



Special Travel Notice for Myanmar

Posted: February 1, 2016

Updated: August 24, 2016

PC/Myanmar is still in the process of building relationships and setting a strong foundation for the Post. They want to ensure that visiting Volunteers take the utmost caution to be responsible, respectful, and courteous visitors. Both positive and negative behavior of visiting Volunteers to Myanmar will directly impact the image of the Peace Corps program.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has enacted directives regarding “the permission and restriction of the land areas for the international tourists who visit to Myanmar by air, sea and land” and visiting Volunteers will need to adhere to this very closely.

At this time, Volunteer travel to Myanmar is permitted but requires:

- Adherence to the linked travel guidance
- Submission of a travel safety plan to PC/Myanmar (see below)
- Prior written approval by the Country Director of PC/Myanmar

For all travel requests, a Volunteer’s Country Director or SSM should submit the Travel Safety Plan to the PC/Myanmar Country Director for approval (at least 2-4 weeks in advance of the proposed travel dates). Additional information on travel to Myanmar can be found in post’s Guide for Visiting Peace Corps Volunteers (also below).

This restriction is effective until otherwise amended.

Please see below for additional information for Visiting Volunteers.



Guide for Visiting Peace Corps Volunteers

Travel to Myanmar

Volunteers who would like to visit Myanmar should please read this guidance and the associated linked resources carefully. Work with your Country Director and Safety and Security Manager (SSM) to create a travel safety plan based on the guidance. Your Country Director or SSM will submit the travel safety plan to the PC/Myanmar Country Director for approval (at least 2-4 weeks in advance of the proposed travel dates).

At this time the PC/Myanmar Post is very new and we want to be sure that visiting Volunteers take the utmost caution to be responsible, respectful, and courteous visitors - and we appreciate your collaboration on this. Both positive and negative behavior of visiting Volunteers to Myanmar will directly impact the image and integrity of the Peace Corps program.

Important Contact Information

U.S. Embassy

Visiting Volunteers are encouraged to review the latest [State Department Travel Advisories](#) so that you can make informed decisions regarding your travel plans. You will also want to become familiar with the hours and services offered by [American Citizens Services](#) at the U.S Embassy in Yangon. We strongly recommend you enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).

Address: 110 University Ave, Kamayut Township

Phone: (951) 536-509

Fax: (95)-(1)-650-480

E-mail: consularrangoon@state.gov

The Embassy is available 24 hours a day to assist U.S. citizens in emergencies. After hours, or in case of a busy signal when dialing the Consular Office phone number above, dial: Duty Officer Phone: (95)-(9)-51-24330 or the 24 Hour Embassy Phone: (95)-(1)-500-547

Peace Corps

Uniteam Building Level 10

No. 84, Pann Hlaing Street

Sanchaung Township, Yangon

Office Phone Numbers: +95 (0)9 786 323 583 or +95 (0)9 976 414 759

Office hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The office is closed on U.S. and Myanmar holidays.

If you would like to meet staff while you are in Yangon, you may contact our Executive Assistant to make an appointment: nvo@peacecorps.gov.

Post's Travel and Transportation Policy

With reference to: MS450, MS522, MS523

The travel and transportation policy helps to minimize the risks to Volunteers associated with travel. We expect Volunteers to carefully and responsibly consider transportation systems and means. We strongly advise Volunteers to choose the safest and most feasible transportation option and travel at times and on routes that present the lowest risk. Failure to comply with this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including administrative separation.

Transportation Options

Acceptable transportation options in Myanmar include the following. Be aware that public transportation within Myanmar often does not meet international safety standards. Please consult the SSM or program staff if you have any questions or concerns.

- Minivans (8 to 14 seater)
- Minibuses (25 seater)
- Buses (45 seater)
- Taxis (vehicle-type only)
- Trishaw (three wheeled human powered)
- Three-wheel motorbike carrier (commonly used in rural area)
- Train (long distance and circle train)
- Private vehicles owned by persons known to Volunteers
- Boats with personal flotation devices
- Airplanes
- Bicycles with Peace Corps issued helmets

Restrictions

Volunteers are expressly prohibited from using the following forms of transportation.

Automobiles and Motorcycles

Volunteers may not, at any time or under any circumstance, operate a car, motorcycle, or any other motorized vehicle. Volunteer operation of any vehicle in Myanmar is grounds for immediate administrative separation.

Motorcycles

Volunteers are strictly prohibited from riding as a passenger on the back of motorcycles of any size. This policy is strictly enforced. Volunteer travel as a passenger on a motorcycle in Myanmar is grounds for immediate administrative separation.

