



## HIDDEN MYANMAR PHOTO WORKSHOP WITH GEOFFREY HILLER

Myanmar is a country on the cusp of change. Still suffering the consequences of decades of stagnation under military rule, but also feeling the impact its recent “opening up,” it is currently at a crossroads. Having been closed off to the West and isolated from global influences for so long, it can sometimes feel like it’s stuck in a time warp. Unlike many of its Southeast Asian neighbors who have been rendered near unrecognizable by rapid development and tourism, Myanmar remains an untapped gem, with a strong cultural identity relatively undiluted by outsiders.

**TRIP DURATION:**

12 days, 11 nights

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Summit Parkview Hotel in Yangon, Mawlamyine Strand Hotel in Mawlamyine and Mountain Top in Golden Rock.

**DATES:**

November 8 - 19th, 2015

**PRICE:** \$4,595 USD per person double occupancy. Add 1,395 for single occupancy. Includes accommodations, transportation Yangon-Goden Rock-Mawlamyine-Yangon, breakfast daily and all meals only from day 7 to 10.



Often referred to as the Golden Land, this undiscovered country holds many unexpected surprises. There are vast but largely unheard of temple ruins that rival those of the world's most famous forgotten cities. There is lush jungle, monasteries, snow-capped mountains, idyllic beaches and vibrant cities that hold treasures from ancient civilizations, as well as evidence of more chaotic recent development. It is rich in desirable resources, with oil, gas, minerals, precious stones and rare timbers, yet its real treasure is undoubtedly its people. With more than 130 distinct ethnic groups, Myanmar's culture is diverse, but kindness and hospitality are commonplace. Wherever you go, you'll usually be met with a warm smile.

## WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

On this 12-day photographic workshop, you'll be spoiled with a myriad of photo opportunities to practice and nurture your craft. It will take place under the guidance of Geoffrey Hiller, a seasoned photographer who has been published in the likes of Geo, Newsweek and the New York Times Magazine. Hiller has been capturing images of Burma since 1987, and has returned to shoot this beautiful country many times over the following years. Through his lens, he has witnessed Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, change and grow, and has observed the impact of the historic opening up in 2011. With Hiller at the helm, leading and escorting you through the process, you'll get to explore this fascinating country and observe — and even attempt to capture — its beauty, as well as its contradictions and contrasts.

Every day in Myanmar, you'll wake up early and set off in small groups of two or three to explore and shoot. Under guidance from Geoffrey Hiller, you'll discover intriguing new perspectives of the city and its people. You'll be sent on challenging assignments and will receive practical, hands-on instruction. Linger at picturesque and interesting locations, and attempt to capture their essence in photographs.

After a morning spent shooting, you'll meet up with your photographer guide in the afternoon to discuss what you've been working on. Not only will he offer his expert input, but he'll also provide tips on how to get the most of every situation and opportunity you will be confronted with throughout your stay in Myanmar. Hiller will share his skills on storytelling and provide advice on how to best approach your subjects and a new culture.

After discussing your assignment, start shooting again in the late afternoon when you can incorporate the newly learnt lessons into your photography session. Every evening, the whole group will reconnect and discuss the day's activities, before returning to their accommodation.

Whether you're snapping pictures of the local crimson-robed monks, intimate portraits of children with their faces painted in thanaka (a yellowish tree bark paste often used as sun protection) or the ancient Shwedagon Pagoda, you'll learn how to make compelling and memorable images — skills that you can put to use to document your travels or even to help you build a professional portfolio.

## Days 1 to 7 (Nov 8 - 15): Yangon

The first seven days of the workshop will be spent in photogenic Yangon, Myanmar's former capital and its largest city. Yangon straddles the historical divide: A scattering of concrete and glass skyscrapers has sprung up and there are plans for more development, but for now at least, it remains much the same as it has in the past. There are crumbling colonial facades, magnificent centuries-old pagodas and generous expanses of green parkland. The skyline is punctuated by a series of gold stupas (commemorative Buddhist shrines), most noticeably the gilded Shwedagon Pagoda, the most famous of all the country's pilgrimage sites. There is also the riverfront Botahtaung Pagoda and the landmark Sula Pagoda, which despite being located at a busy roundabout in downtown Yangon and being surrounded by the ceaseless whirring of traffic, is supremely serene once you enter.

Yangon has much more to offer than just buildings though. Situated in the fertile delta of southern Myanmar and fed by the water of the Yangon River, it is a verdant place, with tree-lined boulevards, vast parks and gardens. It is known as 'The Garden City of the East'. There is the serene Kandawgyi Lake, whose placid surface covers an area of 150 acres and is bordered by lush tropical woods of Kandawgyi Nature Park, as well as the vast Inya Lake, an expansive artificial pool of water north of the city center.

In addition to these two lakes, there are numerous other urban retreats and nature spots where locals come to escape the constant din of city life.

Yangon's, and indeed Myanmar's, greatest asset is its people. It boasts a truly multicultural population. Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Christian influences meet and mingle in this diverse and distinct city. The Burmese people are known for being polite and visitors are not only treated with respect, but are warmly welcomed. This hospitable atmosphere makes Myanmar a comfortable destination for budding photographers to hone their craft. With a population of around two million people, Yangon also feels more accessible to practicing photographers than some of the larger Asian metropolises.

**Days 8 to 11 (Nov 15 - 18):  
Mawlamyine**

On Day 8 of the photography workshop, you'll depart from Yangon by van for a four-hour drive southeast to Mawlamyine. It is the country's fourth largest city, although it feels closer to a town in spirit. Situated on the Salween River delta, this port town was the administrative capital of British Myanmar and fading remnants of its colonial past remain, alongside Buddhist shrines, monasteries and Muslim mosques. It is the capital of the Mon State, and the majority of its population is made up of Mon people, one of the most influential ethnic minorities in Myanmar. Mostly untouched by tourism, Mawlamyine offers a fresh look into an unblemished culture.

Literature lovers will recognize Mawlamyine from the pages of both Rudyard Kipling's "Mandalay" and from George Orwell's literature. Orwell lived here for several years and used it as inspiration for his "Shooting an Elephant" essay.

For visitors seeking out photo opportunities, Mawlamyine can provide them in spades. Frequent religious festivals often provide the chance to witness unique local rituals and your guide will check to see if any are taking place during your stay. Local attractions include the Kyaikthanlan Pagoda, the Kaladan Mosque and the town's large

markets. Mawlamyine also acts as a perfect base for some of Myanmar's photographic and indeed sightseeing highlights, including the 560-foot (170-meter) reclining Buddha at Win Sein Taw Ya. Nearby islands and small villages can also be reached from here by short ferry and boat rides.

On the way to Mawlamyine, you'll make a trip out to the **Mon State's Golden Rock**, which is also known as Mt Kyaiktiyo. This famous Buddhist pilgrimage site features a gold leaf-covered boulder that hangs precariously over the edge of a cliff and is topped by a small pagoda. Small though the pagoda may be, the dangerous and dramatic cliff-edge location makes up for its diminutive size. Buddhist pilgrims frequently make the journey here to meditate and give offerings to Buddha at this site.

There may also be an opportunity to visit a monastery school in either Yangon or Mawlamyine.

**Days 11 to 12 (Nov 18 - 19): Yangon**

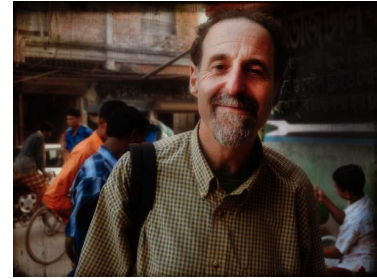
Return to Yangon for the final night. Here, you'll present the best of your photos to the group, who will, in turn, share their images with fellow tour-goers. Enjoy one last evening together, before saying your goodbyes. The following day, depart from Myanmar.

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND?**

This class is for photographers of all levels.

**REQUIREMENTS**

Attendees should bring their portfolio to the class for review. Each student is responsible for bringing their own camera and equipment, including a laptop.



**ABOUT GEOFFREY HILLER**

Photographer Geoffrey Hiller has been documenting the people of Burma since

1987 and has returned several times since the historic opening in 2011 to capture evidence of change, not only images of rallies for Aung San Suu Kyi, but the anticipation, hope and concerns of a nation forgotten by the world.

His work has been published in magazines in the USA, Europe, and Japan including Geo, Newsweek, Mother Jones and the New York Times Magazine. His award-winning multimedia projects about Vietnam, Eastern Europe, Ghana, Burma, and Brazil have earned recognition from National Public Radio, The Christian Science Monitor and USA Today. Hiller was a Fulbright Fellow in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2008–2009. Since then he has worked as a media trainer in India, Cambodia and Pakistan. Hiller is the creator and editor of Verve Photo: The New Breed of Documentary Photographer. His home is in Portland, Oregon.

Visit his website at [www.hillerphoto.com](http://www.hillerphoto.com)

**TERMS & CONDITIONS**

To reserve space in this workshop, a \$500 per person deposit is required at the time of making the reservation. Deposits are due no later than 90 days prior to departure. Final payment is due no later than 60 days prior to departure unless indicated otherwise in the description of the tour or workshop. All payments must be made by credit card or wire transfer to Photo Xpeditions, LLC,



and instructions for payments will be mailed upon confirmation of participation

Photo Xpeditions reserves the right to cancel a reservation if full payment has not been received by 60 days prior to departure. For reservations made within 60 days of the departure date, full payment is required when the reservation is accepted. All cancellation notices must be received in writing and will become effective as of the date of the postmark. If you cancel 90 days or more prior to departure, a refund less an administrative fee equal to 50% of your deposit will be made. Per person charges for cancellations that occur less than 90 days prior to departure are as follows:

60–90 days prior to departure: 100% of your deposit amount;

45–60 days prior to departure: 50% of the expedition cost;

45 or fewer days prior to departure: 100% of the workshop cost.

PhotoXpeditions reserves the right of canceling the workshop at any time if the minimum amount of students required for the workshop is not reached. If a workshop needs to be cancelled for this reason, a full refund will be given to all participants.

If you need more information or have questions, give us a call or drop us an email, we will respond promptly.

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