

ASEAN EXCEPTIONAL URBAN HERITAGE

10 CITIES UNDER ZOOM



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Myanmar

Laos PDR

Thailand

Cambodia

Vietnam

Philippines

Malaysia

Singapore

Brunei

Indonesia

10 Cities Under Zoom

At crossroads of cultures, Southeast Asia has been from start an attractive land to explore in modern times. At the confluences of two major Asian civilisations, China and India, the region has seen in its ancient history the development of Hindu and Buddhist Kingdoms Southeast Asia attracted as early as the 7th century the first traders along the famed Silk Road.

Traders came from the Arabic Peninsula through Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent in parallel to the first Chinese traders. They generally blended easily with local populations. At the start of the 12th century, the first local kingdoms converted to Islam with more Kingdoms adopting the new faith in the 13th century.

The next wave of foreigners arriving into the area would have also lasting consequences on the political and socio-economic evolution of the region. In the 16th century, the first groups of Europeans reached the coasts of Southeast Asia. They were not only traders but also conquerors. The Spanish term of “Conquistador” has been widely used across all languages to generally describe European soldiers — coming first from Portugal and Spain— who often used violence to establish their power. They also helped spreading Christianity in the region through missionaries. Ports turned into the base to spread Christianity.

The colonialisation of Southeast Asia was generally motivated by trade, especially for spices –pepper, cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon – followed later by textiles and finally primary resources, such as, wood, rubber and tin. The Portuguese were the first Europeans in the region, arriving in the Sultanate of Malacca as early as 1511. They were however chased away by two emerging maritime superpowers, Spain and Holland. The first took over the Philippines in 1599 and the second started to spread into Java, Indonesia in 1619.

Wars for trade influence grew further as British and French started to look at Southeast Asia. Britain established its first trading post in Penang and in Singapore in 1819. In 1824, the British Army settled in Rangoon, Burma with three Anglo-Burmese Wars giving to Britain the total control of the country by 1886. In 1862, Vietnam gave three provinces to France, paving the way to the establishment of the first French colony of Cochinchina in 1864. The rest of Vietnam territory and then Cambodia and Laos would then form at the end of the 19th century.

Siam escaped colonisation with the Siamese monarchs negotiating with the surrounding colonial powers for the integrity of Siam in return for trade agreements and exchange of territories. However, European influence gained ground in Siam as the Thai monarchs particularly King Rama IV, Rama V the Great and in some ways, King Rama VI – embarked into the modernisation of the Siamese society and economy.

In the Philippines, three centuries of Spanish rules were broken by a revolution for independence by local Filipinos. However, the revolution was rapidly overruled by a war between Spain and the United States which finally concluded into Spain ceding the Philippines to the USA in 1898 followed by a new war between the Philippines and the USA and the victory of US troops in 1902.

These waves of immigrants and foreigners have left their mark in the region. Gastronomy, religious practices, languages, the way to dress or even festivals all bear in some ways the various influences and identities of people who have settled over centuries in the region. But not only this. Architecture is also a very strong benchmark as it is often considered a mark of power. In former colonial empires, architecture was indeed the most visible symbol of the colonial influence. In the years after independence, new governments across all of Southeast Asia looked at giving a proud identity to their country through architectural masterpieces.

Cities such as Yangon, Singapore or Georgetown exulted a sort of “Britishness” through imposing structures, from Government’s offices and residences to churches or museums. French did the same in Indochina, even transforming Hanoi to turn it into the Indochinese pendant of Paris; Intramuros in Manila, the old Batavia area (the district of ‘Kota’ in today Jakarta) or Bandung in Indonesia have a distinctive European atmosphere.

What about Thailand? The Kingdom did not escape the craze for European architecture. King Rama V and King Rama VI asked European architects— mostly from Italy but also from Austria, Britain or Germany— to transform Bangkok into a modern metropolis— meaning at that time to become European.

This Heritage Trail is not really a circuit as the three precedent ASEAN Heritage Trails. It is more a tribute to 10 urban settlements which can be considered remarkable for their unique architectural and historical value. That means that this trail does not necessarily look at well-established architectural treasures such as Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Bagan in Myanmar, Borobudur in Indonesia or Ayutthaya and Sukhothai in Thailand. It looks more at the uniqueness of a city from its urban atmosphere and its architectural layout. It also helps to highlight and give a new identity to secondary destinations— often neglected by tourists and potential travellers.

This trail is just another way to show that urban destinations—even for cities as famous as Bangkok and Singapore, still will delight visitors (including returning travellers) through hidden treasures of architecture. Each city’s portrait is just here to give tourists a glimpse into a fabulous history and encourage them to explore 10 ASEAN urban destinations with exceptional heritage.

THAILAND

Government House
(Villa Norasingh)



LA DOLCE VITA IN BANGKOK DUSIT DISTRICT

Did you once wondered why in the old part of Bangkok, they are so many European-style looking buildings? In the late 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, Siamese monarchs had a strong desire to modernize Bangkok and show to the world that the city was on par with its counterparts all across Asia.

King Rama V the Great and King Rama VI invited then a dozens of Italian architects and engineers but also some Austrian, British and German to come to build up the Thai capital. For a few decades, the Royal Public Works Department was headed by Italian people, mostly originated from Turin.

The architects hosted by the Kingdom gave to Bangkok a unique heritage of European buildings mostly inspired by the Italian Renaissance or Baroque time. Constructions included palaces for the Royal family and noble people but also rail stations, bridges, offices for ministries and public institutions or even temples, churches and schools. They are probably close to 200 structures today bearing a distinctive Italian Heritage around town. This European style was so much in vogue that rich merchants and public servants replicated the style with often grand Italian looking structures. It is not rare when walking around Bangkok —particularly along the Chao Praya River— to bump into a house with distinctive European features.

The passion for European architecture by the Siamese Monarchy shapes Bangkok in a unique way. In contrary to other large cities in Asia such as Hanoi, Jakarta, Rangoon or Singapore, European architecture of Bangkok was not imposed by a foreign power but came from the will of Siamese kings.

The Thai capital can consequently claim to be the only city in Southeast Asia with a comprehensive Italian heritage, which is still visible mostly in the districts of Dusit, Phra Nakhon and Bang Rak— all of them shaping the historical part of the town. For Bangkok travellers, this represents a great opportunity to explore the Dolce Vita side of the Thai capital in the generally quiet lanes of Dusit!

10 TOP not to be Missed



1 Marble Temple (Wat Benchamabophit)

Bangkok, THAILAND

Built exclusively with lavish Carrara marble, Wat Benchamabophit looks so Thai from the first sight. But is it really? Commissioned by King Rama V the Great in 1899, the temple was conceived by Prince Narisara Nuvadtivongs, a half-brother of the King, and designed by Italian engineer and architect Carlo Allegri and Mario Tamagno. Both worked at that time for the Public Works Department. While the temple with its gables and five-tiered roof and its ornaments has a distinctive Thai style, the cruciform shape of the temple, the floor tiles and the stained glass windows are typically Italian. Behind the temples, the garden contains many Western-style pavilions as well as the Wat Benchamabophit School, built as a Tuscany mansion.

Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall



2 Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall

Bangkok, THAILAND

Only currently visible from a distance for the time being, the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall epitomizes the influence of Italy on Thailand. The neo-classical construction with its dome, its columns and statues was built uniquely by Italian craftsmen and architects. The marble was imported from Carrara in Italy. The throne hall was commissioned by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V the Great). Started in 1908, it took seven years to be completed. Nothing was beautiful enough for the new construction at that time. Conceived entirely by Italian architects, engineers and artists, the structure is made of Carrara marble and lavishly decorated with statues and columns while giant frescoes ornate the ceilings. Main architects were Mario Tamagno and Annibale Rigotti. The Hall is not open to the public but can be seen from afar.

3 Parusakawan Palace

Bangkok, THAILAND

A royal residence for Prince Chakrabongse, Parusakawan Palace is a magnificent structure which reflects the taste of the nobility for Europe. The Palace is today the Police Museum and is open generally Tuesday to Friday from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, closed on Saturday, Sunday, Monday and public holidays. Designed by Mario Tamagno, the palace is an extravagant blend of art nouveau and rococo styles. Exterior facades have an Art Nouveau feeling with its porches, its windows decorated with floral motives and its interior stairs. Inside mirrors, chandeliers and frescoes give the palace its distinctive rococo atmosphere. Do not miss the opulent ballroom with its mirrors!



Government House (Villa Norasingh)

4 Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue

Bangkok, THAILAND

The majestic avenue goes from Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall passing the equestrian statue of King Rama V and merges after more than a kilometer into Ratchadamnoen Klang avenue. There are many classical Italian style buildings along the road such as the Royal Thai Army headquarters, the Ministry of Education or the two palaces inside of Parusakawan Palace compound. Notwithstanding the constant traffic of cars – something which is part of Bangkok life–, the avenue is probably the most European in the Thai capital. It is said to have been inspired by the Champs-Élysées in Paris.

5 Government House (Villa Norasingh)

Bangkok, THAILAND

Located on the corner of Phitsanulok and Nakhon Pathom roads, the Government House is a clone structure of a Venetian gothic palace from the 15th century, the Palazzo Ca' d'Oro (Palace of Gold) along Venice Grand Canal. The palace looks like a theatre setting with its loggias and gothic arcades and was achieved in 1926 by Italians Annibale Rigotti and Mario Tamagno. The structure can be seen from the outside only, except on Children's Day (second Saturday in January), where the palace and grounds are open for the public.



