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Led by Dr. Donald Stadtner

**KINGDOMS OF THE EAST:
BURMA AND LAOS**
October 14-27, 2012





Dear Club Member,

Burma, renamed Myanmar by the military junta, is an extraordinary country. It is a land where the ruins of ancient and glorious kingdoms stand stark and impressive, and where cities and towns retain their ambience and charm. Neighboring Laos is a tiny, undiscovered gem of a country whose refined and elegant culture offers a tapestry of unparalleled beauty.

Join Dr. Donald Stadtner on a journey through Burma and Laos, which has been designed to unravel these two countries' unique histories. Over a period of two weeks we will discover the remains of powerful kingdoms, admire stunning landscapes, walk through little known archaeological sites, explore fascinating Buddhist caves and gain insight into the political backgrounds of these two fragile societies. As a result of their isolation from the world – both politically and economically – real development and freedom has been slow in coming and both countries face important decisions.

We hope you can join us!

Sincerely,

The signature of Kristina Nemeth, Director of Club Travel.

Kristina Nemeth
Director of Club Travel



Our trip will be accompanied by renowned author and scholar Dr. Donald Stadtner. Dr. Stadtner taught Art History at the University of Texas, Austin. He completed his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley. His publications include *Ancient Pagan: Buddhist Plain of Merit* (2005) and *Sacred Sites of Burma: Myth and Folklore in an Evolving Spiritual Realm* (2010). He has conducted many study groups to Burma and divides his time between North America and South and Southeast Asia. Dr. Stadtner will be speaking at the Commonwealth Club on May 8. Please register online or call (415) 597-6720 to sign up.

EN ROUTE-Sunday, October 14 & Monday, October 15

Depart the US for Yangon crossing the International Date Line.

YANGON-Tuesday, October 16

Early morning arrival in Taipei where you will connect with a flight to Yangon. Arrive Yangon, formerly Rangoon, and transfer to the **Traders Hotel Yangon**. This centrally located hotel offers an excellent base from which to explore Yangon. **D**

YANGON-Wednesday, October 17

Begin the day at the Botataung Pagoda, the site where the Shwedagon Hair Relics landed after their voyage from India. Continue to the Chauk Htat Gyi Pagoda containing one of the largest reclining Buddhas in Burma. During lunch enjoy a talk by Ms. Ma Thanegi, a prominent author on Burmese cultural matters and history who also wrote a very popular book on Buddhist pilgrimage in Burma, and was for many years the private secretary of Aung San Suu Kyi. After lunch, visit the Last Mughal's Tomb and St. Mary's Cathedral. In the late afternoon we will visit the Shwedagon Pagoda, perhaps the most beautiful Buddhist shrine in Asia, to enjoy the golden temple basking in the rays of the setting sun. **B,L,D**

YANGON-Thursday, October 18

Explore Yangon's magnificent and decaying colonial architecture during a walking tour led by Dr. Stadtner. Begin at the Sule Pagoda (exterior visit) and end at the historic Strand Hotel. End the morning with a visit to Scott's Market, a sprawling 70-year-old market with an excellent collection of Burmese handicrafts. Nearby is the Holy Trinity Church, headquarters of the Church of England. Late afternoon briefing to be given by a member of the NLD political party. In the evening, enjoy a reception at the American ambassador's residence. **B,L,D**

MANDALAY-Friday, October 19

Morning flight to Mandalay. Visit the Mahamuni Temple, the most important religious structure in Mandalay, and Shwe Nandaw Kyaung, a beautiful monastery built of teak. After lunch check-in at the **Mandalay Hill Resort**. Explore local craft shops and ateliers in Amarapura and stroll across the famous U Bein Bridge, the longest in Burma, which was constructed in the late 19th century. We also meet with a local NGO. **B,L,D**

MANDALAY-Saturday, October 20

Travel by boat to Mingun to see the world's largest intact bell and the remains of the world's largest pagoda, which was destroyed during construction by an earthquake. Climb to the top for incomparable views of the river and the surrounding countryside. End our stay at Mingun with a visit to the gallery of Mr. Zaw Mong, a watercolor artist. After lunch continue to the Kyauktawgyi and Kuthodaw Pagodas. Return to the hotel for some rest and as sunset approaches, take a bus to the top of Mandalay Hill to visit a temple from which spectacular views unfold of Mandalay. **B,L,D**

To make a reservation or for additional information, please contact Commonwealth Club Travel
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PAGAN-Sunday, October 21

Morning flight to Pagan. Upon arrival transfer to the **Thiripyitsaya Hotel**. Pagan is a most remarkable town, offering one of Burma's most amazing sights - across 25 square miles, stretching back from the Irrawaddy River, stand hundreds of pagodas and temples. Explore Thatbyinnyu Temple passing through Pagan's old city walls. Visit shops specializing in the production of lacquer ware which is made in this part of Burma. **B,L,D**

PAGAN-Monday, October 22

Discover the Shwezigon Pagoda, one of the holiest in Burma since it is said to contain a bone and a tooth of the Buddha. Continue on to Kyansitha Umin, a cave temple ornamented with frescoes dating from the 11th through the 13th century. Stop at Ananda Temple and then interact with local children during a school visit. After lunch, visit the Abeyadana Temple then drive to Minnanthu village to see 13th-century temples. End the day at the Mingalazedi Pagoda. **B,L,D**

VIENTIANE-Tuesday, October 23

Fly through Yangon and Bangkok to Vientiane, arriving mid-afternoon. Laos has had a somewhat turbulent history, and for years has been a pawn in the hands of more powerful countries. The country has a long tradition of textile making and we meet with textile collector and maker, Carol Cassidy. Tonight we will dine with a staff person from the Asia Foundation. In 2009 the Asia Foundation re-established its Laos operation and is involved in programs accelerating the country's legal development, women's rights and encouraging sustainable development. **Salana Boutique Hotel**. **B,L,D**

VIENTIANE-Wednesday, October 24

Explore the charming capital city of Vientiane. Walk along Lane Xang which is a wide street, modeled on the Parisian style boulevards. It runs from the Presidential Palace by the Mekong River, to a huge monument which is considered to be a replica of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Visit Wat Si Saket and Wat Ong Tu in addition to the Museum of Revolution. Afternoon briefing at the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane. **B,L,D**

LUANG PRABANG-Thursday, October 25

Morning flight to Luang Prabang. The former capital of Laos is an ancient city of Buddhist temples and pagodas by the Mekong River. It is also the religious center of Laos with 59 Buddhist temples. Visit the Heritage Information Centre and learn how Luang Prabang fuses and preserves its traditional Lao and European colonial architecture. The Heritage Information Centre is part of a project using information and communications technology to aid in the management of World Heritage sites and also promotes sustainable development. Later this afternoon, visit Wat Xieng Thong and the hilltop temple of Wat Phousi. We have arranged a meeting at the House of Puang Champa, a private organization founded by Prince Nithakhong Somsanith, a world-renowned patron of the Lao Arts. Enjoy a private show of traditional

dance with intricately embroidered costumes. After this performance, go upstairs into the Prince's home to experience a Laotian Baci firsthand. This is a traditional Lao custom celebrating occasions such as weddings, the birth of a child or the arrival of guests. Overnight at the **La Residence Phou Vao**. **B,L,D**

LUANG PRABANG-Friday, October 26

Morning visit to the Palace Museum and the market. Luang Prabang has changed little over the years. Travel by a private, covered, motorized long-boat along the Mekong River to the Pak Ou Buddhist Caves. Stop en route at the village of Sang Hai which is noted for its potent rice alcohol, and the village of Done Kien where you can see local villagers panning for gold in the Mekong River. The caves, which are set in towering cliffs, house 3,000 Buddhist statues most of which are about 400 years old. On the way back to Luang Prabang, stop at the village of Phanom, home to 800 people of the Leu minority who produce textiles which they sell at the local market. **B,L,D**

DEPARTURE-Saturday, October 27

Enjoy some free time before departing for the airport for a return flight home. **B**

TOUR PRICE PER PERSON: \$5,495

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$1,300

Based on minimum of 10 travelers and a maximum of 19 travelers

Tour price includes:

- Accommodation as per itinerary
- All meals
- Bottled water on the bus
- All sightseeing in a deluxe, air-conditioned coach
- Internal flights
 - * Yangon/Mandalay
 - * Mandalay/Pagan
 - * Pagan/Yangon
 - * Yangon/Bangkok
 - * Bangkok/Vientiane
 - * Vientiane/Luang Prabang
- All entrance fees and special events listed
- Full lecture program and Study Leader
- Pre-departure materials and reading list
- The services of local guides
- The services of a professional tour manager who will accompany the group throughout the trip (with a minimum of 15 travelers)
- Gratuities

Does not include:

- International airfare into Yangon and out of Luang Prabang (approximately \$1,750)
- Visa fees for Burma and Laos
- Excess luggage charges
- Medical expenses
- Trip Insurance
- Items of a purely personal nature



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The activity level on this trip is moderate to strenuous.

Commonwealth Club CST: 2096889-40 • Distant Horizons CST: 2046776-10

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Deposit and Payments

To make a reservation a deposit of \$500 per person is required by check. Please mail your check (payable to "Distant Horizons") with your completed reservation form to the address on the form.

Final payment is due on July 14, 2012 and must be paid be check.

Cancellations and Refunds

Please note the following policies on cancellations and refunds.

We strongly recommend trip cancellation insurance; applications will be sent to you.

If cancellation occurs:

More than 90 days prior to departure

Between 90 and 60 days prior to departure

Between 60 days & 30 days prior to departure

Within 30 days of departure

Cancellation charge:

\$250 per person

50% of per person trip cost

75% of per person trip cost

100% of per person trip cost



R E S E R V A T I O N F O R M

I would like to reserve _____ space(s) for the ***Kingdoms of the East: Burma and Laos*** tour.

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ (\$500 per person).

Room Arrangements

Single Supplement

Double Occupancy, I will be sharing a room with:

I would prefer a roommate, but will pay the single supplement if one is not available.

Personal Information

Traveler 1: Last Name _____

First Name _____

Traveler 2: Last Name _____

First Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____

E-Mail Address _____

I/we have read the Terms and Conditions and agree to abide by them.

Date: _____

Traveler 1 signature: _____

Date: _____

Traveler 2 signature: _____