



Festival Calendar in *Myanmar*

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Festival Contents

Myanmar Festival Calendar	1
JANUARY	
Ananda Pagoda Festival	
Kachin Manaw Festival	2
Naga New Year Festival	
FEBRUARY	
Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda Festival	3
Kyaik Khauk Pagoda Festival	
Maha Muni Pagoda Festival (Mandalay)	4
Htamane (Glutinous Rice Festival)	
MARCH	
Ko Gyi Kyaw Spirit Festival	5
Novitiation Ceremony	
Shwe Nattaung Pagoda Festival	6
Maw Tin Zun Pagoda Festival	
Inn Daw Gyi Shwe Myitzu Pagoda Festival	7
Bawgyo Pagoda Festival	
Zalun Pyi-Taw-Pyan Buddha Image Festival	8
Pindaya Shwe Oo Min Festival	
Shwe Myat Mhan Pagoda Festival	9
Kekku Pagoda Festival	
Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda Festival	10
Shwedagon Pagoda Festival	
Alaungdaw Khathapa Pagoda Festival	11
Panguni Utram	
APRIL	
Water Festival and Myanmar New Year	12
Shwe Maw Daw Pagoda Festival	
Salon Festival	13
MAY	
Ritual of Pouring Water on the Bodhi Tree	13
JUNE	
Pakokku Thiho Shin Pagoda Festival	14
JULY	
Waso Full Moon Festival	14
Waso Chin-Lone(Cane Ball) Festival	15
AUGUST	
Taung Pyone Spirit Festival	15
Yadana Gu Spirit Festival	16
SEPTEMBER	
Manuha Pagoda Festival	16
Hpaung Daw Oo Pagoda Festival	17
OCTOBER	
Festival of Lights	17
Kyaik Taw Gyi Pagoda Festival	18
Dancing Elephants Festival	
Kaunghmudaw Pagoda Festival	19
Shwe Kyin Light Festival	
NOVEMBER	
Tazaungmone Full Moon Festival	20
Hot Air Balloon Festival	
All Night Robe Weaving Contests	21
Shwezigon Pagoda Festival	
Pho-Win-Taung Festival	22
Shwesandaw (Pyay) Pagoda Festival	
DECEMBER	
Mae Lamu Pagoda Festivals	23
Popa Guardian Spirits Festival	
Kyaik-hti-yo 'Golden Rock' Pagoda Festival	24
(Nine Thousand Lamps)	
Magway Mya Thalon Pagoda Festival	

Myanmar Festival Calendar

Myanmar is a Land of Festivals; in every month there is a festival. Most of the Myanmar festivals are cultural and religious in nature, reflecting the country's deep spirituality as well as important social events. Many festivals are related to pagoda festivals that people from the surrounding towns and villages come. Pagoda festivals are meant to commemorate the religious consecration rituals which are observed by the monks and make it into a holy and revered place of worship. During the pagoda festivals, there are local entertainment groups performing for the visitors, foodstalls, other shops selling various products, etc. As most festivals are held during the fair weather; i.e. after the rains when the harvest has been done by the villagers and they are free from their daily fieldwork. During the festivals, they meet old friends, engage in commerce, boys meet girls and generally the people enjoy themselves. There are also other festivals by many ethnic groups inhabiting the country connected with either the new year or harvest according to their own calendars. Apart from these festivals there are also many festivals connected with the other religions and Nats or the spirits.

January



Ananda Pagoda Festival

Date : Full Moon of Pyatho to 15th Waning of Pyatho
 Location : Bagan
 Duration : 15 days

This is one of the most famous pagoda festivals in Bagan; one of the Asia's most amazing and richest archaeological sites. The Great Ananda Pagoda Festival is said to have been going on continuously since the Bagan period. Long ago, people from many villages around Bagan came to the festival in bullock-carts and made camps for the whole duration of the festival. Even now some villagers still come to the festival in the traditional way. Visitors can definitely enjoy the traditional lifestyle of the locals of Bagan during this festival.

January



Kachin Manaw Festival (Kachin New Year Festival)

- Date : Usually around first week of January
 Location : Myitkyina, Kachin State.
 Duration : 1 day

The Kachins; one of the major races of Myanmar, take great part in this festival and many Kachins from abroad come back to meet and dance at this special event. The Manaw dance is performed at Manaw Festival which originated as part of the Nat or spirit worship of the past.