6 Ladawan Palace (Wang Ladawan)

Bangkok, THAILAND

The beautiful palace which was the residence of Prince Krommaluang Lopburiramet is now the main office of the Crown Property Bureau. The architecture of the palace is very distinctive with its 3-storey octagonal turret which reminds of Italian Renaissance castles. The recently restored structure has its yellow and white facades decorated with intricate stucco bas reliefs.

7 The Weeping Bridge (Mahatthai Uthit Bridge)

Bangkok, THAILAND

At the start of Ratchadamnoen Klang Avenue, the small Mahatthai Uthit Bridge passes the canal in the direction of the Temple of the Golden Mountain. Built in classical style in 1914 by Carlo Allegri with sculptures of Vittorio Novi, the bridge is ornate with figures of crying women evocating ancient Roman vestals. They grieve the death of King Rama V the Great which occurred in 1910. Next to the Bridge is another structure Phan Fa Lilat Bridge, a typical art nouveau bridge with its large iron sunflowers.



8 King Prajadhipok Museum

Bangkok, THAILAND

Built as an emporium for a British company, the small department store was built in an Italianate style taking its inspiration from a Venetian style palace and crowned by a cupola. It is today a museum dedicated to King Rama VII and is free for visit.

9 Wat Rajathiwat (Samsen Road)

Bangkok, THAILAND

Located north of Dusit district, Wat Rajathiwat is a peaceful temple next to the Chao Phraya River and in the vicinity of a century-old Vietnamese community living in Bangkok. The temple was first built around 1820 but its main hall was reconstructed between 1907 and 1911 by Prince Narisara Nuvativongse. While the temple structure takes its inspiration from Angkor, unique murals inside the main hall were executed by the Italian painter Carlo Rigoli. It depicts the Vessantara Jataka, referring to the Buddha's life in an interesting European academic painting style.

Phya Thai Palace (Phya Thai Military Hospital)



10 Phya Thai Palace (Phya Thai Military Hospital)

Bangkok, THAILAND

The Palace is now integrated into a military hospital but prior to its medical conversion, it used to be the residence of Queen Saovabha, the mother of King Rama VI and then of King Rama VI himself. However, King Rama VII decided to transform the palace into a hotel in 1928 before taking over by Military and turned into a hospital. The pavilion in front of the Palace used to be the Private Lounge for King Rama VI and is now a coffee shop. Pay a look at the throne hall built in Moghul/Art Nouveau style.

Museum

King Chulalongkorn Memorial Exhibition Building (Thawon Watthu Building) is a free exhibition who looks after the biography of King Rama V the Great as well as all the achievement during his reign. It is an excellent complement to a tour of Bangkok Italian heritage as it explains a lot about the King's passion for European arts and architecture and how he transposed his vision to Bangkok. The museum is open from Wednesday to Sunday and stands in the vicinity of the Grand Palace along Sanam Luang.



Gastronomy

Café de Norasingha. The charming coffee lounge is located inside Phya Thai Palace. It is all decorated with frescoes and wood panels in Art nouveau and Renaissance style. Sofas, armchairs and mirrors give the place a sort of Vienna-style atmosphere. Also food is correct without being exceptional, the place is wonderful to enjoy a coffee and a piece of cake while loudspeakers distil classical music.

Flying There

Bangkok two airports in Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi are connected to all major Asian and overseas cities.

BRUNEI

ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHT IN BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

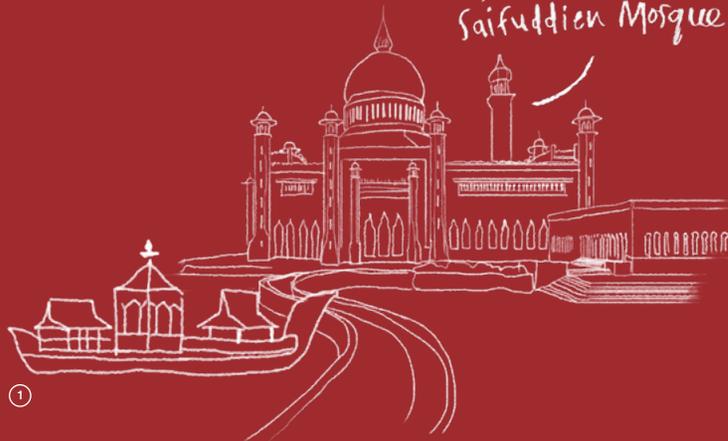
Located on the northern shores of Borneo Island, Brunei capital city is generally a modern town with few historical buildings. Despite its sometimes monotone urban design, Bandar Seri Begawan is surprising for its modern architecture inspired by Arabic and Persian traditions, rather than its traditional Borneo–Malay roots.

The current aspect of Bandar Seri Begawan is the result of its recent history. Developed by British colonial forces from 1906 as Brunei Town, the city had to suffer heavy bombings by Allied troops during World War II following the invasion and capture of the city by the Japanese.

Few historical structures remained after the fights. Meanwhile, buildings which could have deemed as historically interesting were also subsequently demolished between the 1960s and 1980s as the Sultanate new oil wealth translated into modern looking structures. In 1970, Brunei town name was changed into Bandar Seri Begawan which means the Being Blessed Harbour.

As the capital of the only Malay independent sultanate with its roots deeply ingrained into a strict interpretation of Islam, the city has taken its urban inspiration since its independence in 1984 into a traditional Arabic town. With its lavish mosques and palaces, Bandar Seri Begawan however looks a bit like a 1,001-night fairy tale destination. A sunset over the golden dome of its mosques is an unforgettable experience!

Sultan Omar Ali
Saifuddien Mosque



5 TOP not to be missed sightseeings



1 Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque

Bandar Seri Begawan, BRUNEI

It is the oldest mosque in Brunei and is named after the 28th Sultan of Brunei, it is considered to be one of the most beautiful mosques in Asia and it is certainly one of the most photographed in town with its giant golden dome reflecting itself into an artificial lake. It is mostly inspired by Arabic architecture but has also some Malay and Italian style details. The interior of the mosque is open to the public from Saturday to Wednesday, but closed on Thursdays and Fridays. The exterior compound is however open daily from 8am – 8.30pm.

2 Jame' Asr Hassaniil Bolkiah Mosque

Bandar Seri Begawan, BRUNEI

The giant structure is visible already from aircraft overflying the northern part of the capital before landing. The mosque is located in Kampong Kiarong, four km. away from the capital. It is the largest mosque of the Sultanate. It was opened by Brunei Sultan Hassan Bolkiah back to 1994 and is not shy of superlatives. The mosque has 29 golden domes and 4 minarets, its main dome standing at a height of 58 m. It can accommodate 5,000 worshippers.

Ash Shaliheen Mosque



3 Ash Shaliheen Mosque

Bandar Seri Begawan, BRUNEI

It is the newest mosque in town and was designed by Egyptian architect Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil and opened in July 2012. The mosque is different from its other counterparts in Bandar Seri Begawan as it takes its inspiration from Moroccan and Andalucian styles. While the exterior evocates Fez medina, the interior has a distinctive Andalucian atmosphere with its patios and gardens. Its roof is a unique feature as it is retractable making the mosque the most high-tech structure of Brunei. The mosque is next to the office of Brunei Prime Minister.

4 Royal Regalia Museum

Bandar Seri Begawan, BRUNEI

The museum testifies about the lavishly 1,001-night life style of the Sultan of Brunei and his family. Officially opened in 1992, the exhibition gallery shows pictures and artifacts that were used for royal ceremonies in the country. There are plenty of gold and silver weapons, crowns, chariots used for the royal parade and even the golden thrones. Many however are often replicas but it does not matter really. The objects still did not fail to impress! The museum is free to all and is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday - Wednesday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday-Wednesday during Ramadan.

5 Al-Muhtadee Billah Mosque

Bandar Seri Begawan, BRUNEI

Located in Kampong Ayer, the famous floating village in the capital, the mosque has a unique style of architecture as it resembles a pyramid on stilts dominated by four minarets. It is a perfect place to make pictures of Kampong Ayer and fixes on camera a bit of Brunei traditional lifestyle.

Museum

The Malay Technology Museum is in contrary to its name mostly dedicated to highlight the traditions from Brunei ethnics. It presents six examples of 100-year old houses found in Kampong Ayer as well as housing from Dusun, Kedayan and Murut ethnics. It also showcases the various activities of Kampong Ayer such as fishing, weaving, boat drilling and copper casting and technologies used in agriculture. It is opened every day until 5pm except Friday.



Gastronomy

Sapphira Cake House is a place specialized in the confectionary of the Malay/Indonesian traditional cake Kueh Lapis (Layer Cake). As the cake enjoys currently renewed interest all across the Malay Peninsula, Sapphira is offering a wide choice of layer cakes with incredible colours and flavours. The restaurant is also proposing traditional food including a famed Nasi Lemak (coconut rice) served with chicken and chilli sauce. Located near to HSBC bank in the city centre.

Flying There

Bandar Seri Begawan is connected daily to Bangkok by non-stop flights or through Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

INDONESIA

BANDUNG, ASEAN CAPITAL OF ART DECO

Bandung has been dreamed as the ideal capital city for the Dutch during their occupation of Indonesia –at that time the Dutch East Indies. Their ambition was to turn Bandung with its milder climate due to the proximity of West Java mountains into a garden city. Starting at the end of the 19th century, Bandung was given large parks, villas, shadowy streets thanks to an abundance of trees. At the turn of the 20th century, planning started to develop a brand new district north of town, reserved for the administration, public servants as well as education institutions.

The city became at that time an architectural laboratory of new art movements with a string of buildings reflecting the taste of the time for linear, geometrical buildings with a touch of local heritage integrated into it. Even gardens were integrated into the quest for an ideal town. Young architects both local and Dutch showed an incredible creativity to design houses and public buildings adapted to a tropical climate. The mixing of modernist and Indonesian style was called “New Indies” and became indeed the flavour of the moment. As a future capital city, Bandung got the best and received the nickname of “Parijs van Java” for its elegant allure.

According to Bandung Heritage Foundation, there are today some 300 ancient structures spread all across town with probably 100 buildings being considered as art deco or streamline modern — a late Art Deco movement characterized by a minimalist approach. This makes Bandung the largest Art Deco city in the entire Asian continent and one of the major urban centre of this art movement in the world. Efforts to preserve this unique heritage in Asia have been done in the past decade although many needs to be done. Bandung however retains its charming character of a garden city and could still be a model for town’s planning today.



10 TOP not to be Missed sightseeings

1 Gedung Merdeka

Bandung, INDONESIA

Previously home to the Societeit Concordia, a concert and dance hall, the building got its current art deco shape in 1926 by a team of Dutch architects: Wolff Schoemaker, Albert Aalbers and Van Gallen. In 1954, the government of Indonesia chose the structure to host the Asian–African Conference, as it offered the largest meeting facilities in town. Today, it hosts the Museum of the Asian–African Conference.

2 Gedung Sate

Bandung, INDONESIA

Impossible to come to Bandung without wondering in front of Gedung Sate, today West Java Governor’s office and formerly seat of the Dutch East Indies department of Transport, Public Works and Water Management. Dutch architect J. Gerber built the structure between 1920 and 1924 integrating elements of Indonesian architecture, in particular the roof which gave the structure its nickname of Satay Building as it reminds of the shape of a skewer. The building was for a long time closed to the public until parts of the building was opened last year as a historical museum with 4D exhibits.

3 Hotel Savoy Homann

Bandung, INDONESIA

It might not be Bandung trendiest hotel today but Hotel Savoy Homann does not fail to impress with its imposing curved shape and its stylish column where the words S–A–V–O–Y are displayed. The hotel, in existence since 1883, acquired its famous streamline modern shape between 1937 and 1939 while the name Savoy was added for more prestige. Among prestigious guests, the hotel received various Indonesian Sultans, the King of Thailand, Charlie Chaplin or during the Asian African Conference Sukarno, Nehru, Ho Chi Minh and Marshal Tito.

4 Bragaweg (Jalan Braga)

Bandung, INDONESIA

This rather narrow street was however from the 1920s to the 1950s the centre of Bandung elegant life with its cafes and shops. Braga Weg cosmopolitan atmosphere gave to Bandung its nickname of “Parijs van Java”.

5 City Hall Bandung

Bandung, INDONESIA

Designed in 1935 by architect EH de Roo at the corner of an existing park, the city hall resembles more to an opulent mansion than a public administration building. The long two–floor structure blends European art deco ornaments with Javanese–style roofs, two turrets with flagpoles and Chinese–style rounded windows.

6 Jaarbeurs (Gedung Kologdam)

Bandung, INDONESIA

Another work from local Dutch architect Wolff Schoemaker which built the Jaarbeurs back to 1920 as a trade fair exhibition centre. The building has a cross-shaped floor plan and is crowned by three sculptures of naked human figures inspired by modernist movements of the Amsterdam School. The building is not open to the public as it belongs to military. But pictures can be taken from outside.

7 Cipaganti Mosque

Bandung, INDONESIA

This is the most eclectic mosque of Bandung, work of architect R.L.A. Schoemaker. The mosque was built on the ground of a previous mosque with construction lasting from 1933 to 1934. It is an interesting mix of Dutch Art Deco, Javanese and Moghul style architecture.

8 Villa Merah (Red Villa, Jalan Tamansari 78)

Bandung, INDONESIA

Built in 1922 by architect Wolff Schoemaker in the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), the villa takes its name from the use of dark-red bricks and is characterized by its over proportionate roof. The villa was originally a residence attached to the ITB and was turned into a residence hall for lecturers. During the Asia Africa Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, the villa served as a home for Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai.

9 Institut Teknologi Bandung (the Bandung Institute of Technology –ITB)

Bandung, INDONESIA

Originally the Technische Hoogeschool te Bandoeng is an amazing structure created by Henri Maclaine Pont, a Dutch architect born in Indonesia. Constructed in 1920, it is a blend of Bauhaus style and Indonesian architecture. Roofs are an eclectic mix of Sundanese (Bandung local ethnic), Batak (from North Sumatra) and Mentawai (West Sumatra) styles. Roofs are covered by plants while long galleries and passages let the air circulating, maintaining a constant cool atmosphere. The buildings are aligned with Tangkuban Perahu volcano, following ancient cosmological principles.

10 Villa Isola (University of Education or Universitas Pendidikan)

Bandung, INDONESIA

A pure example of streamline modern architecture, Villa Isola is located north on a hill. Its minimalist design evocates an ocean liner with its long balconies and rounded shapes but also the shape of a temple from East Java, according to his creator architect Wolff Schoemaker, who was influenced by Javanese cosmology. Built between 1932 and 1933 for Dutch media tycoon Dominique Berretty, the villa stands along a north-south axis, set between Mount Tangkuban Perahu and Bandung. The building is surrounded by 7.5 hectares of gardens also designed in an art deco style. Following the death of his owner in a plane crash in 1934, the building was converted into a hotel, then into a Japanese military museum and finally into an education institution.

Museum

The Museum Konferensi Asia Afrika is dedicated to the famous conference of non-aligned countries which took place in Bandung in 1955 and affirmed the determination of 29 Asian and African nations to close the chapter of colonialism and go their own political and economic way. The museum shows furniture, objects of the time and displays also photographs of Bandung in the 1950s. It is also possible to see the conference hall as it was back to 1955. The museum is free of charge and is open from Tuesday to Sunday until 4pm.



Gastronomy

Indischetafel offers traditional Indonesian and Dutch dishes in an old colonial building decorated with 1930s objects which confers a nostalgic atmosphere to the place. Located in Jalan Sumatra not too far from Bandung main rail station and the city hall.

Flying There

Bandung is only two to three hours by road or train from Soekarno-Hatta International Airport where daily flights connect the city to Bangkok Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi. There are also possibilities to fly directly to Bandung Airport via Kuala Lumpur or Singapore.

VIETNAM

**DALAT, A PIECE OF FRANCE IN VIETNAM HIGHLANDS**

His name was Alexandre Yersin and he was a bacteriologist. Swiss by nationality but working in France for the Institut Pasteur, Yersin finally became a doctor for Messageries Maritimes, a merchant shipping company in French Indochina. He arrived in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) in 1891. Exploring in depth Annam and Cochinchina territories, Yersin asked the Governor-General of French Indochina, Paul Doumer to give him the approval to build up a hill resort centre to provide a healthy environment for French affected by tropical diseases. The new resort city should be chosen over climate, water and accessibility criteria. Located on Lang Bian plateau at a height of 1,500 meters, a new site called Dalat was selected in 1897 but it took another ten years to see the first buildings rising from the ground.

Unlike Hanoi or Saigon who existed prior to colonial times, Dalat is a pure French creation, which gives a unique character to the city. Its urban planning and its architecture were carried out by five French urbanists. They created a chic French station with wide leafy boulevards, over 1,000 Normandy, Basque or Alpine inspired villas, a golf course, schools, sanatoriums and health centres, all located in an abundant natural environment made of gardens, parks, lakes and pine forests. The destination turned increasingly popular with roads and a rail line taking visitors to Saigon as Dalat became also the seat for the colonial government during hot summer months.

Dalat heart beat around the artificial pictorial Grand Lake (Xuan Huong) surrounded by villas, majestic hotels and the bell tower of the former Yersin Secondary School. The lake is today Dalat major attraction with gorgeous panoramic views and the possibility to go around it on a paddle-boat. During French height days, Dalat was the place for the rich and famous. The city's most prestigious guest was former Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai, who possessed a residence.

Dalat was fortunately spared the dramatic destiny of being bombed during the Vietnam War. However, urban modernization and the rapid city expansion in the last ten years start to deeply modify the character of town today. However, many areas have still escaped so far frenzy urban development, plunging visitors into a romantic or nostalgic time.

10 TOP not to be Missed sightseeings**1 Grand Lake Panorama and Art Deco Hotels***Dalat, VIETNAM*

Wow effect is guaranteed for any visitors looking at the first time at the spending Grand Lake in the city centre of Dalat. Best to admire the lake is to enter into the gardens of the Dalat Palace Heritage Hotel. Set in five hectares of hilly gardens, the hotel has the best view over the lake and surrounding mountains. The Dalat Palace was built in 1922 and reconstructed in art deco style in the early 1940s. It is still considered the most luxurious five-star property in Dalat. More modest –and cheaper– but also located in a French Art Deco building, the Hotel Du Parc faces the Dalat Palace.