Open Pick-Up Trucks

There are high risks of severe injuries and death associated with riding in the back of open pick-up trucks. Volunteers may not ride in the back of open pick-up trucks on highways and roads where public transportation is available. A pick-up truck *may* be the only reasonable means of transportation for Volunteers to accomplish your work in some rural areas where other forms of public transportation are not available. In such cases, Volunteers should request to ride in the enclosed cab, and only ride in the back after the option to ride in the cab has been ruled out--for cultural or other reasons. If a Volunteer must ride in the open back of a pick-up truck, you should sit on the bottom of the truck bed and not the sides. Any use of the open back of a pick-up truck as a means of transportation should be kept to a minimum and must be limited solely to work-related activities.

Hitchhiking

Volunteers are prohibited from hitchhiking as a means of transportation across Myanmar. There are enough regular and reasonably priced transportation options available for Volunteers to take. Please do not put your personal safety at risk by accepting rides from strangers.

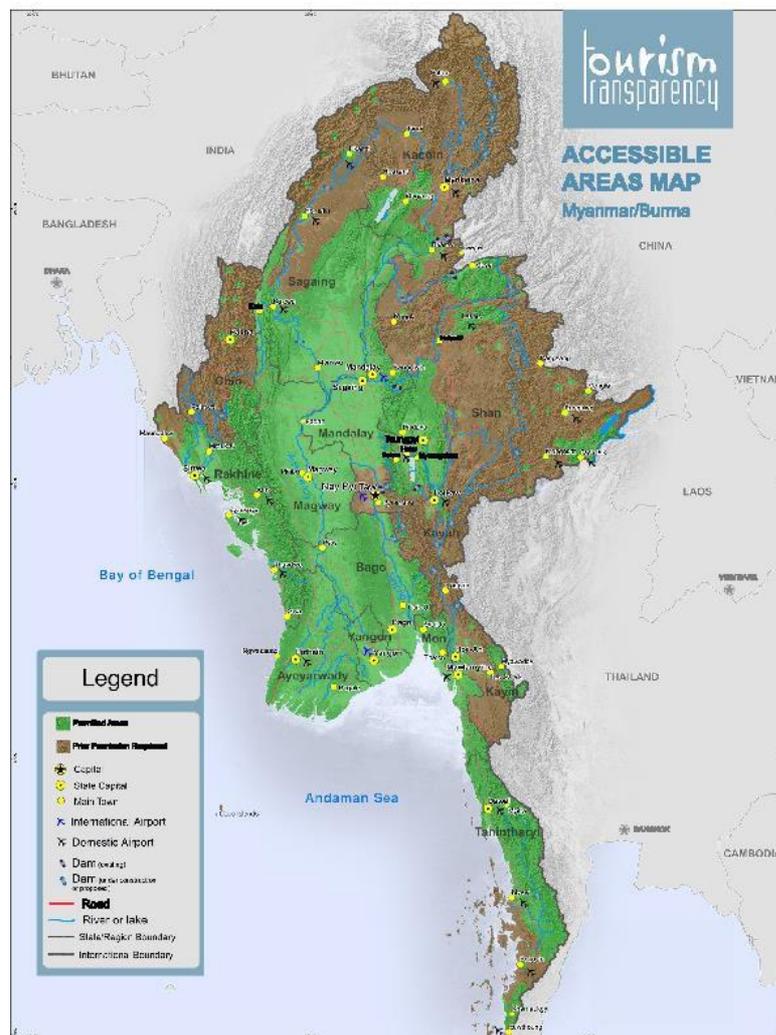
Travel After the Dark

Volunteers should travel during daylight hours. Most traffic accidents increase significantly after dark due to limited visibility on the road, lack of street lights, wayward animals, and drivers falling asleep. Statistics also demonstrate that incidents of drunk driving increase significantly at night. Travel should be planned, to the maximum extent possible, so that one begins travel after dawn and arrives at the destination before dark.

Restricted Areas within Myanmar

Travel is restricted outside major cities to designated tourist areas only. Permission from local authorities is required to visit certain areas. Volunteers should discuss your travel plans within Myanmar with the SSM well in advance of your proposed travel. PC/Myanmar, in coordination with the Regional Security Office of the U.S. Embassy, reviews the security situation in all areas of Myanmar on an ongoing basis and travel policies are subject to change. Due to government restrictions Volunteers are prohibited from traveling to certain areas.

In order to safeguard the security of national and foreign visitors (and this applies to Volunteers), the Ministry of Home Affairs enacted directives regarding the permission and restriction of areas for international tourists who visit to Myanmar by air, sea and land. The government prescribed a list of the restricted areas to facilitate international tourists within Myanmar ([review the complete list of permitted areas here](#)). Please also review the [map of the restricted areas](#) on the Transparency Tourism web site and below. If you have a question about whether you are permitted to travel to a specific area, please contact the SSM.