Naga New Year Festival

- Date : Usually January 14 to 16
 Location : Either Lahe or Layshi, Savgaing Region
 Duration : 3 days

Naga New Year Festival is one of the rarest ceremonies in Myanmar. There are more than 49 different clans with their own distinctive dresses and dialects. They usually gather annually to celebrate the New Year which falls on January 15. Package tours are available to visit the Naga New Year Festival of Myanmar.

February



Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda Festival

- Date : Begins on 5th Waxing of Tabodwe
 Location : Shwe Settaw, Magwe Region, Central Myanmar
 Duration : 11 days

There are two pagodas which enshrine footprints of the Buddha. The site is on the bank of Mann Creek, where bamboo cabins are erected every year for local travellers to enjoy cool swims during the heat of summer.



Kyauk Khauk Pagoda Festival

- Date : 8th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Tabodwe
 Location : Thanlyin, near Yangon
 Duration : 8 days

One of the famous pagoda festivals around Yangon City. Most of the activities of Pagoda Festival are evening entertainments such as Zat(Drama), Anyient, Stage Show and Movies shown in the open air, the whole night everyday.



Maha Muni Pagoda Festival (Mandalay)

Date : 14th Waxing and Full Moon Day of Tabodwe
 Location : Mandalay
 Duration : 2 days

Maha Muni Buddha image is highly venerated, as it is said to be made in front of Buddha Himself, and thus its face is most revered. The image is completely covered with 15 cm-thick gold. February is the coldest month in Myanmar and at the Maha Muni Pagoda Festival Devotees light bonfires and cook huge pans of sticky rice with ginger, coconut and sesame to offer to monks.



Htamane (Glutinous Rice Festival)

Date : Full Moon Day of Tabodwe
 Location : Throughout the country.
 Duration : 1 day

This is a competition between teams of men for donation of Glutinous Rice to the Great Lord Buddha in early morning on Full Moon Day. There are lots of people enjoy watching the demonstrations and competition of cooking glutinous rice and after finished, Glutinous rice is distributed as donation to people and followed by the prize giving ceremony for the winners.

March



Ko Gyi Kyaw Spirit Festival

Date : 3rd Waxing to 10th Waxing of Tabaung
Location : Pakhan, Yayzagyo Township
Duration : 8 days

It is enjoyable to see the singing and dancing of the worshippers to Ko Gyi Kyaw; a happy spirit who loves to drink and gamble. This annual festival in his honour is celebrated in his home town; Yayzagyo, Mandalay region.



Novitiation Ceremony

Date : During the months of Ta bodwe and Taboung (school holidays, mostly in summer holidays in March and April before the water festival)
Location : Throughout the country
Duration : 2 days

It is deemed the most important duty that parents owe to their son by letting him go forth and embrace the legacy of the Buddha, join the Sangha as novice and become immersed in the teachings of Buddha at least for a short while. Novitiation ceremony is the unique characteristics in Myanmar. The ceremony usually celebrates during the school holidays. A formal Novitiation Ceremony involves a parade around the pagodas with boys all dressed up as princes.



Shwe Nattaung Pagoda Festival

Date : 8th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Location : Shwe Taung, Bago Region
Duration : 8 days

This is one of the largest pagoda festivals in this part of Myanmar and many local pilgrims arrive by bullock-carts from the surrounding villages. This pagoda is said to be built in the Pyu Period.



Maw Tin Zun Pagoda Festival

Date : 8th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Location : Laputta Township, Southwest Coast of Myanmar
Duration : 8 days

This is the only seaside Pagoda Festival which attracts many people and it can be accessed from Yangon by a pleasant boat ride to Patheingyi, an interesting delta town famous for its parasols.



Inn Daw Gyi Shwe Myitzu Pagoda Festival

Date : 8th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Location : Moenyin, Kachin State (Northern Part of Myanmar)
Duration : 8 days

Shwe Myitzu pagoda is situated on the largest lake in Myanmar, this 8-day festival highlights a pilgrimage to the banks of the Pagoda. Sandbanks emerge from the lake just prior to the beginning of the pagoda festival making it an easier trek for pilgrims. Locals believe that one sandbank is used for humans and the other is for Spirits. Immediately following the festival, the sandbanks disappear and retreat back into the lake.



