

AGELESS CITIES OF TIME



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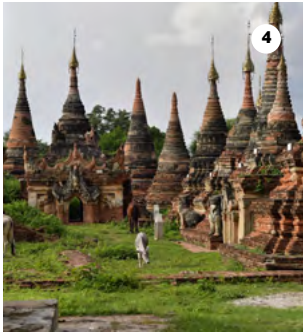
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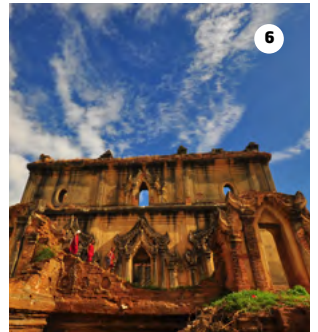
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INTRODUCTION

The ancient cities in Myanmar are a wonder to behold as they still retain their striking beauty, despite being worn by age and time.

Several iconic landmarks present in these cities hold historical value that tells a story of the rise and fall of the kingdom, the glory of a capital, and the spread of Theravada Buddhism within the nation.

You will discover much in these cities. From temples erected thousands of years ago and a township with excavated archaeological sites to the prominence of Myanmar's changing capitals, this is a land with an exciting history to tell. You'll be in awe as you visit all of Myanmar's ancient civilisations and learn about the origins and history that led to the developing nation that we see today.



PYU CITIES

The Pyu Cities comprise of **Halin**, **Beikthano** and **Sri Ksetra**. These sites have been excavated and are part of the Pyu Kingdom, which stretched from Tagaung in the north to the Ayeyarwady River and to south of present-day Daw.

History

In 832 AD, the Pyu kingdom was attacked by an army of Nanzhao who kidnapped 3,000 citizens and took them away. The remaining citizens left behind went on to blend with the rest of Bamar society, which settled along the upper Ayeyarwady banks by the end of 800 AD.

Highlights

Sri Ksetra was excavated in 1926, archaeologists discovered relic chambers that held a twenty-page Buddhist manuscript and gilded Buddha images. There were also three pagodas – Payama, Payagyi and Bawbawgyi – which point to Sri Ksetra being a centre for early Buddhism in Myanmar.



BAGAN

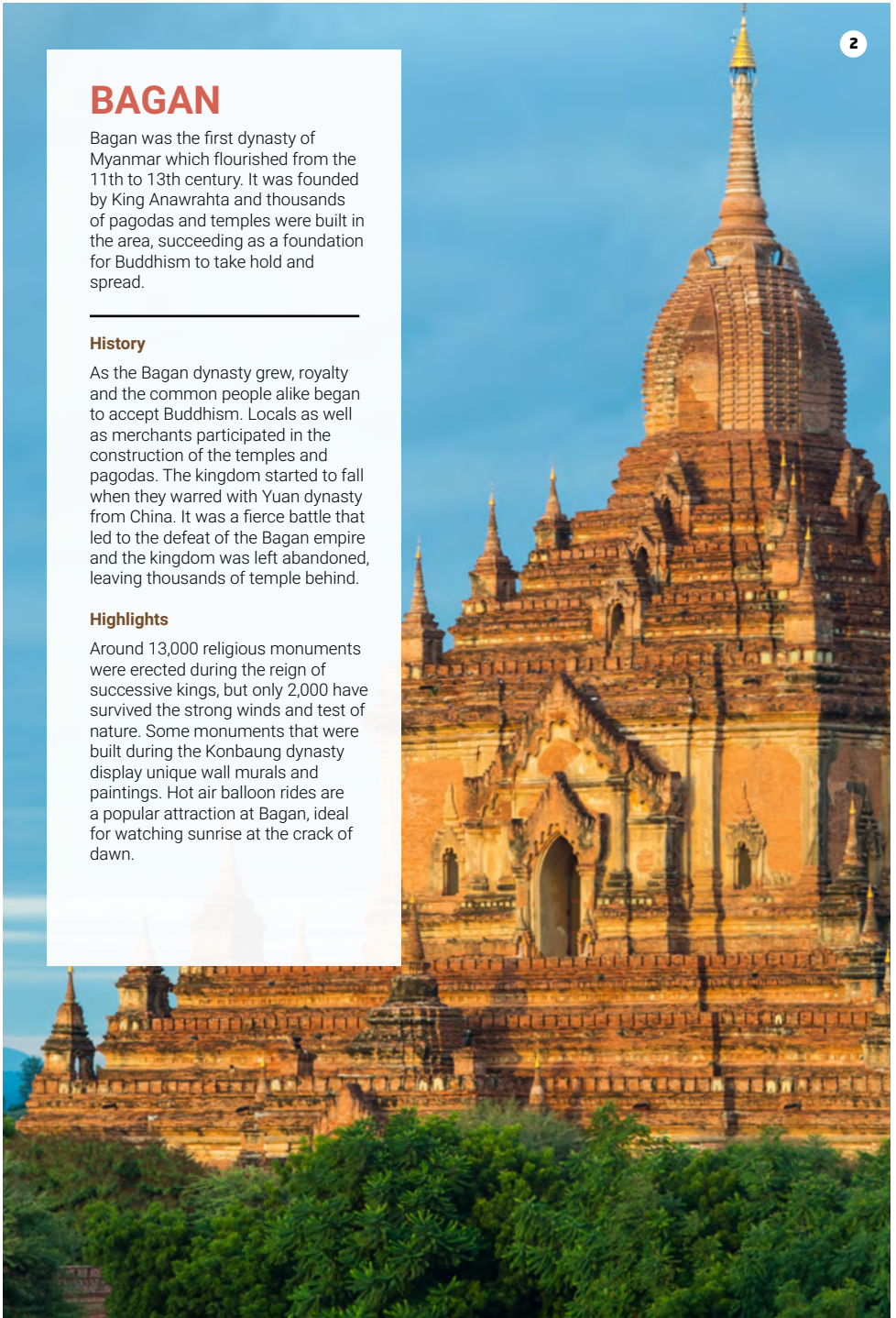
Bagan was the first dynasty of Myanmar which flourished from the 11th to 13th century. It was founded by King Anawrahta and thousands of pagodas and temples were built in the area, succeeding as a foundation for Buddhism to take hold and spread.

