** provided by the Myanmar Government's Post and Telecommunication agency. This works on the GSM900 band, so is visible to multi-band GSM phones. However, MPT has no international roaming arrangements, so manual attempts to connect to the network are refused. If your own mobile telephone can detect the MPT GSM network, then you may be able to buy a US\$20 SIM card which will work for 28 days.

**Phone:** Telephone: International Direct Dial (IDD) services are available at most hotels but can be expensive. There is a mobile phone network in Burma, but you probably won't be able to access it via roaming.