Bawgyo Pagoda Festival

Date : 10th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Location : Thibaw Township, Southern Shan State
Duration : 6 days

It is a famous historic pagoda festival in Shan State of Myanmar. Not only the people from Shan State but also the ones from the middle part of Myanmar take part in that festival. To observe Shan tradition, custom and culture, which are slightly different from the tradition of the middle part of Myanmar, is quite good while celebrating in the festival.



Zalun Pyi-Taw-Pyan Buddha Image Festival

Date : 8th Waxing To Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Location : Zalun, Ayeyawady Region
Duration : 8 days

The colonialists who had occupied lower Myanmar took this Buddha Image to England with the intention of using the bronze in their mint. According to legend they could neither melt it nor break it with hammers, and the Queen was said to have suffered nagging headache and nightmares. She ordered that the statue be returned to the place from where it was taken. After sending back it to Myanmar, she recovered from the suffering. In memory of its having been taken abroad and having been brought back, it became famous as the Man Aung Myin Pyitawpyan Bhuddha Image (the statue that was returned from abroad).



Pindaya Shwe Oo Min Festival

Date : 11th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Location : Pindaya, Southern Shan State
Duration : 5 days

Shan, Pa O, Palaung, Taung Yoe, Intha, Danu groups residing around Pindaya come and camp under the huge banyan trees to take part in the festival. The Pindaya Cave houses hundreds of Buddha Images, old and some new. During the festival time, thousands of devotees come from villages around the area to the cave. It is a joyous scene, people coming in groups by car, some coming in a huge line of traditional bullock-carts. The tribals circle the ox-carts, and in the middle, people do their cooking and rest for the night during the festival.



Shwe Myet Hman Pagoda Festival

Date : 13th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Location : Shwetaung, Bago Region
Duration : 3 days

People enjoy celebrating Shwe Myet Hman Pagoda Festival annually. People of Buddhist can pay obeisance and others can observe the Buddha image, only one having spectacles, that is very wonderful in Myanmar. The products of Pyay and it's environ, the traditional handicrafts from various places of Myanmar are available during the festival.



Kekku Pagoda Festival

Date : Begins on 14th Waxing of Tabaung
Location : Kekku Ancient Pagoda Complex, near Taunggyi, Southern Shan State
Duration : 3 days

A cluster of more than 3000 pagodas, said to be from Bagan period, but in the Yun Shan style, are grouped on a small hillock overlooking the Hopon Valley. Pa O people flock to the festival in their best costumes to pay homage to the pagoda on the full-moon day of Tabaung . The best time to see this is at dawn, on the full-moon day, when villagers come



Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda Festival

Date : Full Moon Day to 8 Waning Day of Tabaung
Location : Shwe Sar Yan Village, Patheingyi, Mandalay Region
Duration : 9 days

Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda is easily accessible by car, being on the main Mandalay-Lashio Highway. The Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda Festival is a very interesting festival indeed: a typical rural fair, bringing many visitors from not only the outlying villages but also from faraway. The main attractions of this festival are the folk toys woven out of dried palm fronds. Beside the Pagoda is also a 17th century pagoda, Po Kalar Gu, which houses many beautiful mural paintings.



Shwedagon Pagoda Festival

Date : Full Moon Day of Tabaung
Location : Yangon
Duration : Approximately one week preceding the fullmoon day

Shwe Dagon Pagoda is the most well known pagoda in Myanmar and this Pagoda Festival is one of the most visited festivals for pilgrims all over the country. There is a competition to weave the holy robes using traditional looms to be offered to the Buddha Images at the four corners of the pagoda before dawn. Monks recite the holy scriptures 24 hours continuously throughout the duration of the festival. Buddhist devotees pay homage every day and their donations go towards the preservation of the Pagoda.



Alaungdaw Khathapa Pagoda Festival

Date : Fullmoon Day of Tabaung
 Location : Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park, Sagaing Region
 Duration : 1 day

The Alaungdaw Khathapa shrine is located in a National Park in Yinmarbin Township, Sagaing Region. It is crowded with the local people from surrounding area and far distances. The festival is held by lighting to the Pagoda and National Cave. People go there not only for just pilgrimage but also for observing the nature as it is one of the renowned ecotourism sites of Myanmar.