History

As the Bagan dynasty grew, royalty and the common people alike began to accept Buddhism. Locals as well as merchants participated in the construction of the temples and pagodas. The kingdom started to fall when they warred with Yuan dynasty from China. It was a fierce battle that led to the defeat of the Bagan empire and the kingdom was left abandoned, leaving thousands of temple behind.

Highlights

Around 13,000 religious monuments were erected during the reign of successive kings, but only 2,000 have survived the strong winds and test of nature. Some monuments that were built during the Konbaung dynasty display unique wall murals and paintings. Hot air balloon rides are a popular attraction at Bagan, ideal for watching sunrise at the crack of dawn.



MRAUK U

The ancient Arakan city of Mrauk U was founded from 1430 AD to 1785 AD. It was once a bustling cosmopolitan city of the Arakan kingdom with an important position as a center of trade. The entire place was fortified by a network of moats and canals surrounding the city. In the centre was the Royal Palace. Its solid defence system earned it the title of the 'fortress city' of Myanmar.

History

The golden days of Mrauk U were in the 16th and 17th century, where it was a centre for foreign traders, particularly the Portugese and Dutch.

Highlights

The canal waterways and creeks lining the city gates led it to fame as the city had a similar design to Venice. The Shittaung Temple is a remarkable sight in Mrauk U as it contains 80,000 Buddha images that date back to 1536. It features a bundle of stupas of various shapes and sizes clustered around the temple.



INNWA

Innwa, near Mandalay, was also known as the Ava Kingdom and was the longest-serving capital of Myanmar throughout history. It held the title of capital on five separate occasions, from the 14th to 19th century. This ancient city takes you back in time with its many stupas, pagodas and monasteries that will allow you to forget the busy hum of Mandalay.

History

Innwa was known as a significant capital of Myanmar up to the 19th century. Aside from its more common names Ava and Innwa, it was also referred to as Ratnapura which meant 'City of Gems'. It was rebuilt and torn down several times as the capital was often relocated; such as when the king of Taungoo relocated the capital to Innwa in 1636, and was sacked in 1752 when the Mons opposed his rule. During the Konbaung dynasty, the king defeated the Mon and re-established Innwa as the capital. However, a series of earthquakes completely destroyed the imperial capital in 1839.

Highlights

The city is built on an artificial island which connects the Ayeyarwady River and Myitnge River with a canal.

Did You Know?

The Awa Bridge that was constructed in 1934 served as a railroad for transportation and local vehicles to cross. Today, it is still in use to cross the Ayeyarwady River.



SAGAING

Once the capital of Myanmar in the 14th century, Sagaing today is an important place for Buddhist worship and study. Many pilgrims and monks come here to study and meditate. The vast landscape of the many pagodas and monasteries on the hill casts a mesmerising sight from the top of the hill.

History

The Sagaing Kingdom was first ruled by Shan kings from 1316 to 1364. Later on, the capital was shifted back and forth between Sagaing and Innwa, where kings of Innwa ruled from 1364 to 1555. The capital was relocated several times due to political, religious and strategic reasons.

Highlights

Kaunghmudaw Pagoda was built in 1636 to remember Innwa's re-installation as the royal capital. There is a local tradition that tells about how a king could not decide how he wanted his stupa's design to look like. The queen was fed up with his indecisiveness and ripped open her dress and pointed to her breast, saying, 'Build it like this!'

AMARAPURA

Its name means 'City of Immortality' and reigned as the capital of Myanmar during the Konbaung dynasty. It is home to the beautiful landmark of the U Bein Bridge, which spans 1.2 kilometres and is said to be the longest teakwood bridge in the world. It serves as an intersection for Lashio and Myitkyinā.

History

Amarapura was founded by King Bodawpaya as the new capital in 1783. Later on, his grandson King Bodawpaya shifted the capital back to Innwa in 1823. However, his successor King Tharrawaddy moved the capital back to Amarapura in 1837 and there it remained until King Mindon took over in 1857.

Highlights

Today, Amarapura is known for its silk-weaving industry and has a weaving school where longyis of all kinds of colours and sizes are produced. It is also famous for Buddha figures, bells and gongs, as well as tiles, pottery and baskets. There are two mausoleums that enshrine the bones of the town's previous kings, King Bodawpaya and King Bagyidaw.

