

Myanmar/Burma



Overview: In many respects, Burma's cultural diversity reflects its location on a strategic crossroads in Asia. Here it has acted as a historic buffer between the neighboring powers of China, India, and Siam (Thailand). A fertile land . . . the country is protected by a rugged horseshoe of mountains that surround the Irrawaddy plains.

Official Language: Burmese

Burmese is spoken by at least two thirds of the population. English is the secondary language but there are over 100 languages and dialects in Myanmar.

COMMON BURMESE PHRASES

- Hello - Min gla ba
- How are you? - Nei kaon la?
- I'm fine - Ne kaon ba de
- What is your name? - na mal bal loe kall lal?
- My name is... - Kya nau na mee... ba
- Nice to meet you - Twe ya da wanta ba de
- Please - Kyeizu pyu yue
- Thank you - Kyeizu tin ba de
- You are welcome - Ya ba de
- Yes - Ho de
- No - Ma ho bu
- Excuse me (getting attention) - Ka mya?
- I'm sorry - taung pan par tal
- Goodbye! - Thwa dau mal

Facts:

- The US has welcomed refugees from Myanmar: 2021 (581 individuals-as of 31 August 2021), 2020 (2,115), 2019 (4,932), 2018 (3,557)
- Popular Sports include the following: Football(soccer), Golf, Lethwei (pronounced 'la-way, it's a form of martial arts) and Chinlone (a combination of dance and sport)
- Clothing: **Thummy**
- - traditional dress for women, **Longyi**-traditional dress for men, Burmese people are often seen wearing traditional clothing and European-style clothing
- Customs
 - The family, both immediate and extended, is the most important social unit in Burman life. Uncles, aunts, and cousins may live together under extended family arrangements.
 - After marriage it is usual for children to continue to live with parents.
 - In Burman families, males have priority, with father and sons assuming first place. They wield greater authority and are shown deference. Grandparents living with the family are also shown deference.
 - Females have many rights, however, including inheritance rights and the right to an equal share of property upon divorce. Enrollment in higher education shows almost equal numbers of females and males.
- Religion: Buddhism 85- 90%, Christianity 6-8%, Islam 2-4%

- Food:
 - The Burmans typically eat boiled rice accompanied by curry and condiments. The early morning meal may consist of fried leftover rice or steamed sticky rice, eaten with sesame and finely ground salt, boiled beans, and sometimes grilled dried fish.
 - In the urban areas, breakfast might be bread and jam or Indian naan (flatbread) with boiled beans. The midday meal is usually rice and some kind of curry, which for the more well-to-do may be a meat dish accompanied by stir-fried vegetables and a soup.
 - More side dishes, such as various fermented fish paste dips (eaten with boiled vegetables) and other meat or vegetable dishes, may be served, depending on the family's income.

Current Events

- Resource-rich and fertile, Burma was once regarded as “the rice bowl of Asia.” Under military rule since 1962, its fortunes have steadily declined, and today it is one of the world’s least developed and least free countries. It is also the source of one of the world’s most protracted refugee crises.
- The military regime changed the name from "Burma" to "Myanmar". The names mean the same thing, but Myanmar is more formal. Many people and countries refused to acknowledge the name change in order to deny the regime's legitimacy, but today it is more accepted. Many Burmese people will say they are from Burma, not Myanmar.
- The military seized power on February 1, 2021, and have declared a year-long state-of-emergency. Min Aung Hlaing, the commander-in-chief, is currently in charge. There are widespread protests against his power and many countries do not support him. Various ethnic groups have fled for their lives to countries such as Bangladesh.
- While the generals who overthrew Myanmar’s elected government on 1 February envisioned a swift, smooth and bloodless action, they have increasingly resorted to repressive and brutal measures to try to bring overwhelming public resistance under control.
- Neither the military nor the protest movement can be certain of the current crisis’ ultimate outcome.

Sources for further study; <http://www.culturalorientation.net/learning/backgrounders>, <https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals>, the UN Refugee Agency; Burma.com; bbc.com

Submitted by:

