

DOs & DON'Ts FOR TOURISTS



HOW YOU CAN VISIT MYANMAR RESPONSIBLY

Dos and Don'ts for Tourists

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Special acknowledgements: U Khaing Oo Swe, Mr. Achim Munz, Mr. Axel Neubert, Daw Khin Than Win, Daw Kyi Kyi Aye, U Tun Ohn, Mr. Felix von Studnitz and all the people who were so kind to participate in the interviews and focus groups.

Cartoonists: Ngwe Kyi, Thit Htoon, Harn Lay, Apk, Chit Thu

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TOURISM TRANSPARENCY

www.tourismtransparency.org



**GREETINGS FROM
THE UNION MINISTER
OF HOTELS AND TOURISM**

Dear Friends,

Mingalarbar!

First and foremost, I am very pleased and happy to extend my heartiest welcome to the visitors from all over the world who would like to enjoy and value our hospitality, culture and nature based tourism resources.

Since a lot of changes have taken place in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, many people across the world are increasingly interested to visit Myanmar with various purposes. It is of vital importance that we provide our best services and hospitality to the satisfaction of all visitors.

Most importantly, we would like to share some best practices, as exemplified in the present Dos and Don'ts for foreign visitors so that the relationship with the local communities will be friendly, more understandable and beneficial for all.

As the productive outcome of the close and deep cooperation with Hanns Seidel Foundation based in Germany, the present tourism guidelines came to materialize with the efforts of Dr. Andrea Valentin.

We hope that this cartoon booklet is an approachable medium for travelers to understand and respect the traditions and customs of our local community, in order to make Myanmar a better place for people to live in and a better place to visit.

Thank you.

Enjoy your holiday in Myanmar!

Htay Aung

Union Minister of Hotels and Tourism
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

THE MYANMAR DOs AND DON'Ts CARTOON PROJECT

Given the tremendous potential of Myanmar as an emerging tourist destination in the global tourism market and the rapid change the country is currently experiencing, the **Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism** recognized the risk of unsustainable tourism growth and negative impacts relating to culture, society and the environment. In response to this challenge, the '**Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy**' was launched in September 2012. Under the aim of minimising unethical practices, the first action point was to develop a code of conduct to raise visitor awareness about the intricacies of Myanmar culture and society.

Cooperation was facilitated among a wide range of Myanmar tourism stakeholders in order to identify the most pressing issues to be communicated to tourists. First, the researchers **Dr. Andrea Valentin** and **U Khaing Oo Swe** undertook qualitative research in form of semi-structured interviews and focus groups in five different tourism destinations in Myanmar. From **Yangon**, to **Bagan**, **Mandalay**, **Kyaing Tong** and **Nyaung Shwe**, the researchers spoke with over 350 people, ranging from embassies, trade associations, NGOs, monks, Pagoda Trustees, hoteliers, tour operators, travel agents, tour guides to ethnic minority villagers, artisans, gastronomists, tri-shaw and horse cart drivers. The results of the research were then presented to 17 Ministries related to tourism in Naypyitaw, who discussed and approved the final Dos and Don'ts.

Then the cartoonists were approached. Again, the researchers aimed to include a wide range of Myanmar cartoonists to work together to minimize the negative impacts of tourism. We were honoured to work with Ngwe Kyi, Thit Htoon, Harn Lay, Apk and Chit Thu for this project.

Ngwe Kyi began drawing cartoons in 1964 for Myanmar magazines, journals and newspapers. His most famous cartoon character is called Kabasha. He is the author of a range of books called 'Myanmar laughter'.

Thit Htoon started drawing in 1971. His most famous cartoon is Maung Ti Htwin (Mr. Inventor). He draws comics, satire, illustrations and animation cartoons. Thit Htoon used Watercolour for his cartoons.

Harn Lay began his professional career by drawing film posters for theaters in Taunggyi, Shan State. After fleeing Burma following the uprising in 1988, he began contributing his art to several exiled organizations and media groups. He works as a staff cartoonist for The Irrawaddy, a source of news, information, and analysis on Burma and the Southeast Asian region.

Aw Pi Kyal began drawing cartoons in 1975. He is a very popular cartoon artist in Myanmar. In particular he is famous for his satire cartoons, which he regularly publishes in Myanmar journals and magazines.