Panguni Utram (Full Moon Day of Panguni Month of Tamil People)

Date : Full Moon Day of Tabaung or Tagu (March or April)
 Location : Sri Angata Eswari Muneswar Swamy Temple, Pelikha Village, Kyauk Tan Township, Yangon Region
 Duration : 10 Day Festival, main festival falls on Full Moon Day

Panguni Utram is the main religious festival of Hindu people in Myanmar, held in the compound of Sri Angala Eswari Muneswar Swamy Temple, Pelikha Village Kyauk Tan Township which was built in 1862. The ritual attracts many participants and even more spectators with the performance of fire walking, many of who wait long hours to witness relatives or friends perform. After walking over the hot coals, the devotees wade through a pit filled with goat's milk, then rub their feet with yellow powder, turmeric. This holy rare occasion is usually attended by the many local and overseas devotees.

April



Water Festival and Myanmar New Year

Date : Usually 13 April to 17 April (New Year's Day)

Location : Throughout the country

Duration : 5 days of throwing water and the last, New Year's Day,

Thingyan (The Water Festival) is the most interesting and greatest occasion for merry-making with the largest number of people taking part in it throughout the country. During the Thingyan Festival, people pour water over one another to the melodious tunes of singing and dancing at the decorated pavilions. Pouring water signifies cleansing the body and mind of evils of the past year. During these auspicious days, Myanmar people perform a lot of meritorious deeds to usher in the New Year such as keeping Sabbath, going to pagodas and monasteries, offering food and alms to monks, paying respect to parents, teachers and elders, setting free fish and cattle and so on. Thingyan is a distinctive festival which is always awaited with great joy and excitement by Myanmar people every year.



Shwe Maw Daw Pagoda Festival

Date : 8th Waxing to 5th Wanning of Tagu

Location : Bago

Duration : 13 days

The most famous Pagoda Festival in Bago. Classical theatre troupes perform their best here so they will be booked by agents for the next pagoda festival season.



Salon Festival

Dates : Late April (After Thingyan (Water Festival))
 Location : Myeik Archipelago
 Duration : 1 day

The only inhabitants in Myeik or Mergui Archipelago of Myanmar are Sea Gypsies, namely Salon (Moken). They live on boats during dry season and remain on land during rainy season. They still practice the same fishing and boat building techniques used for generation. Even they are living in the sea for most of the time, they have their traditions, customs, cultures and their localized traditional festival. During the festival, all villagers gather at the villages, offer foods and pray for their better on business, good luck, for good health and more prosperous for coming season. They are also enjoy their meals, drink and dance traditionally during their festival.

May



Ritual of Pouring Water on the Bodhi Tree

Date : Full Moon Day of Kason
 Location : Pagodas throughout the country
 Duration : 1 day

This ritual commemorates the date 2500 years ago when the Buddha gained enlightenment while meditating under a Bodhi tree. Pilgrims pour water on the Bodhi trees in pagoda compounds to keep them fresh in the summer heat of May.

June



Pakokku Thiho Shin Pagoda Festival

Date : 8th Waxing of Nayon
 Location : Pakokku, Central Myanmar
 Duration : 15 days

Pakokku is an old traditional town on the western bank of the Ayeyawady River. This pagoda festival is the most important for all towns west of the Ayeyawady and products from the region, such as dried chili, homespun baskets and tobacco are sold every year at this huge country fair. The best thanakha trees, the bark of which is pounded to make the purely organic make-up cream used by many Myanmar women, grow in this area.

July



Waso Full Moon Festival

Date : Full Moon Day of Waso
 Location : Throughout the country
 Duration : Mid July

The Myanmar month of Waso is the beginning of the monsoon rains. It is also the start of the Buddhist Lent. Monks are prohibited to travel overnight from their monasteries. According to the monks' code of conduct, they are still obligated to make the rounds for their daily food whether it is raining or not. As it is, they need spare robes. Therefore there is a ceremony to offer robes to the monks for use during the wet season.



Waso Chin-Lone (Cane Ball) Festival

Date : After the Full Moon Day of Waso
Location : Maha Muni Pagoda Compound, Mandalay
Duration : 48 Days

Waso Chinlone Festival of Mahamuni Buddha Image in the year 2009 stretched for 48 days. It was the 81st. game held annually since 1926; the largest sport event of its kind, participated by 1220 Chinlone teams. The players had travelled across from all corners of the country to pay homage to the most revered Shrine, and to convene in tribute, the game of Chinlone. It is believed that this game has taken root in Myanmar for more than 1500 years. During the Festival of Mahamuni Buddha Image, as the grandeur of game call for, chinlone contest is performed with live music of Myanmar saing-waing (traditional orchestra) and running commentary.

