



EXPERIENCES, PLACES, TRAVEL

15 reasons to visit Inle Lake, Myanmar

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Inle Lake is developing into one of Myanmar's most popular tourist destinations.

Enjoy boat tours? Love landscape photography? Appreciate people watching? Appreciate visiting destinations offering great insights into a country's heritage?

If you do, you're likely to be rewarded by a visit to Inle Lake.

Here are 15 reasons to visit the lake, which lies around 550km north-east of Yangon:

1. Take a look at Shwe Yaungthwe Kyang Temple

The road journey from Heho to Inle Lake takes 45 minutes. Allow additional time for a stop at Shwe Yaungthwe Kyang Temple. The Buddhist place of worship was established around 800 years ago. The teak temple now at the site dates from the 19th century – a fire destroyed its predecessor. It's a great place for photographing monks and novices.



Buddhist monks at Shwe Yaungthwe Kyang Temple.

2. See some of Myanmar's many tribal groups

Six different tribal groups live around the lake. The biggest group is the Intha people. Some people believe the Inthas were encouraged to settle during the reign of King Narapati Sithu, more than 800 years ago. Others think they migrated here from the country's south, around 600 years ago.

For people watching head to one of the local markets. Their locations vary.



A woman from the Kayan tribe.

3. It's a great for landscape photography

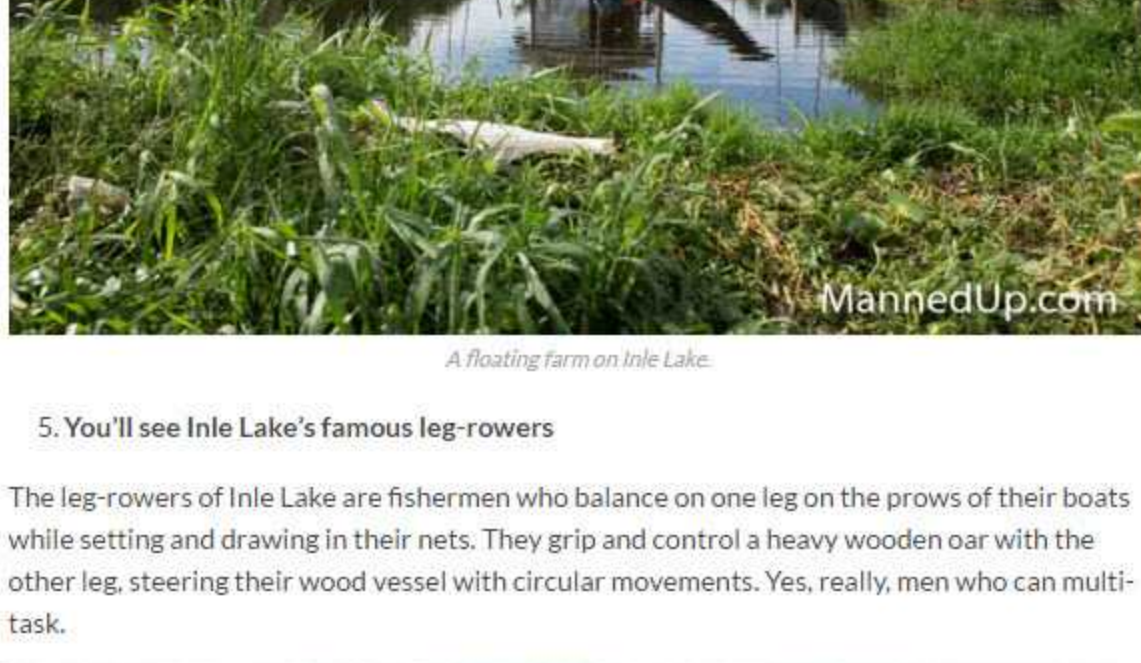
The Shan Mountains rise above Inle Lake, providing a dramatic backdrop for landscape photos. The hues of the mountain slopes change throughout the day, making it a rewarding place to spend time with a camera.



A tourist with a camera on Inle Lake.

4. You can take a boat tour on the lake

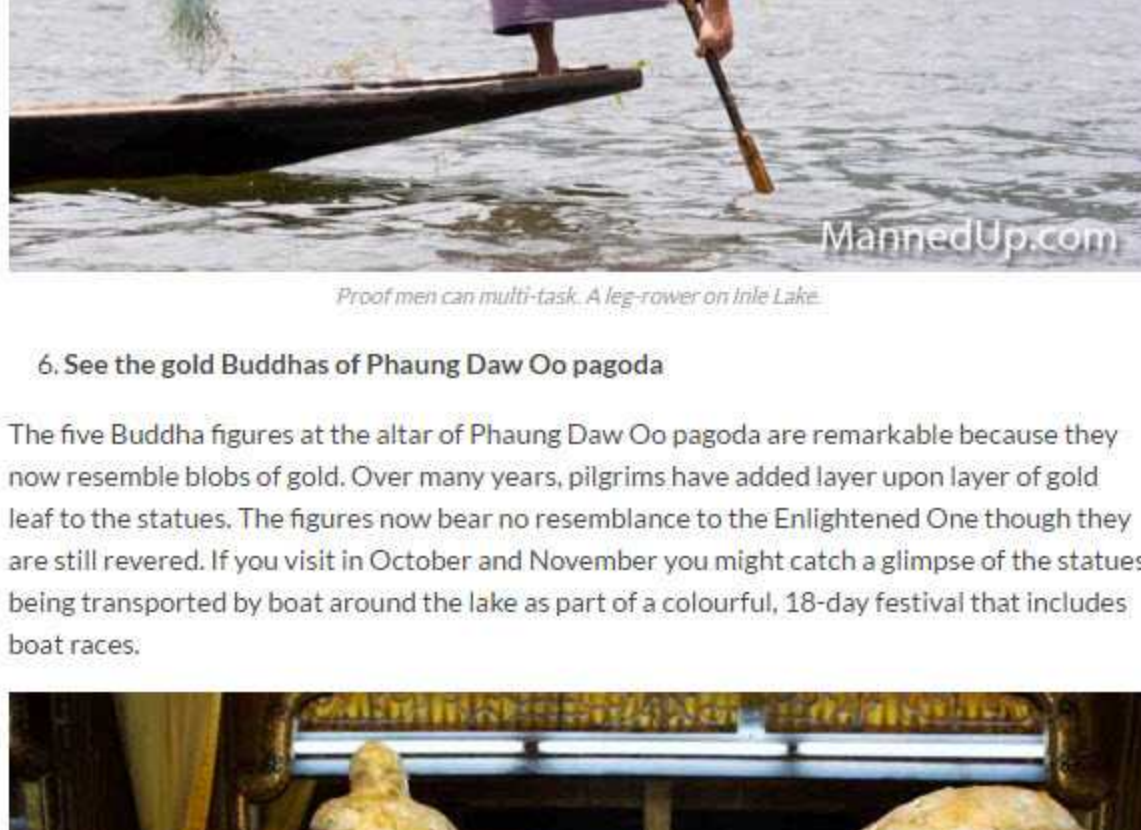
You can cycle around the shore of the lake but boat tours provide a means of exploring the narrow channels between the vegetation of Inle Lake's floating farms. You'll see farmers in straw hats tending vegetation bundled into islands that are tethered between bamboo poles. The floating farms yield three crops a year.



A floating farm on Inle Lake.

5. You'll see Inle Lake's famous leg-rowers

The leg-rowers of Inle Lake are fishermen who balance on one leg on the prows of their boats while setting and drawing in their nets. They grip and control a heavy wooden oar with the other leg, steering their wood vessel with circular movements. Yes, really, men who can multi-task.



Proof men can multi-task. A leg-rower on Inle Lake.

6. See the gold Buddhas of Phaung Daw Oo pagoda

The five Buddha figures at the altar of Phaung Daw Oo pagoda are remarkable because they now resemble blobs of gold. Over many years, pilgrims have added layer upon layer of gold leaf to the statues. The figures now bear no resemblance to the Enlightened One though they are still revered. If you visit in October and November you might catch a glimpse of the statues being transported by boat around the lake as part of a colourful, 18-day festival that includes boat races.



Gold covered Buddha statues.

7. Stroke a cat at Nga Hpe Chaung monastery

Locals refer to Nga Hpe Chaung monastery at the jumping cat temple. Times have changed and the monks no longer make the resident felines perform tricks in return for treats. That said, a handful of cats live in the teak-built monastery and are accustomed to being stroked by visitors.



A cat enjoying attention.

8. Observe fabric being woven from lotus thread

Lotus stems are harvested from the lake and woven into luxury clothing on wood handlooms. At Inpawkhon village you can see how fibres are extracted, then converted into thread. Women from the Kayan tribe, who wear brass rings on their necks, tend looms.



A women extracting lotus fibres.

9. Now is a great time to visit Myanmar

Ongoing reforms to Myanmar's governmental structure mean, increasingly, travellers see the country as a viable tourism destination. Will an influx of travellers bring change? Most probably, Now is the time to travel there if you want to observe traditional ways of life.



Local people in a boat on Inle Lake.

10. You can sleep in classy accommodation

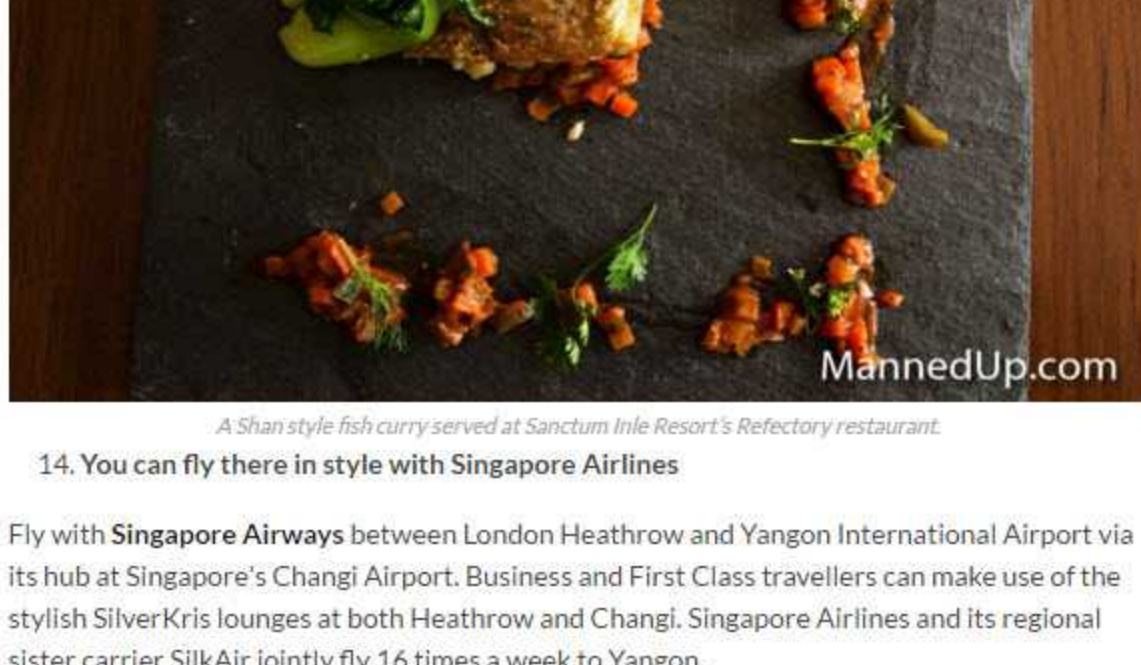
Overnight in chic, minimalist rooms at the upscale **Sanctum Inle Resort** (Maing Thauk Village; +95 92 52818805). The architecture blends monastic-style Gothic-inspired with Asian luxury. The Sanctum Spa offers a spectrum of relaxing treatments. The balcony of the resort's Refectory restaurant, where you can sample dishes inspired by the region's Shan cuisine, overlooks the lake.



Bedroom at the Sanctum Inle Resort.