Cartoonist **Chit Thu** began drawing in 1992. One of his comic books is called 'The Adventurer'. He is famous for drawing child educational cartoons, monthly Myanmar hero cartoons, rural customs and monastery laughter cartoons.

The value of this project should not be underestimated, not only in raising awareness of visitors, but also in the facilitation of cooperation between a set of very different people who have never worked together before. We are particularly delighted to illustrate the guidelines in five very different cartoon styles, reflecting the diversity of Myanmar culture.

The **Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism**, assisted by the **Hanns Seidel Foundation** from Germany, supported the establishment of this project. It is a viable first step to create more aware visitors and to tackle the momentous task of establishing genuine sustainability in Myanmar. It is hoped that these guidelines will prove useful to visitors.

- 1 The Myanmar people are friendly, helpful and polite.
- 2 Respect the Myanmar people and their unique traditions.**
- 3 Don't take any photos that may make people feel embarrassed.
- 4 Do smile.**
- 5 Don't point with your foot.
- 6 Wear decent clothes when visiting religious sites.**
- 7 Do tuck away your feet.
- 8 Don't touch anyone on the head.**
- 9 Please learn the basic words of Myanmar language.
- 10 Women travelers are very safe in Myanmar.**
- 11 Don't kiss in public.
- 12 Don't disturb people praying or meditating.**
- 13 Calling with your finger up means calling for a challenge.
- 14 Please learn the local customs before visiting ethnic minority villages.**
- 15 Do try Myanmar traditional transport facilities.

16 Visitors should be understanding when experiencing electricity outages.

17 Don't touch the robe of a monk.

18 Spread your wealth, use your money wisely.

19 Myanmar is a cultural destination.

20 Myanmar currency should be exchanged at the official exchange counters and banks.

21 If tourists wish to help the people of Myanmar, they should consider creative ways to contribute to communities, not to individuals.

22 Giving money or sweets to children is not advisable.

23 Myanmar people are delighted when tourists participate in their festivals.

24 Using drugs is illegal in Myanmar.

25 Help protect Myanmar wildlife by refusing to purchase wildlife products.

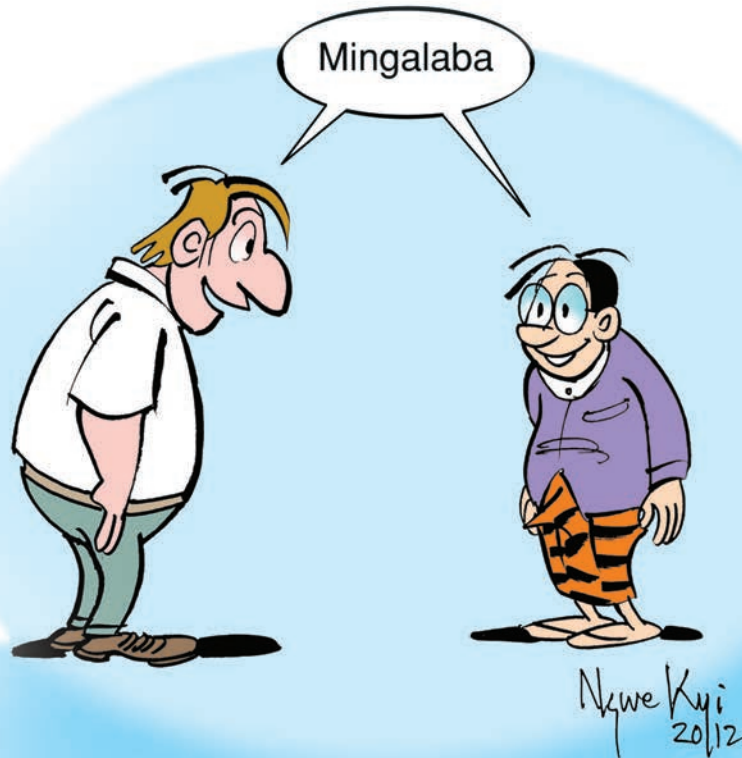
26 To maintain Myanmar's unique heritage, do not buy antiques. Buy arts and crafts instead.

27 Help us keep Myanmar clean.

28 Practice safe sex.

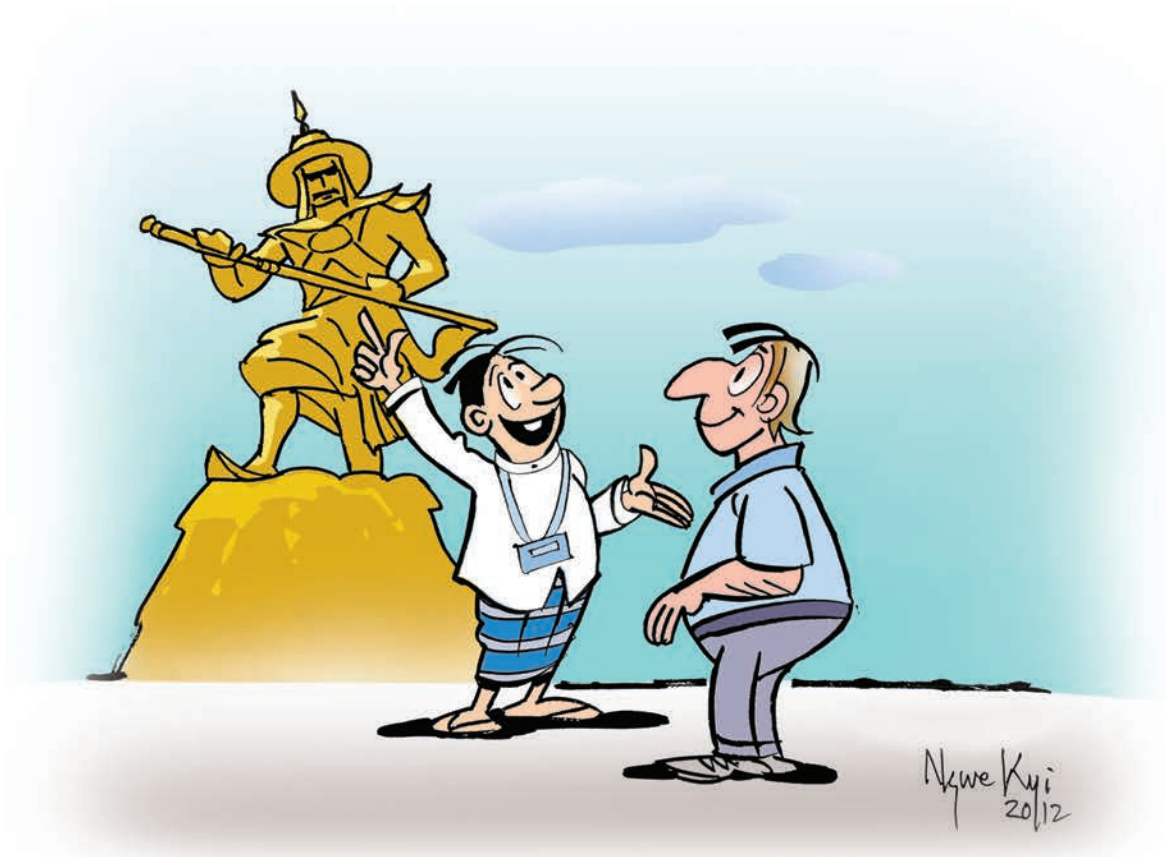
29 Do not go where you are advised not to go.