Use of Safety Equipment

Bicycle Helmets

Volunteers are required to wear a Peace Corps approved bicycle helmet at all times while riding a bicycle. Note that, worldwide, failure to wear a helmet while riding a bicycle during service is grounds for immediate administrative separation.

Seat Belts

Volunteers must wear seatbelts when riding in vehicles equipped with them and must wear seatbelts at all times when riding in Peace Corps vehicles.

Life Jackets

If traveling by boat or ferry, Volunteers are required to wear a Peace Corps-approved life jacket, or personal floatation devices (PFDs).

Travel While On Leave

Volunteers planning to request annual leave should first check with the SSM to ensure there are no travel notices or restrictions in any areas within Myanmar or in another country or any areas within that country. Please do not make travel arrangements, purchase tickets, etc. until you have checked on this with the SSM.

Within Myanmar

Volunteers who travel on authorized leave within Myanmar must adhere to the PC/Myanmar transportation policy at all times.

Outside of Myanmar: In a Peace Corps Country

Volunteers who travel on authorized leave to another country where Peace Corps operates must adhere to the Peace Corps travel policy in that country. The SSM will assist Volunteers in obtaining a copy of the policy and you are responsible for reviewing and following it.

Outside of Myanmar: In a non-Peace Corps Country

Volunteers who travel on authorized leave to other countries should familiarize yourselves with local transportation options and risks. You are strongly encouraged to review the latest State Department Travel Advisories so that you can make informed decisions regarding your travel plans: www.state.gov/travel. We also recommend you enroll in the Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).

Special Travel Considerations/Recommendation

Because conditions in Myanmar can and do change, Volunteers must consult with the SSM about the security situation before each proposed trip, either work related or vacation. If conditions are deemed dangerous, permission to travel may not be authorized.

Monitoring Transportation Issues

The SSM is responsible for regularly monitoring transportation issues and providing relevant information, such as recommendations/updates on companies, carriers, and road closings/conditions to the Country Director, and shall ensure that this policy is reviewed at least annually and that revisions are made as necessary.

General Travel Tips

The tourism industry and infrastructure in Myanmar is still developing. Research your trip carefully and be sure to plan travel **only** to those areas accessible to foreign visitors. The [Transparency Tourism web site](#) is a good resource as is the [Ministry of Hotels and Tourism web site](#).

Tourist facilities are adequate in Yangon, Bagan, Inle Lake, Mandalay, Ngapali Beach, and Taunggyi, but limited elsewhere. Tourists trekking in remote parts of the country have experienced difficulties with military authorities, even after obtaining prior permission. Foreigners can expect to pay several times more than locals for accommodations, domestic flights, and entry to tourist sites throughout the country.

Visa

The Government of Myanmar now has an e-Visa program that allows visitors to apply online for a tourist visa. Please click [here](#) for more information.

Personal Conduct

PC/Myanmar is a new Post and, as such, we want to ensure that visiting Volunteers take the utmost caution to be responsible, respectful, and courteous visitors. **Both positive and negative behavior of visiting Volunteers to Myanmar will directly impact the image and integrity of the Peace Corps program here.** We expect visiting Volunteers to be cautious and respectful in your travels and interactions with Myanmar people as well as other tourists/travelers. Volunteers must be very mindful of religious and social/cultural traditions in Myanmar to avoid offending local sensitivities.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism has helpful and entertaining advice on their web site [Dos and Don'ts for Tourists](#). Please take some time to review this. Volunteers should not become involved in threatening, violent, embarrassing, or inappropriate behavior with Myanmar nationals or other foreign nationals. Be aware also that prostitution is illegal in Myanmar. Avoid any personal interactions that could be construed as prostitution by the authorities.

Weather

Myanmar is located in an active seismic zone. The rainy season extends from June to September in the southwest and December to April in the northeast. Severe rainstorms can cause flooding and landslides. Typhoons usually occur between April and October. These storms can result in significant loss of life, extensively damage infrastructure and hamper the provision of essential services. Volunteers should keep informed of regional weather forecasts, avoid disaster areas, and follow the advice of local authorities.

Money

The currency of Myanmar is the kyat. The most common denominations are 100, 200, 500, 1,000, 5,000 and 10,000 kyat notes. The U.S. Embassy cautions that no Burmese bank accepts traveler's checks and Burmese businesses rarely have capabilities to accept credit cards. While several banks now accept limited ATM card withdrawals, visiting Volunteers are encouraged to enter the country with enough cash to cover all expenses, including unexpected ones. Crisp, new, unfolded 100 USD bills usually are exchanged at a higher rate than lower denomination, less pristine ones.