2 St. Nicholas Cathedral*Dalat, VIETNAM*

Impossible to miss Dalat largest church with its freshly repainted façade in strong pink colours. The building was opened as a Catholic parish in 1931–1932 in an eclectic style Romanesque for its outside. The interior, which was only completed in 1942 is in simple Byzantine style.

3 Guesthouse of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour*Dalat, VIETNAM*

Perched on a hill opposing the city centre with the Dalat Palace Hotel, the Guesthouse of the Dalat Trade Union is an opulent mansion from the 1930s surrounded by pines. While it is necessary to be member of the Labour Confederation to get a room there, a restaurant in the park is open to the public with great views over the Grand Lake.

4 Dalat Railway Station*Dalat, VIETNAM*

Dalat Railway Station was built in 1932 by French architects with the arrival of the rack train, which construction started in 1920. The rail structure is a perfect copy of Deauville–Trouville art deco rail station in Normandy except the fact that French and local travellers were segregated from each other. The railway line was abandoned during the Vietnam War but a seven-km track has been restored in 1990 and is now a tourist attraction under the name of "Dalat Plateau Rail Road".

5 Pedagogical College of Da Lat (formerly Lycée Yersin)*Dalat, VIETNAM*

The largest structure in town is the Lycée Yersin, the former Yersin Secondary School was built in 1927 and expanded in 1940. With its tall belfry in red bricks –imported from Europe, the school has reminiscences of Northern France. It used to welcome 600 students and is now a Teachers University. The structure can be visited later afternoon after classes.

6 Palace I, working residence of Bao Dai.

Dalat, VIETNAM

Dalat most pictorial is certainly the Palace numbered 1 surrounded by colourful gardens. It was originally a French-Italian Mansion for a millionaire who owned electric factories in Shanghai. Built in 1929, the mansion has a distinctive Southern French or Savoyard style with a mix of French and Italian details. Inside are all the rooms where the Emperor lived. The mansion served after World War II and the return of the French as the working headquarters of Emperor Bao Dai. Following the independence, the palace became a private residence of South Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem who let build a tunnel to a nearby helicopter pad.

7 Tran Hung Dao Road

Dalat, VIETNAM

The street is in the heart of the French quarter and is lined with opulent French villas set in colourful gardens. Most are in private hands but the Dalat Cadasa Resort is open to visitors with twelve fully restored colonial villas being now bedrooms in a unique Normandy architectural style. The villas were once residences of many political figures, famous artists and scientists.

8 Queen Nam Phuong Palace

Dalat, VIETNAM

The name of the Palace is actually wrong as the residence was built for the father of Queen Nam Phuong but she resided there for a couple of years until Palace III was completed. Located just behind the Lam Dong Museum — the collection is not worth visiting but the entrance ticket gives access to the Palace— the construction is perched on a small hill with a view on gardens in terrace. The style is more like a late classical villa on the French Riviera. Modest in its size, the palace has a definitive feminine touch.

9 Palace III, Bao Dai Residence

Dalat, VIETNAM

The late Art Deco/streamline modern structure was built in this style very much in vogue in Paris in the early 1930s. The palace was constructed between 1933 and 1938 and has reserved all the furniture of the whole imperial family including the children. It is interesting to walk between the dining room, kitchen and bedrooms of the family. On the top of the villa, a terrace has a rounded window looking like a huge moon...After the Emperor's abdication and its departure to France, the palace became a residence for South Vietnam President Diem.

10 The Domaine de Marie

Dalat, VIETNAM

A Catholic convent built in 1940 in late Indochinese style with elements of French and Vietnamese style. The church is located atop a hill and was built in a modernist reinterpretation of a 17th century monastery. The architecture is unique with the church's façade designed in the shape of a triangle with small arch-shaped windows. Gardens surround the church.

Museum

Palace 1 and Palace 3 are an enjoyable way to discover the life of Vietnam imperial family. Furniture from the 1930s and 1940s have been preserved in both palaces showing that Emperor Bao Dai life was not so lavish. Both palaces are furnished in the style of a rich upper class family mansion rather than an imperial palace. This contributes to the atmosphere of both palaces. Both palaces are open every day from 7am to generally 5pm.



Gastronomy

Next to Domaine de Marie stands Ana Mandara Villas Dalat Resort & Spa, a luxury hotel made of former villas for French high-rank public servants located in a beautiful pine forest. The Ana Mandara Villas is today a resort with a restaurant and terrace serving Vietnamese specialties and Dalat famed coffee. Dalat is indeed well known all across Vietnam for its excellent coffee with its notes of chocolate. Coffee farms are located some 25 km from Dalat on Lang Biang Plateau.

Flying There

Dalat is now linked by non-stop flights to Bangkok or alternatively via Danang, Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City.

MALAYSIA

**KUCHING, THE CAPITAL CITY OF AN ADVENTURER TURNED INTO A RAJAH**

Capital city of the Malaysian State of Sarawak on Borneo Island, Kuching offers a unique architecture evoking the architecture of the Channel Islands with their white facades and black roofs despite the fact that the James Brooke, a British soldier was born in Calcutta in India and probably never heard of the Channel Islands...

James Brooke certainly represents the kind of historical legendary figure. Sailing from India to the island Borneo in 1838, he helped the Sultan of Brunei to crush a rebellion of locals in Kuching. The Sultan showed his gratitude by giving to Brooke the governorship of Sarawak territory. Fighting against piracy in the territory, Brooke was granted the title of Rajah in 1841 while the full sovereignty of Sarawak from Brunei was officially declared in 1842.

The 'White Rajah' created a dynasty which would rule for 100 years Sarawak until Charles Vyner of Sarawak ceded the Raj to Britain as a crown colony in 1946, ending de facto a century of White Rajah reign...

The 100-year old Brooke era turned Kuching into a main trading port for Northwest Borneo as commerce developed with public buildings and housing erected along the Sarawak River. Although inspired by British architecture, Brooke heritage buildings are very different of the usual colonial style left by Britain in the region. Most of the lime-stone buildings stand in white colour and are generally crowned by crenels like in medieval fortresses and castles. The architecture is more reminiscent of houses in Jersey or Guernsey than in Continental England.

While many historical buildings were destroyed in the 1980s and 1990s — particularly Borneo oldest market- to give way to modern constructions, Kuching city centre still has over a dozen grand structures from the Brooke time surrounded by 100-year old shop houses. They all contributes to Kuching unique charm.

10 TOP not to be Missed sightseeings**1 Astana**

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

The Astana (Palace) was the official Residence of the White Rajah and is today the residence of Sarawak State Governor, who is the representative of Malaysia Head of State. Three buildings stood where the Astana stands today, the current structure being completed in 1870. The main structure is characterized by a high large roof inspired Borneo Malay/Indonesian architecture and is flanked by a tower in the ubiquitous Brooke style. The Astana is not open to the public but is clearly visible from Kuching riverfront.

2 Fort Margherita

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

Next to the Astana stands Fort Margherita, a complex built on the top of hill with a clear view over the River to prevent the arrival of pirates. It was built in 1879 by Charles, the second Rajah of Sarawak who bestowed to the fort the name of his wife Margaret Alice Lile de Windht. The structure of the fort is very similar to the one of an English castle dominated by a three-story crenellated tower overlooking a courtyard surrounded by walls. It is home today to the Brooke Gallery, which showcases belongings from the Brooke family and artefacts.

3 Square Tower

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

The single-standing structure built in 1879 faces Fort Margherita and the Astana across the river and was part originally of Kuching defense system before being transformed into a prison and then into a dance hall for the use of Royal Guards. It is now a handicraft centre and bears the same characters than other Brooke structures with its crenellated rooftop and turret.

4 Brooke Memorial and Old Court House

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

Facing the Square tower is Brooke Memorial and the Old Court House. Brooke Memorial is a 6-meter granite obelisk in neo-classical style erected to the memory of Charles Brooke by his son Charles Vyner Brooke. The Old Court House was the centre of the Rajah administration and was constructed in 1874. The various buildings are linked by a gallery surrounding a courtyard. The Court House has some restaurants, cafes and exhibition rooms and is the main venue of the Rainforest Fringe Festival in July, a colourful event offering a glimpse into Borneo art scene. Next to the Old Court House is the Japanese Building, constructed in a similar style by prisoners of Japanese forces during WWII.

5 Round Tower

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

Unfortunately dwarfed today by a gigantic shopping mall next door, the round tower was built in 1886 as the first city dispensary. The unusual round tower is reminiscent of an armoury.

6 Former Hospital (Pavilion)

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

One of the most amazing structure among Brooke heritage buildings, the building used to be a hospital. The facades are all made of windows divided and structured with bas reliefs, columns and railings, reminiscent of English Renaissance. The building is today the Museum of textiles.

7 Central Post Office

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

The Central Post Office is the only large building of the White Rajah time which does not follow the traditional Brooke architectural site. Built in 1931, the post office has a neo-classical style with Corinthian columns seems to have been constructed in the early 19th century. The post office was designed by Singaporean architects.

8 Main Bazaar

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

The pictorial road along the Riverfront is the oldest commercial street in Kuching and goes for 1.2 km. It starts from the old Chinese Court built in neo classical time and end after Brooke Memorial. First built in wood, houses were all reconstructed in bricks and mortar following Kuching giant fire in the city centre in 1884. The shop houses used to face warehouses –all demolished in the 1990s– to give way to the new waterfront. Architecture of the houses are typical of the Malay Archipelago in a simplified style.

9 Brooke Dockyard

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

The dockyard is the oldest surviving maritime structure in Kuching and opened in 1912 by second White Rajah Charles Brooke. It was the place where ships and boats were repaired. There are plans to turn the heritage structure into Kuching Maritime Museum with a possible opening in 2021. Near used to be Kuching famous old market, a 140-year old Victorian structure built on arches as well as the fish market. They have all been demolished.

10 Tua Pek Kong Temple

Sarawak, MALAYSIA

It is Kuching oldest Chinese temple at the start of Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman, dating from 1839, prior to the arrival of James Brooke. The temple originally stood along the Sarawak River, before land reclamation. The temple survived the inferno of Japanese bombing in World War II. Extensive renovation makes it very modern looking from outside but the interior is in classical Chinese style.

Museum

One of the grandest structure in the unmistakable Brooke style architecture, the Sarawak Museum is inspired by mansions in Normandy. The museum opened in 1891 with a new wing in 1911. It contains the original natural history collection of second Rajah Charles Brooke as well as ethnologic collections from the various ethnics living in Sarawak. The museum is currently under renovation with a reopening in 2020. However, the park is open to the public with great views of the building at sunset.



Gastronomy

Sarawak is also known for its peculiar food with many typical North Borneo dishes available in Kuching. Try Midin, a wild fern from Borneo with its crispy delicate texture. It is generally cooked like morning glory with a chili and garlic sauce. Try also the iconic Laksa Sarawak, a mild curry soup prepared from a shrimp-based broth with a heavy spice sauce, tamarind, garlic, galangal, lemongrass, coconut milk, noodles and chicken.

Flying There

From Bangkok, there are no direct flights to Kuching but the city is easily reachable via Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Singapore.

LAO-PDR

Wat Xieng Thong



LUANG PRABANG, MEKONG ROMANCE

UNESCO World Heritage city Luang Prabang is certainly ASEAN most romantic place. Nestled in a peninsula shaped by the Mekong and Nam Khan Rivers, hidden amid lush green hills, the city seems to have escaped the modernity which generally characterized Southeast Asian towns.

Luang Prabang has been a royal capital of the former Kingdom of Lan Xang in the middle age. Once the capital city moved to Vientiane in the 16th century, Luang Prabang remained the spiritual Buddhist centre of the kingdom with its dozens of temples. In the 17th century, three kingdoms were created with Luang Prabang chosen as the capital of the Northern Kingdom. The city kept its status of a royal residence during both Siam and French rule.

The arrival of French gave Luang Prabang its current aspect as French style villas and shop houses started to be build next to traditional temples. The Royal Family settled in a new palace built in the early years of the 20th century. Luang Prabang relative isolation protected the city of destructions and war damages all along the 20th century. Following the independence in 1953, the city continued to host the Royal Family until 1975, when the Lao People's Democratic Republic was proclaimed and the monarchy abolished.

Luang Prabang unique urban structure with its hundreds of colonial buildings and its 34 temples gives the city an outstanding architectural, art and religious value. It has been acknowledged by UNESCO which listed Luang Prabang peninsula into its World Heritage List in 1995. The UNESCO status has been an asset to preserve the city unique urban layout and preserve the serene atmosphere of the former royal residence.

10 TOP not to be Missed sightseeings

1 Royal Palace

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

Following an older palace destroyed during looting of Haw Chinese bandits in 1887, the current Royal Palace was built between 1904 and 1909 during French colonial time, serving as a main residence for the Laotian Royal Family. The palace architecture is a blend of French neo-classical and Laotian styles. After 1975 revolution, the royal family left the palace which was then turned into a museum in 1995. Inside are furniture as well as jewels and antiques belonging in the past to the Royal Family. In front, a Laotian style golden pavilion houses the 2,000 year-old golden Prabang Buddha, which gave the name to the city. There is also a garage containing the last king's collection of cars.

2 Phou Si Mountain

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

The small mountain is located in the heart of town overlooking the gardens of the former Royal Palace. The mountain is considered as sacred and is crowned by the 20 m. high Wat Chomsi stupa. Climbing the 328 steps to the top pays off with a fabulous panoramic view over the entire town, up to the airport.

3 Wat May

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

The distinctive temple with its five-tiered roof and large main hall was built in the 18th century and served as the residence of the Supreme Patriarch for Lao Buddhists, the Phra Sangkharat during colonial times. The temple also served for keeping royal elephants. Inside, Wat May has a large collection of golden Buddha statues and wood carvings.

4 Colonial-style Sisavangvong and Sakkaline Roads

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

Luang Prabang main arteries Sisavangvong and Sakkaline roads in the old town concentrates all the architecture styles of the town, with six temples, colonial-style villas —turned into boutique hotels, public buildings (such as the library or a complex of schools) and French-Laotian style houses with balconies and teak wood facades. For the tourists, the street has its fair share of restaurants, cafes and craft shops.

5 Maison Souvannaphoum (Angsana Hotel)

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

Maison Souvannaphoum is a historical villa which used to belong to Laos' four-time Prime Minister Prince Souvanna Phouma. The early 1960s style villa reflects the taste of the time, showing the modernist approach of traditional Luang Prabang architecture. The interior of the hotel is mostly colonial with its wooden furniture.

6 Former Hospital (Amantaka Resort)

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

It used to be a hospital for leprosis and tropical diseases built by the French on the city centre's outskirts in the 1920s. The hospital closed in 2005 and was abandoned until Aman Resorts bought and renovated the property. It officially opened the doors to guests in 2008. The immaculate white pavilions used to be all for treatments with only one or two pavilions being added in the same style to add new rooms. The library —with its bar— and the restaurant are open to outside visitors. The ensemble provides an incredible sense of serenity mirroring themselves in a huge swimming pool.

7 Former Governor's residence (Sofitel Luang Prabang)

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

The magnificent hotel set in lush gardens used to be the residence of the Governor General for Laos during French colonial times. Built in the 1900s the residence combines French classical style with Laotian traditional houses with its mixed use of teak wood, mortar and bricks. Some of the buildings inside the residence served also as a local prison and an armoury, which explain its fortified walls. It was renovated a decade ago to be transformed into the luxury all-suite Sofitel in 2016.

8 Wat Xieng Thong

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

Wat Xieng Thong is considered Luang Prabang most beautiful and important temple, symbolizing the spirit of Lao religion, royalty and traditional art. The temple was built around 1560 in the Luang Prabang style, featuring an elaborate tree of life mosaic, carved walls with beautiful inside murals in black and gold and an amazing three-tiered roof. The temple is surrounded by small halls and stupas that contain Buddha images and a 12-metre royal funeral carriage. The temple is today a museum and centre of spiritual life for Laotians. The temple was used as the location for Lao king coronations.

9 La Maison du Patrimoine

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

Formerly the French customs house, the beautifully renovated house is home to the centre for heritage preservation since 1996. It is possible to visit the house and stroll around the garden. Exhibitions are organized on a temporary basis.

10 Wat Pak Khan

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR

The white-washed monastery was built in 1717 and its simple layout is what makes its appeal. Inside the simple structure is a main hall covered by Luang Prabang style murals and a sitting Buddha which provides much serenity.

Museum

Buddhist Heritage Project is located in a Laotian-European style building constructed in the 1950s, next to Wat Pak Khan temple. It shows a choice of historical pictures about Buddhism and life in Luang Prabang temples from the late 19th century to the Indochina wars. They are part of a collection of 35,000 photographs collected and preserved by photographer Hans Georg Berger. The compound also integrates a the Vocational School of Arts.



Gastronomy

Manda de Laos is a pictorial restaurant serving typical Northern Lao fares in a peaceful garden opening on a huge lotus pond. Try a salad of Mekong fish with lemongrass, mint and corianders, pork caramelized with organic honey from the region or barbecued chicken with local herbs.

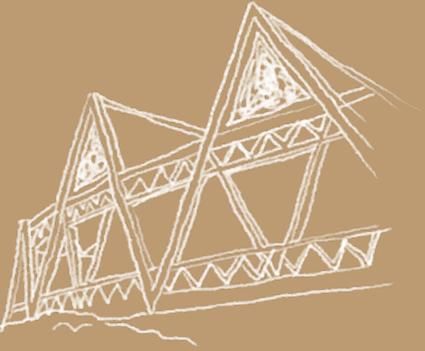
Flying There

Bangkok and Chiang Mai have non-stop flights to reach Luang Prabang while it is also possible to reach the city from Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Singapore.

CAMBODIA

Chaktomuk
Conference Hall

①

**PHNOM PENH, THE SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE THROUGH ARCHITECTURE**

The independence of Cambodia in 1953 translated into a new art and cultural spirit which culminated all along the 1960s in a movement called New Khmer Architecture. The search for a new international style was spearheaded by Prince Norodom Sihanouk who had a vision to turn the newly independent country into a modern state with a progressive society. Like in many other countries around the world, architecture played a pivotal role of expressing the vision of the Head of State.