30 Relax and enjoy your holiday!



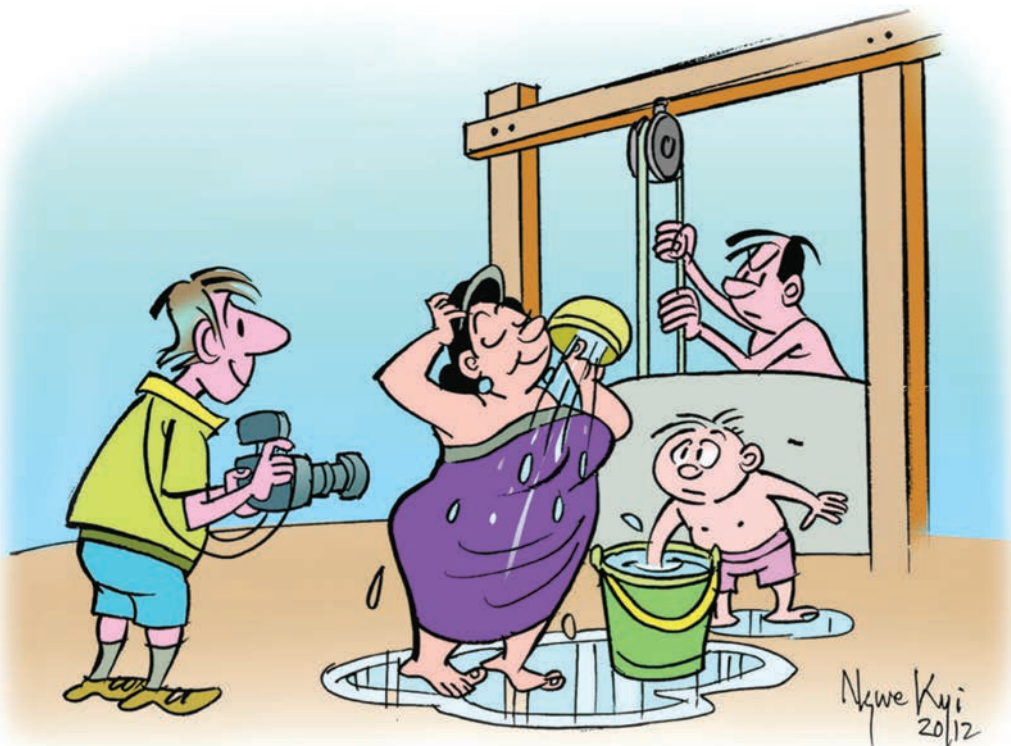
The Myanmar people are friendly, helpful and polite.

The typical Myanmar character is friendly, helpful, kind, polite and trustworthy.



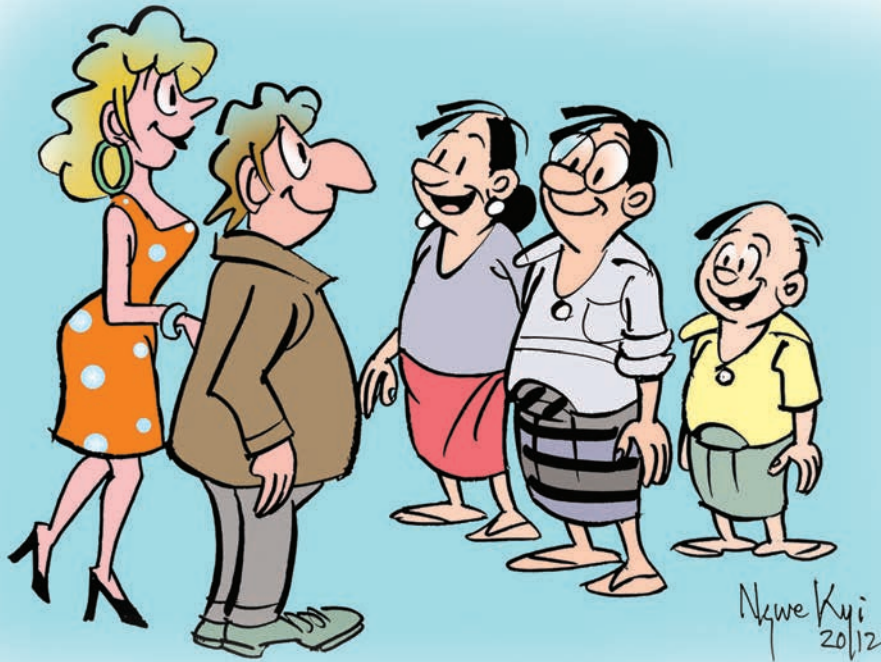
Respect the Myanmar people and their unique traditions.

Visitors are not asked to abandon their ways, they are asked to adapt to the Myanmar environment.



Don't take any photos that may make people feel embarrassed.

For example, it is considered disrespectful when tourists take photos of women taking a shower.



Do smile.

The Myanmar people are very friendly. A smile will lighten up everyone's day.



Nywe Kyi
2012

Don't point with your foot.

In Myanmar the feet convey messages. Pointing with your feet means disrespect.



Wear decent clothes when visiting religious sites.

Please cover your shoulders and knees, and take off your shoes and socks when entering pagoda areas.



Do tuck away your feet.

When you sit, your legs should not be stretched out and your feet should never face the Buddha.



Don't touch anyone on the head.

The head is the most esteemed part of the body. To be touched on the head is considered aggressive.



Please learn the basic words in Myanmar language.

People will be delighted to meet visitors who are willing to immerse themselves in the language.



Women travelers are very safe in Myanmar.

Myanmar is a very safe place for tourists, but it is recommended women dress decently.



Don't kiss in public.

Displaying physical closeness in public places is frowned upon in Myanmar.



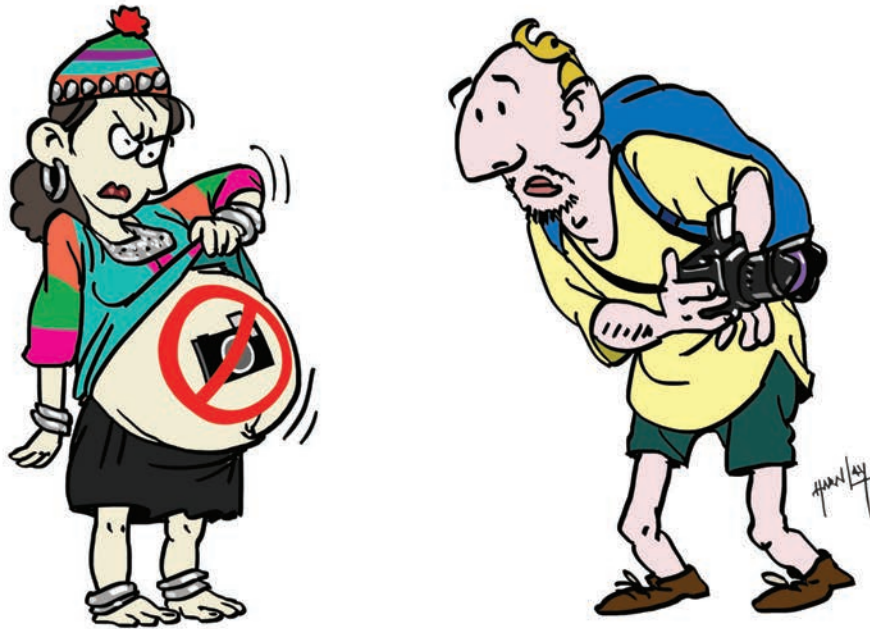
Don't disturb people praying or meditating.

Visitors should avoid loud talk and should take care not to touch people meditating.



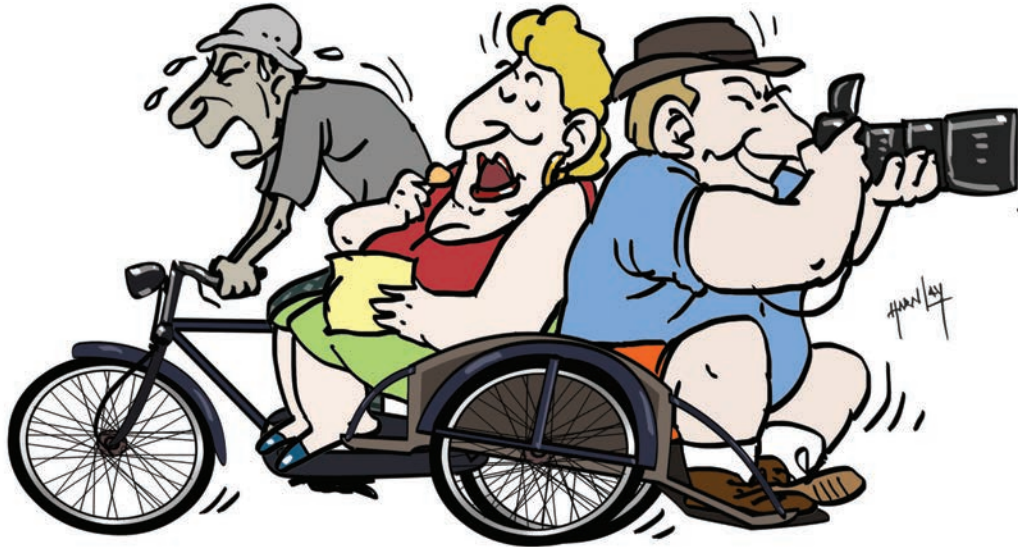
Calling with your finger up means calling for a challenge.

Calling someone with your fingers down is considered polite.



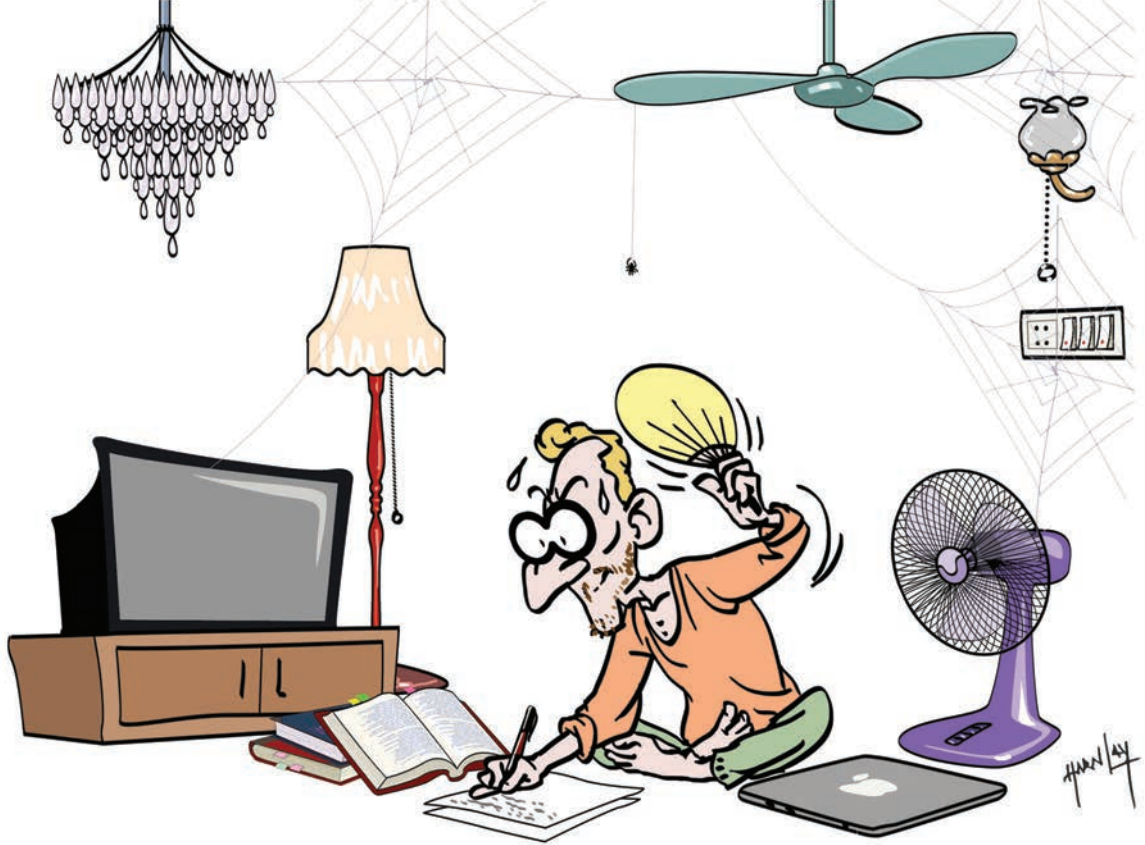
Please learn the local customs before visiting ethnic minority villages.

The people of Myanmar are very diverse; each ethnic minority has their own local customs. For example, when tourists visit Akha villages they should know not to take photos of pregnant women.



**Do try Myanmar traditional transport facilities.
It's sustainable and benefits the locals.**

If they wish, visitors are encouraged to be a bit adventurous and to support local transport facilities.



Visitors may experience electricity outages.

Tourists are urged to be understanding about the electricity situation in Myanmar.



Don't touch the robe of a monk.

Monks are very revered; they observe many rules, study the Dhamma, practice meditation, and are highly respected in Myanmar society. Visitors should never touch the robe of a monk, not even if they see a worm crawling up his robe.



Spread your wealth, use your money wisely.

Tourists should purchase non-precious items at the local market.

Licensed stores will give certificates that guarantee the authenticity of the items, whereas unlicensed stores, as depicted in this cartoon, cannot guarantee the authenticity of the items.



Myanmar is a cultural destination.

Visitors are encouraged to learn about Myanmar's traditional festivals and ceremonies.



Myanmar currency should be exchanged at the official exchange counters and banks.

Visitors should change their money at the reliable exchange counters, not on the black market.



If tourists wish to help the people of Myanmar, they should consider creative ways to contribute to communities, not to individuals.