August



Taung Pyone Spirit Festival

Date : 8th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Wagaung
Location : Taung Pyone Village, near Mandalay
Duration : 8 days

Taung Pyone is the site where two brothers serving a king of Bagan in the 11th century were executed. They became powerful spirits or Nats. This festival in their honour is attended by tens of thousands of mediums and worshippers. During the festival, toddy palm wine, whisky, rum, grilled rabbit and fried chicken are offered to the two spirit brothers. Orchestras come to play for the mediums who dance to make the spirits 'joyful'.



Yadana Gu Spirit Festival

Date : 1st to 8th Wanning of Wagaung
Location : Amarapura, Mandalay Region
Duration : 8 days

This festival honours the mother of the two powerful spirit brothers in Bagan era. She is the Goddess of Poba and her main shrine is on Poba Crest, near Bagan. She is a powerful spirit and protector of women.

September



Manuha Pagoda Festival

Date : One Day before the Full Moon Day of Tawthalin
Location : Myinkaba village, Bagan, Mandalay Region
Duration : 2 days

On the first day of festival, pretty village girls dressed in their best parade with trays of fruits and cakes to offer at the pagoda. During the afternoon, young men parade with larger-than-life paper-made figures of heroes, celestials and animals. At night, they put on dances and plays. The next morning at dawn they offer food at shrine and also to the monks.



Hpaung Daw Oo Pagoda Festival

Date : 1st Waxing to 3rd Wanning Day of Thadingyut

Location : Inle Lake, Southern Shan State

Duration : 18 days

Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda is one of the famous principal pagodas which houses five Buddha images. This pagoda is the main attraction of Inlay Lake and is situated in the middle of the Lake. Thousands of people from communities around the lake and villages in the surrounding mountains carry fruits and flowers on lacquer trays in their own boats and pay homage as the holy barge passes. Teams of the lake's famous one-legged-rowers compete in annual boat races.

October



Festival of Light

Date : One day before the Full Moon Day of Thadingyut, the Full Moon Day and one day after

Location : Throughout the country

Duration : 3 days

This festival commemorates the time when the Buddha returned to earth after preaching in the abode of celestials during the three months of Lent. He descended at night and devotees greeted Him with lamps and lanterns. People decorate their houses with candles and coloured lanterns to symbolize this event. The festival of Light marks the end of Lent.



Kyauk Taw Gyi Pagoda Festival

Date : Begins one day before the full Moon day of Thadingyut
Location : Mandalay
Duration : 4 days

An exciting festival focused on a huge Buddha image carved from a single block of marble. It coincides with an annual competition among teams of cane-ball (chinlone) players.



Dancing Elephants Festival

Date : One day before the Full Moon Day of Thadingyut and the Full Moon Day
Location : Kyaukse, about 40km southeast of Mandalay.
Duration : 2 days

On the first day, colourfully decorated elephant figure made of cloth and bamboo with two men inside compete in dance competitions. The elephant with the best dance performance and behaviors wins the gold. Food and flowers are offered to the pagoda on the second day.



Kaunghmudaw Pagoda Festival

Date : Around Full Moon Day of Thadingyut
 Location : Sagaing, Sagaing Region
 Duration : 5 days

One of the famous pagodas in central Myanmar. Most interesting aspect of this festival is the caravan of bullockcarts in the pagoda compound. Some of the carts carry their village products, such as hand-woven cotton clothes and cane mats, etc. to sell them at the festival. They like to camp under the shady trees.



Shwe Kyin Light Festival

Date : After the Full Moon Day of Thadingyut
 Location : Shwe Kyin Creek, Shwe Kyin Township, Bago Region
 Duration : 1 day

Shwe Kyin light festival is held every year on the day after the full moon day of Thadingyut. The festival includes daytime rowing races as well as competitive synchronized paddling exhibitions by separate teams of women and men. However, the highlight of the festival occurs only after darkness falls and locals launch hundreds of lit candles onto the water.