New Khmer architecture focused on integrating an international style with local tradition, materials and climate with a new generation of Cambodian architects. The two most famous architects were Vann Molyvann and Lu Ban Hap. Other Cambodian architects playing an important role were Chhim Sun Fong, Seng Suntheng, Ung Krapum Phka and Mam Sophana. During 15 years, they all covered the capital city Phnom Penh with dozens of stately funded public infrastructures such as theatres, ministries, universities, sport facilities or public housing.

New Khmer Architecture had common elements to be found in most buildings. Many Cambodian houses were built on concrete stilts, reproducing traditional houses. Roofs carried a typical VVV-shape —reproducing Khmer temples but also helping to prevent direct sunlight, loggias, balcony, gables or even multi-tiered roofs gave a distinctive Khmer identity to the structures. The New Khmer Architecture was so popular in the sixties that entire streets of Phnom Penh were built in that style.

The buildings of that time are not only unique in their essence, they also expressed the confidence of Cambodia in the future in a period still considered as the country 'Golden era'.

The dream came to an abrupt end in 1970 with the coup d'état establishing the Khmer Republic followed by the devastating cruel years of Khmer Rouge rule.

Many of Molyvann and Ban Hap structures fell into decay over the years. Some were destroyed in the 1990s, some renovated to such a point that they lost their original design.

However, they are still over a dozen buildings of that time which are visible and hundreds of houses to be seen when wandering around Phnom Penh. There is even a company, Khmer Architecture Tours, organizing regular circuits of the 1960s New Khmer Architecture.

10 TOP not to be Missed sightseeings**1 Chaktomuk Conference Hall***Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA*

The Chaktomuk Conference Hall was built along the Bassac River by Vann Molyvann in 1961 and was considered by the architect as one of its three favourite architectural pieces. The hall reproduces a fan-shaped palm leaf. On the street side, the building is rhythmized by balustrades carrying Molyvann's V shaped motive.

2 Hotel Cambodiana*Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA*

Facing the Bassac River, the imposing hotel was at the beginning envisioned by Prince Norodom Sihanouk as a motel with bungalows but was transformed into a 100-room luxury hotel by a Phnom Penh architect, Lu Ban Hap. The hotel opened in 1969. A year later, following General Lon Nol coup, the hotel was turned into a barracks for the army and then occupied by the Khmer Rouge. It reverted to its original hotel function in the early 1990s.

3 Norodom Boulevard*Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA*

The street is the best example of 1960s urban planning. It starts from the rail station, goes along the beautiful art deco Central Market to merge into National Road No. 1. Among the best preserved examples are the ex-Hotel Holiday Villa (formerly Monorom) of Indian-Chinese architect Jamshed Petrigura; the buildings at the corner of Kampuchea Krom Boulevard and the True Coffee/Paradise Hotel building at the corner of Charles de Gaulle Boulevard.

4 Independence Monument*Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA*

The Independence Monument in Cambodia is a striking sight in the city centre. It was unveiled in 1958 to celebrate the end of French colonial rules five years before, it was designed by Vann Molyvann. The tower is inspired by Banteay Srei temple in Angkor and stands 37 m. high.

5 National Olympic Stadium of Cambodia*Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA*

The Olympic Stadium known as the National Sports Complex, was Vann Molyvann's largest architectural work and was directly commissioned by Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Built between 1962 and 1964 the sports complex is a technical feat mixing the New Khmer Architecture and Brutalism elements with its strong volumes of concrete and sharp angles. The Complex included a 60,000-seat stadium, an external tribune for 8,000 officials, an indoor sports hall for 8,000 people as well as restaurants, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts and an Olympic-size swimming pool. The stadium aesthetics has been altered by a string of condominiums and a shopping mall.

6 Chenla Theatre

Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA

Chenla Theatre was opened in 1969 by Lu Ban Hap, at that time chief architect for the city of Phnom Penh. The structure was abandoned during the Khmer Rouge regime but reopened in 1979 as "Phnom Penh Theater". It has just been renovated with its interior being modernized while the outside has been kept as it was at the end of the 1960s. The theatre is now "Phnom Penh Cultural Center".

7 Institute of Technology

Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA

The institute was created by a group of soviet architects in Moscow, following a promise made by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to offer a technology institute to Cambodia. The compound was built during two years between 1962 and 1964. The façade of the second building is rhythmized by louvered sunscreens filtering the light.

8 Main Hall of the Royal University of Phnom Penh

Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA

The main hall with its open oyster —some would say parabolic— shape is the most remarkable structure which resembles airport buildings or concert halls in tropical modern architecture in California. The building has been run down for a few decades serving among others as a motorbike parking but was recently renovated. A striking feature of the main building —built by a French team in Le Corbusier style— are prominent geometrical external staircases. If possible, go to the roof terrace with its open view on the campus.

9 Institute of Foreign Languages (Teacher Training College)

Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA

The Institute of Foreign Languages is a New Khmer Architecture structure reinterpreting Angkorian Baray construction, a rectangular body of water that provided water to Angkor city and protected at the same time temples of flooding. The university compound is made of pavilions (seminar rooms) built on concrete stilts providing better ventilation. Visitors access for example through walkways and a concrete bridge crowned to the main building, a masterpiece of Brutalism architecture. The most intriguing structure is the round library inspired from a traditional hut made of palm leaves.

10 National Technical Training Institute

Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA

Formerly known as Preah Kossamak Centre, the 1969 inaugurated National Technical Training Institute is in the vicinity of the airport. The main building is rythmed by ellipsoidal white columns that give a very 1960s avant-garde look. The building mires itself into a pond which adds to the harmony of the building. Architect of the complex was Cambodian Mam Sophana.

Museum

SOSORO Museum (or Preah Sri Eysan Voraman Economic and Monetary Museum) opened its doors in April 2019 showing the development of Cambodia through its economy. Located in a former building which used to be a city hall residence, the building has been well restored with eight exhibition halls showing the history of the country including the period of the independence.



Gastronomy

Eating in a villa dating back from the sixties with its beautiful ellipsoidal stairs? Samsara Villa used to belong to a high rank military and has been turned into an exquisite hotel with a restaurant serving high quality Cambodian food, superbly presented...

Flying There

Phnom Penh has a dozen daily flights to Bangkok Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi and is also linked to most other ASEAN capital cities.

SINGAPORE

TIONG BAHRU, SOUTHEAST ASIA FIRST PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATE

Tiong Bahru district is a very special area in Singapore with a strong distinctive identity. Not far from historical Chinatown and Tanjong Pagar, Tiong Bahru was the first attempt in Southeast Asia to create an integrated public housing estate offering not only apartments but also public facilities and shops.

The project of developing public housing came into reality in the late 1920s in Singapore as the Municipal Commission made the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) a legal entity with the empowerment of enquiring and developing land. The SIT puts its eye on an area in the continuation of Chinatown called Tiong Bahru. Covered by farmlands and Chinese cemeteries, Tiong Bahru started its transformation with the construction of Singapore General Hospital on Outram Road. The hospital attracted many settlers living in low lying areas, generating sanitary problems for the area.

Decision was then taken to 'clean' the land. From 1928 to 1931 nearby hills were cut down, swamps filled up while Chinese graves were transferred to other cemeteries. The SIT freed consequently 11 hectares of land. Roads and drainage system were created and by 1936, the first housing of 28 apartments and 4 shops welcomed its first tenants. By 1941, Tiong Bahru public housing estate had already 6,000 inhabitants living in 784 flats. Large developments occurred after World War II when 1,258 flats were added by 1954. Today, the estate has over 2,000 apartments, two dozens of shops, a market and food court, a community centre and schools.

Tiong Bahru main appeal is its late Art Deco architecture, called 'Streamline Moderne', a movement inspired by technology and transportation. 'Streamline Moderne' buildings are characterized by simple curves, rounded corners and geometric motives. This architecture was mostly used for air terminals, rail stations or cruise ships but rarely for public housing. It gives Tiong Bahru its uniqueness.

In 2003, Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) gazetted 20 blocks for conservation with restoration work being carried. It marked the start of the area's gentrification. Some of the sparkling-white buildings have been adorned with artistic murals while trendy shops moved in. Tiong Bahru is considered as one of Singapore most hipster districts these days with its range of cafes, eateries and specialty shops. Tiong Bahru discreet sense of opulence is certainly the district's best asset.

8 TOP not to be Missed sightseeings



1 Tiong Bahru/Seng Poh Roads blocks of flats

Tiong Bahru, SINGAPORE

Coming by bus or walking from the MRT station at Outram Park, the white painted four-storey blocks are the first to be seen from Tiong Bahru or Seng Poh Roads. Built between 1948 and 1954, the blocks mix Streamline Moderne architecture with typical Singapore architectural elements such as passageways running along each block. They protect pedestrians from rain and sun while adding ventilation. Back lanes with greenery were also set up. Round balconies and corners as well as small circular windows evoke cruise liners.

2 Tiong Bahru Market and Food Centre

Tiong Bahru, SINGAPORE

The market was opened in 1951 as Seng Poh Road Market. The original building was made of wood and was not corresponding anymore to hygiene standards. It was consequently demolished in 2004, rebuilt and expanded to become Tiong Bahru Market and Food Centre. It is considered as one of the best hawker centres of Singapore with some 15 food shops present in the market since the 1950s. Go to the top of the building (an open-air parking space) as it provides great view over the estate.