For example, visitors can donate to communities, schools, health facilities, NGOs or monasteries that take care of children.



Giving money or sweets to children is not advisable.

Instead of creating children's dependency on tourism, visitors should consider the saying: "Don't give a helpless person a fish, teach them how to catch a fish and they will learn for a lifetime".



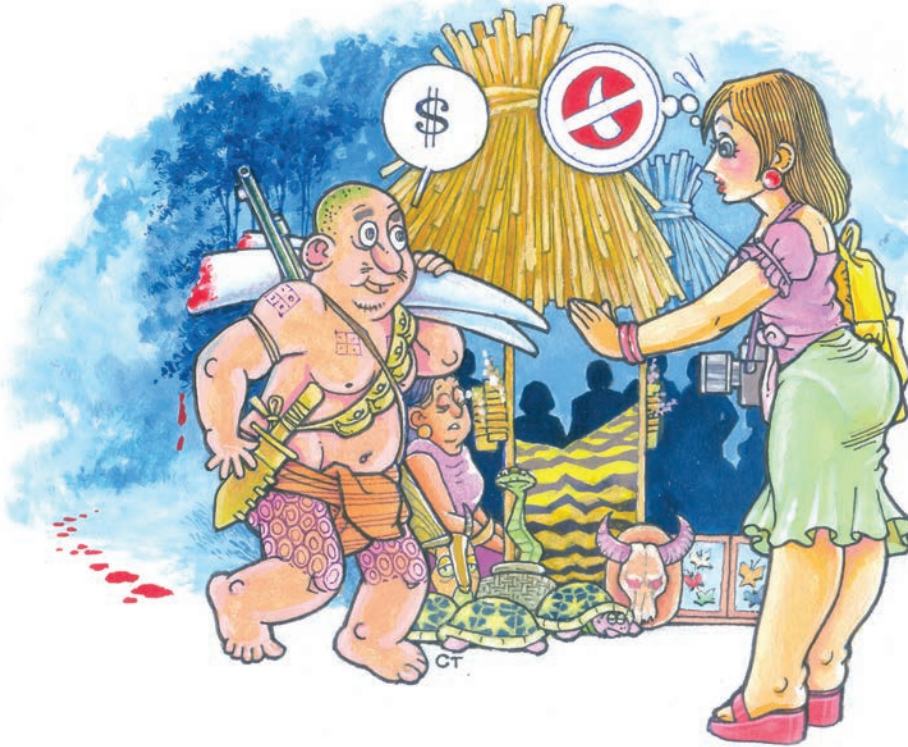
Myanmar people are delighted when tourists participate in their festivals.

It makes Myanmar people very happy and proud of their traditions if they see foreigners participate in their festivals.



Using drugs is illegal in Myanmar.

The use of drugs is against the law, and will destroy your life.



Help protect Myanmar wildlife by refusing to purchase wildlife products.

The illegal selling of wildlife endangers the species native to Myanmar.
Tourists should not buy these products.



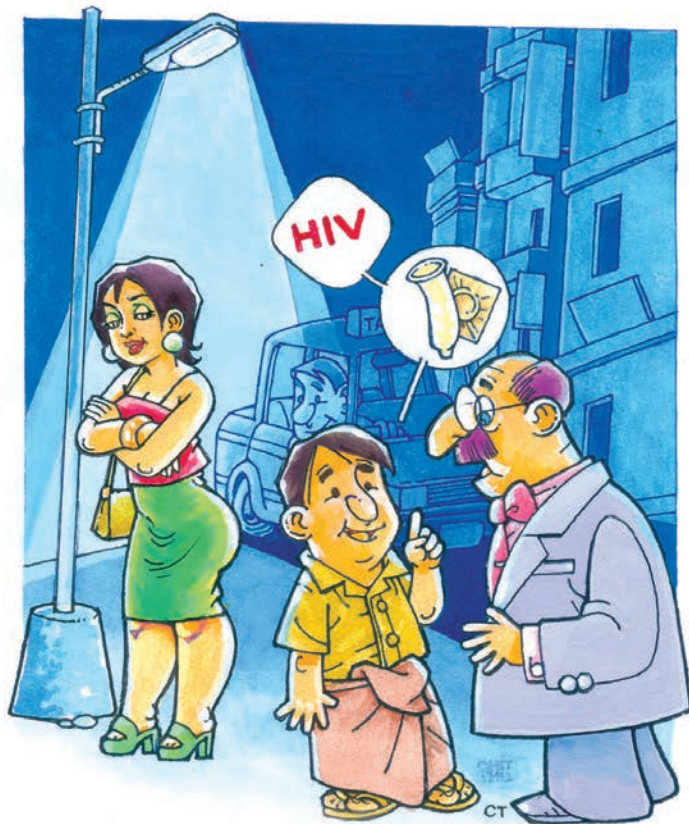
**To maintain Myanmar's unique heritage, do not buy antiques.
Buy arts and crafts instead.**

Myanmar loses its heritage every time antique items are taken out of the country.