11. Inle Lake is a year round destination

Inle Lake is at an altitude of 880 metres above sea level meaning it can be visited throughout the year, even during Myanmar's hot summer season from March to May. In the rainy season, from June until October, the region receives intermittent, sometimes heavy showers.



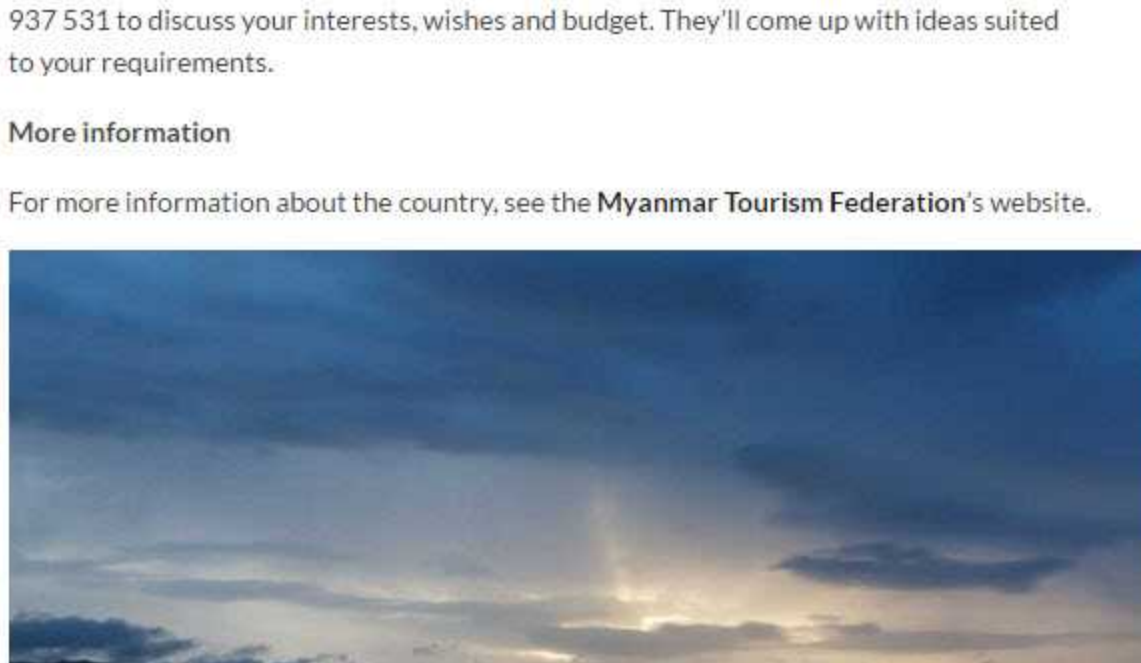
Buddas moored by Phaung Daw Oo pagoda.

12. You can benefit from the insights of local guides

Guides employed by **Seven Stars Tours** are knowledgeable and live locally. The guide will meet you at the airport and provide insightful information about the region.

13. Applying for an e-visa is easy

Travellers from a number of countries can now apply for an **e-visa** online. The process is rapid and efficient, and saves you the hassle of sending off your passport to the embassy.



A Shan style fish curry served at Sanctum Inle Resort's Refectory restaurant.

14. You can fly there in style with Singapore Airlines

Fly with **Singapore Airways** between London Heathrow and Yangon International Airport via its hub at Singapore's Changi Airport. Business and First Class travellers can make use of the stylish SilverKris lounges at both Heathrow and Changi. Singapore Airlines and its regional sister carrier SilkAir jointly fly 16 times a week to Yangon.

A number of domestic airlines fly between Yangon and Heho, the nearest airport to Inle Lake. The flight takes around 70 minutes. Heho Airport is roughly 46km north-west of the lake.

A woman rows between stilt houses at Nyauangthwe on Inle Lake.

15. You can explore Inle Lake during a tailor-made tour of Myanmar

Premier Holidays can put together a bespoke tour itinerary for you. Call them on 08444 937 531 to discuss your interests, wishes and budget. They'll come up with ideas suited to your requirements.

More information

For more information about the country, see the **Myanmar Tourism Federation's** website.

Dusk over the Shan Mountains at Inle Lake.

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