3 Eng Hoon Street

Tiong Bahru, SINGAPORE

This street offers a perfect unity with its rounded corner buildings, curved balconies in red bricks. The buildings were all constructed before World War II. It is also where chic eateries are located such as the Little Elephant Thai Bistro, Merci Marcel French style bistro, Whisk Café and above all Tiong Bahru Bakery famed for its croissants. It also means that the place is most of the time packed and prices are rather expensive...

4 Monkey God Temple

Tiong Bahru, SINGAPORE

Well known locally as Tiong Bahru Monkey God Temple, the facility is integrated into a shop house and was built around 1920 on Eng Hoon Street. Trustees of the Temple claim that this was the very first temple in Singapore to be dedicated to the worship of the Monkey God.



5 Tiong Poh Road Block 81 and 82

Tiong Bahru, SINGAPORE

Both buildings are probably the best examples of Streamline Moderne architecture. Its shape with balconies of various size protected by cantilevered shades and a mix use of red bricks and white mortar. While block 81 evokes the interior of a Zeppelin airship, block 82 takes its inspiration from a huge luxury car with its geometrical motive in the middle remembering an engine.

6 Spiral Staircases at Seng Poh Lane

Tiong Bahru, SINGAPORE

Seng Poh Lane is an open plaza set between two blocks which unfortunately looks more like a parking lot than a walking space. However, at the end of the block on the way to Tiong Poh Road Block 82, there are two typical spiral staircases facing each other, providing a perfect harmony across the street. Spiral staircases used to serve as a fire exit and also an alternative to access upper floors. They were also seen by the SIT as typical architectural elements enhancing the street landscape.

7 Tiong Bahru murals

Tiong Bahru, SINGAPORE

Half a dozen murals ornate public housing estate walls as well as the market. They were mostly produced in 2016 by local young Singaporean artist Yip Yew Chong (YC) who created three murals on blocks. Two of the painting – “Bird Singing Corners” and “Home” are set along passageways. ‘Bird Singing Corners’ is the easiest to discover along Seng Poh Road, ‘Home’ is located near Tiong Bahru Community Centre in Eu Chin Street while ‘Pasar & the Fortune Teller’ is in a small lane linking the Community Centre to Eng Watt Street. Tiong Bahru Market has a sheep on the external façade while inside the food court, two huge murals decorate the stairs giving access to the parking lot.

8 The Horse-Shoe Block

Tiong Bahru, SINGAPORE

Built between 1939 and 1940 at Moh Guan Terrace, the Horse-Shoe Block is named due to its strong curved shape. The building is the only one to integrate an air raid shelter, the first of its kind in a public housing estate!

Museum

There are no proper museum as such in the community beside a large information panel telling all about Tiong Bahru history and heritage located in front of the market. To learn more about the evolution of urbanism in Singapore, an excellent place to visit (for free) is the Singapore City Gallery in the URA Centre located on Maxwell Road in Tanjong Pagar area. The gallery is open from Monday to Saturday from 9am to 5pm.



Gastronomy

Tiong Bahru Market and Food Centre is of course the place to try typical Singaporean fares. Fried noodles of any sort, noodle soups, fish curry, pork ribs. Wonton, pau and Malay-style nasi lemak are part of the delicacies to be tasted. For the ones with a sweet tooth, try traditional biscuits as well as the incredible colourful ice-shaved desserts such as Ice Kacang, ABC ice or chendol, which mixes palm sugar syrup, coconut milk and green rice flour jelly.

Flying There

Singapore is to reach by air by dozens of daily flights from Bangkok Don Mueang and Suvarnahumi but also from Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Krabi, Phuket and Samui. Singapore is also linked to all other ASEAN capitals as well as many secondary cities.

PHILIPPINES



A NOSTALGIC AND ROMANTIC HISPANIC WORLD IN VIGAN

Vigan is a unique city in the northwestern part of Luzon, the main island of the Philippines archipelago. Listed as a world heritage site since 1995, Vigan is according to UNESCO the most intact example in Asia of a planned Spanish colonial town, established in the 16th century. Vigan has been for a long time an important island with flourishing trade along the Abra River Delta. Trade occurred between Chinese and local Asian ethnics and the trading post reputation finally attracted Spaniards.

After the conquest of Manila in May 1572, conquistadors reached Vigan island under Commander Juan de Salcedo. The latter founded then the city 'Villa Fernandina de Vigan' in honour of Ferdinand, son of the Spanish King Philip II. Salcedo was awarded in return the title of Justicia Mayor (Governor) for the northern provinces.

Turning Vigan into a full-fledged town was for Spaniards a way to assert their power as it concentrated all the institutions — public and religious— as well as commerce. Vigan's prosperity turned it into a favourite residence for bishops of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia. In 1758, the diocese was consequently transferred to Vigan, strengthening the city's influence.

Vigan historical city —known as Mestizo District— follows a Spanish Renaissance-style grid plan. But in contrary to other Spain-controlled colonial towns, the uniqueness of Vigan is the blend between Spanish and Mexican architectural elements, Chinese patterns and local Ilocano and Filipino details.

Vigan historical core content two plazas concentrating most of Vigan noticeable monuments such as the Cathedral or the Archbishop's Palace. The historical streets are bordered by 233 Hispanic mansions of brick and wood, crowned by a pitched roof reminiscent of Chinese architecture. Typical for the houses are the windows panels of transparent capiz shells, a material found in oysters.

Vigan lost its economic significance in the second half of the 20th century. A Blessing in disguise as locals did not had the resources to modernize their home. It has paid off: Vigan is today one of the most delightful and romantic towns in Southeast Asia.

10 TOP not to be Missed sightseeings

1 Plaza Salcedo and Plaza Burgos

Vigan City, PHILIPPINES

Plaza Salcedo is an imposing public square in an L-shaped open space, while the Plaza Burgos is a more modest square by dimensions. Both are the centre of public life in Vigan historical town, the two plazas being dominated by the St. Paul's Cathedral, the Archbishop's Palace, the City Hall and the Provincial Capitol Building. The Monument of Juan de Salcedo was erected in the 17th century.

2 Calle Crisologo

Vigan City, PHILIPPINES

Cobbled-paved Calle Crisologo is named after a famed local poet. The street is lined with over twenty ancestral houses with their wooden double doors and capiz windows. The street is very atmospheric in the early hours of the morning and late at night as it is now the centre of tourism with its restaurants, cafes and souvenir shops. Calesas, traditional horse carriages, take also tourists along the road.

3 Ancestral Houses

Vigan City, PHILIPPINES

From the 233 houses, half a dozen are now museums. Named in the Philippines Ancestral Houses, visitors have a choice between Syquia Mansion, home to a Chinese-Ilocano family built in 1830. The Crisologo Museum is the Vigan National Historical Institute in a house from the mid-19th century with splendid furniture. Villa Angela is a museum and a bed and breakfast inside an 1870 opulent mansion.

4 Vigan Cathedral

Vigan City, PHILIPPINES

Three buildings stood on the location of the current Vigan Cathedral. A first temporary church was built in 1577 and replaced then in 1642 but it was destroyed by an earthquake. The third one was burned and finally, the current structure was achieved in 1800. The church is in late baroque style with details inspired by Gothic, Romanesque and even Chinese styles. Inside the cathedral is Museo San Pablo with an outstanding collection of religious statues.

5 Archbishop's Palace

Vigan City, PHILIPPINES

The Palascio Episcopal de Nueva Segovia is the only surviving 18th century palace in the Philippines. Built in 1783, the elegant palace is still today the residence of Vigan Archbishop and only the museum is open to the public. It has an outstanding collection of statues, ecclesiastical artifacts, portraits, the throne room as well as daily objects used by the various bishops. Very impressive is the Palace entrance, large enough to allow horses to get inside.

6 Luna Hotel and Museum

Vigan City, PHILIPPINES

The hotel is the only one of its kind in the Philippines. Opened in 2012, the Hotel Luna was also conceived as a museum. Set in a beautifully restored ancestral home dating back to 1882, the hotel showcases the finest of Philippine art, from historical to contemporary paintings.

7 Bantay Bell Tower

Ilocos Sur, PHILIPPINES

Bantay Bell Tower is a brick late renaissance structure that stands lonely on a green hill overlooking the small town of Bantay, a 10-minute drive northeast of Vigan. The belfry served as an observatory outpost for Spaniards to prevent pirates' invasion. It was built around 1590. The bell was added only in 1857. The nearby St. Augustine Parish Church was destroyed during WWII but rebuilt in the 1950s in a neo-gothic style.

8 St William the Hermit Church in Magsingal

Magsingal, PHILIPPINES

Magsingal is 17 km north of Vigan. The small town is famed for its church built in 1827 in late Baroque style. Inside is a magnificent baroque wooden altar which is often considered as the most beautiful retable in the Philippines. The retable represents a seascape with naked mermaids, sea horses and star fishes. From a previous church remains a 30 m. high belfry from 1732 and a rectory which is now a museum.

