

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Myanmar is popularly known as the Land of Festivals because of the countless religious and cultural festivals that take place all year round. Festivals can be divided into two types, nation-wide and regional. As Myanmar culture is closely intertwined with Buddhism, most of Myanmar's festivals centre around religious events.

THE FULL MOON OF TABAUNG - MAGHA PUJA DAY (FEBRUARY OR MARCH)



The Southeast Asian countries Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar are known for their many colorful and enjoyable festivals. One of the most popular is Magha Puja or Sangha Day, an important Buddhist festival that extends across many cultures and beliefs. It is therefore unsurprising that this ancient celebration is the biggest and most eagerly awaited of all celebrations in Southeast Asia. The festival takes place on the full moon day of the third lunar month, which falls around the last week of February or in early March. In Myanmar, Magha Puja is called the “full moon of Tabaung or Tabodwe”. It begins at the new moon of the month of Tabodwe in the traditional Burmese calendar and continues until the full moon. The celebration takes place in pagodas and temples across the country with a nakyake shitsu ceremony of offerings to the 28 Buddhas (from Tanhankara to Shakyamuni), followed by a ten-day continuous recital of the Patthana (the last book of the Pali Abhidhamma)—a Buddhist scripture on the 24 causes of worldly phenomena. Traditionally, Buddhists visit temples on the full moon of Tabodwe to make offerings to the monks. It is also a day when devout Buddhists choose to fast or eat modestly, do good deeds, and avoid negative and inconsiderate actions.

THINGYAN FESTIVAL (APRIL)



This festival is known as the Water Festival or Myanmar's Traditional New Year Festival. 'Thingyan' means “moving from one year to another”. Thingyan festival is the most unique and colourful with the merriest occasion in Myanmar which lasts for 3 to 4 days and falls on the last four days before Myanmar New Year day, which is in the second week of April roughly on the

Everything is possible

twelfth or thirteenth, according to the Gregorian calendar. During Thingyan days the people throwing water each other since the Myanmar believe that Thingyan water has the power to cleanse the evil and sins of the old year. Elaborately decorated pavilions and pandals called Mandats are built beside of almost every street in front of government offices and private business establishments. Special Thingyan songs play all the time. Some pavilions have raised platform for traditional dance performance. It is really eye-catching, beautiful Myanmar damsels sporting springs of yellow Padauk blossoms in their hair and a round patch of traditional Thanakha on their cheeks. All the people, mostly young boys and girls, some not-so-young, sometimes parents and kids ride on the open top jeeps, and pick-up trucks come to the pavilions to play water and to see the dance.

THADINGYUT LIGHTS FESTIVAL (OCTOBER)



Thadingyut Lights Festival is held on the full moon day of Thadingyut in October marks the end of the Buddist Lent. It lasts for three days during which houses and streets in cities and towns are festively decorated and illuminated. People crowd into their local pagodas to offer alms and make merit. Younger people also pay homage to their parents, elders and teachers. After three months of quiet, Myanmar takes on a festive mood again. The three-day Festival of Lights during Thadingyut symbolizes the return of the Buddha from heaven and angels lighting the path of his descent to earth.

PHAUNGDAW OO PAGODA FESTIVAL, INLE LAKE (OCTOBER)



The Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda is located in Ywama and is an important religious site in the Shan State. The center shrine in the main hall of Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda houses five small golden Buddha images. The Buddha images have been covered with so many gold leaves that it is impossible to see their original structure. During the important Phaung Daw Oo festival in September (or October) four of those Buddha images are ferried on a replica of a royal barge throughout Inle Lake for people to pay homage. Fairs, dances, the leg rowers' boat races and general festivities counterbalance the more austere ceremonial aspect. This is the biggest celebration in the Shan state.

TAZAUNGDAING LIGHTS FESTIVAL (NOVEMBER)

Tazaungdaing Lights Festival is held on the full moon day of Tazaungmon according to the Myanmar Calendar (mid-November). Houses and public buildings are colorfully illuminated everywhere. Robes and other requisites are offered to monks with the special offering of Mathothigan - a robe that is woven in one single day - held on the eve of the full moon. Dedicated teams of weavers compete with one another to complete the robes, which are then reverently offered to images of Buddha.