Communications

The international country code for Myanmar is +95. Telephone numbers are 8 to 11 digits long including the trunk prefix 0. Volunteers may purchase cheap SIM cards to have a local number and data access while traveling in Myanmar. Network coverage is acceptable in Yangon, Mandalay, and Naypyitaw but, in general, coverage can be unavailable or unreliable. There are Internet cafés in Yangon; identification is required, access to certain websites is restricted and records of which websites users have visited are kept. Wi Fi is available but is often weak and unreliable. Be aware that local authorities may monitor electronic communications, including email.

Accommodation

Homestays are technically illegal in Myanmar – foreigners are only permitted to stay at licensed hotels and guesthouses. However, in more remote parts of the country where there are few (or no) hotels, homestays are generally tolerated.

The following guesthouses are recommended in Yangon.

Shwe MOUNG Hotel

No. 1 Aung Chan Thar (3rd) Street
Sanchaung Township, Yangon
Phone: 09 310 60009 or 01 510 021
www.shwemounghotel.com

Pickled Tea Hostel

11 Myaynigone Zay Street
Sanchaung Township, Yangon
Phone: 0 9 250903363
www.pickledteahostel.com/

Recreation

Exercise caution at beach resorts in Ngwesaung, Chaungtha, and Ngapali as there are strong underwater currents and riptides. There are no lifeguards and drownings have occurred. Exercise caution when considering diving excursions in Myanmar. Rented diving equipment may not meet internationally acceptable safety standards and may not be maintained adequately.

Souvenirs

Under the JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2008, American citizens are prohibited from purchasing jadeite and ruby from Myanmar, even if the gems are processed in, and exported from, another country. Volunteers should take care not to purchase any jades or rubies in Myanmar. There are also known scams involving other gems and jewelry in which merchants sell lower-quality items at inflated prices with promises that the items can be resold at a profit. Carefully consider all purchases if you are not knowledgeable about gems or jewelry.

Crime

The Department of State classifies Myanmar as “low” for crime on a scale ranging from low-medium-high-critical. Yangon is generally a safe city and violent crime is rare. However, Volunteers should always be vigilant and maintain situational awareness. Most crimes against foreigners can be characterized as non-violent crimes of opportunity. Pickpockets operate in crowded markets and some visitors have reported bag snatchings. Ensure that your personal belongings, passports, and other travel documents are secure at all times. It’s a good idea to bring photocopies of your passport.

Political Violence

The threat of political violence against American interests in Myanmar is rated as “medium.” There have been no instances of political violence or terrorism directed against Americans in the last few years. Although public protests and demonstrations are normally peaceful, spontaneous rioting may occur. Volunteers should take care to avoid all large gatherings and protests.



Volunteer Travel Safety Plan

Volunteers should complete this plan as thoroughly as possible and discuss it with his/her Country Director and SSM before submitting it to the PC/Myanmar Country Director for approval (preferably at least 2-4 weeks in advance of travel). Once approved, please carry this guidance and plan with you on your trip!

Contact Information

Please include the Email and phone number where you can be reached during your time in Myanmar.

Volunteer Name		Peace Corps Post	
Contact Information (Email and phone)		Travel Dates to Myanmar	

Travel Companions/Local Contacts

Please include the names and contact information of people or travel companies you will be with in Myanmar.

Name		Name	
Relationship		Relationship	
Contact Information (Email and phone)		Contact Information (Email and phone)	

Emergency Contacts

Please include someone at Post and someone at home who can be contacted in case of emergency.

Name		Name	
Relationship		Relationship	
Contact Information (Email and phone)		Contact Information (Email and phone)	

Proposed Itinerary

Please include as much detail as possible, including flight numbers, bus times, travel companies, hotel web sites and Email addresses, etc.

Dates	Location	Means of Travel	Hotel Name/Contact

Other Information

Please include any other relevant information about your trip.

Additional Relevant Information About Proposed Travel in Myanmar

Acknowledgements

X	Please complete and check the following:
	I have read and understand the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism guidance on Dos and Don'ts for Tourists .
	I have reviewed and understand the Ministry of Home Affairs' complete list of permitted areas and map of the restricted areas .
	I have read and understand the latest State Department Travel Advisories for Myanmar (Burma).
	I have enrolled in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) (strongly recommended).
	I am familiar with the hours and services offered by American Citizens Services at the U.S Embassy in Yangon and will carry with me the relevant contact information.
	I have discussed with my Country Director and SSM the risks of travel to Myanmar and the steps I will take to maximize my security given the risks.
	I have discussed with my Country Director and SSM the steps I will take if I have a security issue while traveling in Myanmar.
	I have discussed with my Country Director and SSM the frequency and modes with which I need to communicate/check-in with them while traveling.