9 Santa Maria Church or Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion (Ilocos Sur Province)

Ilocos Sur, PHILIPPINES

Located 40 km south of Vigan in the parish of Santa Maria, the church was built in 1765 and achieved in 1769 with the separated bell tower was constructed in 1810 during the first renovation of the church. The church peculiar architecture is due to its design which makes it looking like a fortress. Perched on a hill, the Baroque style church is to be reached after climbing an 85-step stairway and is surrounded by a defensive wall. It is since 1993 a UNESCO World Heritage site as part of the Baroque Churches of the Philippines.

10 St Augustine Church or Paoyay Church (Ilocos Norte Province)

Ilocos Norte, PHILIPPINES

Located between Vigan and Laoag —where the airport is located— this baroque church is one of the most beautiful in the Philippines. While the façade is all baroque with its sculptures, the shape of the cathedral is inspired by Javanese Buddhist temples such as Borobudur. Achieved in 1710, the church structure is supported by 24 buttresses to protect the building against earthquakes. The adjacent bell tower has a distinctive Chinese pagoda shape and was achieved in 1793. The complex is part of UNESCO World Heritage list.

Museum

Vigan Conservation Complex is composed of three houses dedicated to the history and evolution of Vigan with three themes: the history of the church in Ilocos province, the city development and ancestral houses. The interactive exhibitions are ideal for families. The complex is also a training and education centres about Vigan historical heritage preservation.



Gastronomy

Vigan has many food specialties such as Empanada, a kind of doughnut which is filled with meat or vegetable. Longganisa is another Vigan specialty. It is a pork sausage marinated in brown sugar, garlic, onions, bay leaves, soy sauce, vinegar and pepper. Sinanglaw is another specialty. It is a soup dish made of beef stock flavoured with garlic, onions, ginger and beef chunks. It has a sour taste with a hint of bitterness.

Flying There

Vigan does not have an airport, the closest air facility being located in Laoag in Ilocos Norte province. There are no international flights and passengers need to first fly to Manila.

MYANMAR

BRITISH GRANDEUR IN YANGON

Yangon can easily be considered as the best preserved British colonial city in Southeast Asia with more pre-war grand structures to be admired than in Hong Kong or Singapore. Today Yangon (Rangoon during the British time) is actually the result of massive destructions to the old town afflicted by British troops when they seized Yangon and Lower Burma during the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852. After their victory, British decided to set the capital of British Burma (part of British India) from Moulmein to Rangoon and subsequently transformed it into a flagship of the British Empire.

Like in most cities of British India, Britain wanted to assert its power over its Empire through grand majestic structures. And Yangon did not escape that trend. A centre for the trade —especially for teak wood—, finance, education, medicine, Yangon experienced quick urban developments from 1890. Merchant houses, public and private offices, department stores, markets, prestigious schools and churches were shaping the city centre.

Travellers to Yangon at that time were surprised by the city's cosmopolitan character and its wealth with many telling that the capital of British Burma was on par with London in terms of infrastructure development. Yangon was also described as the Garden City of the East with its manicured parks.

After the independence, a military government seized power with increasing isolation of the country and its capital. But the lack of financial resources and the economic boycott of the country by many had a protection effect on Yangon colonial heritage. It has been mostly preserved until the early 2000s. The move of the capital to Nay Pyi Taw in 2005 left many British colonial structures abandoned as ministries relocated to the new city. Myanmar current economic boom is now threatening to destroy an exceptional urban heritage. But fortunately, many Yangon inhabitants resist a speedy modernization.



10 TOP not to be Missed sightseeings

1 Strand Road

Yangon, MYANMAR

The prestigious boulevard along the Yangon River is one of the most stunning collections of majestic buildings in Southeast Asia. The Strand Road was the first major area to be developed by British with prestigious buildings showing various European styles. Buildings such as the Central Post Office and the British Embassy used to be trading houses. The Myanmar Port Authority with its Venetian style belfry reflected the fact that Yangon Port was the third largest in the British Empire. Yangon former Accountant-General's Office and Currency Department with its domes, the Gothic/early Art Deco Custom House, the classic Yangon Division Office Complex (Rosewood Hotel) or the former Imperial Bank of India with its turret, they all gave to Strand Road its distinctive elegance...

2 Strand Hotel

Yangon, MYANMAR

In the middle of Strand Road stands Yangon's grand old lady in the hospitality industry, the Strand Hotel. Built by the Sarkies Brothers — owners of the E&O in Penang and the Raffles in Singapore— the 60-room hotel opened in 1901. The Hotel has been restored many times. The latest renovation being in 1993.

3 High Court Building

Yangon, MYANMAR

The High Court Building is an iconic colonial-era building located along Pansodan Street, and facing Maha Bandula Garden Street. It was built between 1905 and 1911. It shows Queen Anne style with a clock tower and statues of lions perched on the rooftop. The building is currently empty as the Supreme Court moved to Nay Pyi Taw.

4 Yangon City Hall

Yangon, MYANMAR

This is the only colonial time building designed in a mixed European and Burmese style. Seat of Rangoon municipality and today of Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC). The city hall was designed by Burmese architect U Tin and reproduces traditional Burmese details such as three-tiered roofs, bas reliefs and mythical animal statues, Construction lasted for ten years from 1926 to 1936.

5 Former Rowe & Co. Department Store

Yangon, MYANMAR

Located next to the City Hall and opposite the High Court Building, the building with its prominent corner tower used to be the capital's most elegant department store with its marble floors and inside balconies. After 1964, the store was closed and the building served as a library and then the department of immigration. Following its renovation in 2014, it is now the headquarter of a bank.

6 Former Burma Railways Company

Yangon, MYANMAR

The red-brick structure with its awnings is one of the oldest public buildings constructed by British as it dates back to 1877. The U-shape structure is being restored, facades of the building are resplendent in a strong orange/red bricks while interiors are being rebuilt to host from 2020 the luxurious Peninsula Hotel Yangon surrounded by tropical gardens.

7 Ministers' Building or General Secretariat

Yangon, MYANMAR

Formerly known as the General Secretariat, it is a massive Victorian style series of buildings which used to be the administrative seat of British Burma. The building has a particular historical value. It is in his walls that General Aung San – the hero of Myanmar's struggle for independence and six of his cabinet ministers were assassinated in 1947. The Victorian-style building is made from red and yellow bricks and follow a U-shape pattern in a style mixing neo-renaissance and classical details. It took 16 years to complete the structure from 1889 to 1905, Until 1972, the complex was called the Government Secretariat. After being vacated in 2005, it remained empty with parts of the restored complex occupied now by restaurants, offices and a museum.

8 Pegu Club

Yangon, MYANMAR

Yangon oldest club for the British elite opened in 1882 on Pyay Road and Zagawar Street and was a city within the city with its residential apartments, its club house with a restaurant and bar. The visit of the Prince of Wales in 1922 was the opportunity to expand the club by adding The Prince of Wales Great Hall in a Tudor Revival style. After independence, the club retained its function until closing to public in 1965 and be used as an administrative centre for military. Multi-million dollars' renovation translated into the reopening of the Club in 2018. Pegu Club is now one of Yangon's most elegant hang-out place welcoming private and art events. A restaurant is due to open soon.

9 St Mary's Cathedral

Yangon, MYANMAR

St Mary's Cathedral is Yangon largest Roman Catholic Church. The construction lasted from 1895 to 1899. Built in neo-gothic style, the cathedral can seat 1,500 people. The navel is pure gothic style with its coloured bricks arches, beautiful stained glass windows and its wall paints in white and red, similar to gothic cathedrals in Northern Europe. The exterior of the cathedral is dominated by the twin spires raising in the sky.

10 Chin Tsong Palace

Yangon, MYANMAR

Yangon's most curious structure is the Chin Tsong Palace in Yangon's northern outskirts near Inya Lake. Built between 1915 and 1918, the mansion belonged to a Chinese merchant, Lim Chin Tsong and is a strange mixture of Eastern and Western architecture. The classical European-style mansion is crowned by a five-storey tower inspired by Beijing's Summer Palace. Inside small wall face sculpted doors in the traditional Chinese style. The space is now the Myanmar Art Center accommodating exhibitions and an art gallery.

Museum

Yangon Heritage Trust, with the sponsorship of Prudential®, is showing an exhibition over Yangon's cosmopolitan past and present. Titled "Global City: Yangon's Past, Present and Future" the exhibition showcases more than 120 photographs which expose Yangon history and its role as the trading and administrative centre of Myanmar. The exhibition is open to public Monday to Friday from 9.00am until 5.00pm in the lobby of the YHT office in Pansodan Road.



Gastronomy

Yangon streets are perfect for street food experience with many specialties largely available such as Laphet Thok, pickled tea leaf salad or Tofu salad, Burmese and Shan noodles, rice with mild Burmese curry or mohinga, rice noodles in a fish broth sprinkled with fritters.

Flying There

Yangon has a dozen daily flights to Bangkok and Chiang Mai as well as connections to Kuala Lumpur, Phnom Penh, Singapore and Vietnam.

Information

BRUNEI

www.bruneitourism.travel

CAMBODIA

www.visitcambodia.org

INDONESIA

www.indonesia.travel

LAO PDR

www.tourismlaos.org

MALAYSIA

www.malaysia.travel

MYANMAR

www.tourism.gov.mm

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www.philippines.travel

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