November



Tazaungmon Full Moon Festival

Date : Full Moon of Tazaungmone
Location : Throughout the country
Duration : 1 day

After the rains, the monks would need new robes and on the fullmoon day, the offering of new robes for the monks are held. It is called the Kha htein ceremony. Sets of new robes and other offerings such as slippers, umbrellas, alms bowls, food, towels, soap and other necessities are presented to monks. Cash offerings for monasteries are also collected and displayed on wooden frames built in the shape of a tree.



Hot Air Balloon Festival

Date : Full Moon Day of Tazaungmone
Location : Taunggyi, southern Shan State
Duration : 3 days

The most spectacular event of the year is the Hot Air Balloon Festival held every November in Taunggyi commonly called the Taunggyi Tazaungdaing Festival. Thousands of local pilgrims and international tourists choose to visit Taunggyi, especially to watch scores of giant paper animals being inflated and floated off into the sky. The competitions run during the day and at night when the sky is colourfully illuminated with hot air balloons. Hot air balloons in the shape of elephant, ox, horse, water buffalo, bird, pig, fish, owl and parrot are sent up into the sky.



All Night Robe Weaving Contests

- Date** : Begins in evening before the Full Moon Day of Tazaungmone
Location : Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, and other pagodas throughout the country
Duration : The whole night

In the evening of the Full Moon Day, teams of weavers compete to finish a monk's robe during the night, to be offered to Buddha images at dawn the next day. It is a major event at the Shwedagon Pagoda. This ritual was once practised both in the palace during the time of monarchy and villages.



Shwezigon Pagoda Festival

- Date** : Full Moon Day of Tazaungmone Mandalay Region
Location : Nyaung U, near Bagan,
Duration : 15 days

On the Full Moon Day, there is a ritual of offering a filled alms bowl to a thousand and more monks and novices. Lacquerware, glazed pots and hand woven cotton blankets are sold by villagers living in the region at this great country fair.



Phowintaung Pagoda Festival

Date : One day before Full Moon Day of Tazaungmone
Location : Monywa, Sagaing Region
Duration : 2 days

Like other pagoda festivals with the usual entertainment provided. Myanmar thanaka, sandalwood and woven textiles (cotton blankets and longyis mainly) can be bought at the various stalls around the pagoda area.



Shwesandaw (Pyay) Pagoda Festival

Date : Full Moon Day of Tazaungmone
Location : Pyay, Bago Region
Duration : 1 day Shwesandaw Pagoda is one of Myanmar's biggest Buddhist pilgrimage sites and the festival of this pagoda is one of the most visited festivals for pilgrims all over the country. During the festival, the sacred tooth hall which contains a Buddha tooth relic is opened for devotees.

December



Mae Lamu Pagoda Festival

Dates : 8th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Nadaw
Location : North Okkalapa Township, Yangon Region
Duration : (8) days

One of the famous pagoda festivals in Yangon Region. The activities of Pagoda festival are reciting the holy scriptures 24 hours continuously throughout the festival by monks, offering provisions and articles to monks, celebrating festivities and performing with evening entertainments such as Zat (Drama), Stage Show and Movies.



Popa Guardian Spirits Festival

Dates : 8th Waxing to Full Moon Day of Nadaw
Location : North Okkalapa Township, Yangon Region
Duration : (8) days

One of the famous pagoda festivals in Yangon Region. The activities of Pagoda festival are reciting the holy scriptures 24 hours continuously throughout the festival by monks, offering provisions and articles to monks, celebrating festivities and performing with evening entertainments such as Zat (Drama), Stage Show and Movies.



Kyaik-hti-yo 'Golden Rock' Pagoda Festival Nine Thousand Lamps

Date : One evening of December 31

Location : Kyaik-hti-yo 'Golden Rock' Pagoda, Mon State

Duration : 1 evening

On the platform of the Kyaik-hti-yo 'Golden Rock' Pagoda, devotees light nine thousand lamps to welcome the New Year and to give thanks to Buddha's peaceful Doctrine. The magical Golden Rock Pagoda, a golden spire, sits on the top of a huge boulder covered with gold leaf and perched on the edge of a cliff.



Magway Mya Thalon Pagoda Festival

Date : Thadingyut

Location : Magway, Magway Region

Duration :

One of the famous pagoda festivals in the central part of Myanmar. This pagoda has the legend connected with the Buddha. The emerald cot of Buddha was believed to be enshrined in the pagoda. The name derived from the emerald cot; Mya Thalon in Myanmar Language.

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