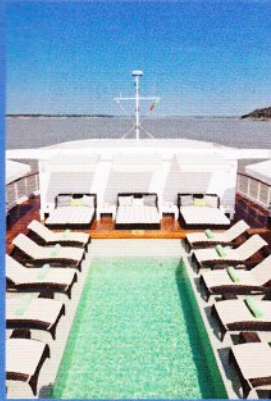


STREETS OF

TRAVELLER PROMOTION

ASIA



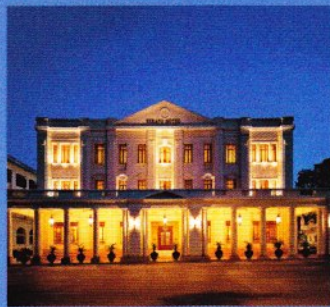
The Strand hotelthestrand.com was the preferred residence and watering hole of visiting royalty and celebrities to the former capital of Rangoon (now Yangon). This year, **The Strand Cruise** thestrandcruise.com transfers the hotel's heritage style to the Ayeyarwady River. Launching in 2016, the Wi-Fi-enabled, sommelier-equipped river cruiser will ply the scenic waters between the ancient ruins of Bagan and the historic riverside city of Mandalay.

As it shakes off the struggles of the past, Myanmar is embracing its experimental side in dining and art, alongside the backdrop of its timeless culture. Long subject to state censorship, Myanmar's art scene is finding its voice and new galleries frequently open in Yangon, the nation's creative hub. **Myanmar Deitta** deitta.org showcases documentary photography, multimedia and filmmaking that adds context to a social landscape in rapid flux. Owned by resident New Zealander Gill Pattison, **River Gallery** rivergallerymyanmar.com presents works by experimental Myanmar contemporary artists, including Kyaw Nyo, Maw Thu Da Nu and Maung Aw.

MYANMAR

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LOBBY, THE STRAND CRUISE, SUNDECK POOL, THE STRAND CRUISE, EXTERIOR, THE STRAND HOTEL, YANGON. MAIN IMAGE: POOL, SEDONA MANDALAY

Stretching across the Ayeyarwady River plains, the slow-paced streets of Myanmar's second city of Mandalay are invigorated by historical highlights such as the Mahamuni Pagoda and Shwenandaw Monastery, while the nearby town of Amarapura is home to the much-photographed U Bein teak bridge, which early risers will find particularly beguiling at sunrise. Mandalay's hotel scene can still be described as formative, so bed down in style at **Sedona Mandalay** sedonahotels.com.sg/mandalay with views of the Royal Palace and lake and Mandalay Hill.



Yangon's fast-changing dining scene is incorporating local and global influences in elegantly refashioned colonial buildings. Sip a cocktail on the relaxed roof terrace, or savour Latin-Burmese crossover cuisine (think seared salmon with mango, chilli and salsa) while slouched in a faux-colonial leather sofa with street views through arched windows at **Hummingbird** hummingbirdyangon.com.

Visitors seeking to make sense of the bewildering pace of Myanmar's transforming zeitgeist will want to head to **Yangoods** yangoods.com near

Bogyoke Market. Here, a small collective of fashion designers create stylised purses, home décor items and artworks inspired by vintage and contemporary Burmese art and photography.

If only the walls could talk. Built in 1901 by the Armenian Sarkies brothers – who also developed Raffles Singapore and the E&O Hotel in Penang, Malaysia –

Traditional festivals are an integral part of Myanmar culture, in both the cities and rural areas. In Shan State, the two-week-long Phaung Daw U festivities in October feature martial arts, street dancing and golden barges carrying Buddhist deities, plus the amazing leg-rowers in competition on Inle Lake. In Yangon, the Botataung Pagoda Festival in December or January combines stalls serving local snacks, theatre, dance, indigenous weaving and fairground rides under the moonlit glow of its majestic golden stupa.