Help us keep Myanmar clean.

Visitors could set a good example by collecting their rubbish and educating Myanmar people about environmental responsibility.



Practice safe sex.

Prostitution is illegal in Myanmar.



Do not go where you are advised not to go.

Myanmar is slowly opening up and more destinations will be accessible to foreigners in the future.



Relax and enjoy your holiday!

The present Dos and Don'ts merely offer some useful hints for tourists who wish to visit Myanmar responsibly.



USEFUL MYANMAR WORDS

Auspicious to you all
Mingalar Ba

How are you?
nei kaun: ye. la:

Good morning
mingala nan ne khin: ba

Good evening
kaun: tho: nya. nei khin: ba

Good night/Good Bye
thwa: bi

Thank you
kyei: zu: tin ba de

Thank you very much
kyei: zu: amya: gyi: tin ba de

I cannot speak Myanmar
Myanmar lo matat' bu:

Do you understand?
khamya: na: le tha la:

May I take a photograph?
da' poun yai' lo. ya. mala:

May I use the telephone?
te li hpon: thoun: lo. ya. ma. la:

Where is the restroom?
ein tha be ma shi. tha le:

How much?
be lau' le:

What's that?
e: da ba le:

Very expensive
zei: mya: de

See you again
noun gya. thei: da paw.

Please to meet you.
twei. ya. da wan: tha ba de

Good luck
kan kaun: ba ze

Sorry
sel' mashi ba ne.

Excuse me
thi: khan ba

It's all right.
ya ba de

Yes (Male)
hou' ke khin bya.

Yes (Female)
hou' ke shin.

No
hin. in:

Really?
da ge la:

It's impossible.
ma hpyi' nain bu:

Possibly
hpyi' nain ba de

I beg your pardon (Male)
khin mya (?)

I beg your pardon (Male)
Shin (?)

Can I help you?
ku nyi ba ya. ze

Help!
kegya. ba oun:

Beautiful
hla. lai' ta

I want...
...gyin de

PLACES

Airport
lei ze

Bus Station
ba saka: hma' tain

Railway Station
buda youn

Hotel
hou te

Embassy
than youn:

Hospital
hsei: youn

Clinic
hsei: gan:

Police Station
ye: sa khan:

Post Office
sa dai

Market
zei:

River Boat jetty
thin: baw: ze'

Guest house
e. yei' tha

Restaurant
sa: thau' hsain



DIRECTIONS

I want to go...
... go thwa: gyin ba de

Where is...?
...be na: ma le:

Turn left
be be cho:

Turn right
nya be cho:

Straight ahead
te, de. thwa: ba

Stop here
dima ya' ba

Slow down
hpyei: byei:

Be careful
tha di: hta: ba

Be careful, don't drive too fast
tha di: hta: ba: phyie: byei: maun:

Turn back
pyan hie:

Turn back
pyan hie:

How much do I owe you?
be lau' kya. tha le:

Keep the change
maan: ne. daw

May I Help You?

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Nay Pyi Taw (Hot Line) **067-412555, 067-412666**

Muse Anti Human Trafficking (Hot Line) **0949-555666**

Mandalay Anti Human Trafficking (Hot Line) **0949-555777**

Yangon Anti Human Trafficking (Hot Line) **0949-555888**

UNIAP Yangon Hot Line **0949-555999**

Child Sex Tourism **067-412201**



**“We warmly welcome those who appreciate and enjoy our heritage,
our way of life and who travel with respect.”**

- Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy



DOs & DON'Ts FOR TOURISTS

Offering a peek into the unique culture of Myanmar to help preserve and maintain the charm of the country, the present Dos and Don'ts are designed to help tourists visit Myanmar responsibly, respectfully and more aware.

