

# CLIA DESTINATION FACTSHEET

## WEST ASIA



Bagan, Myanmar

### BEST TIME TO GO/WEATHER

Weather conditions can vary greatly over such a wide area, though the peak season for Asia cruises generally runs from November to March, avoiding the worst of the rainy season during the summer months which can be stiflingly hot and humid.

In winter, the climate is generally tropical with temperatures around 30 degrees Celsius and this is regarded as the cool, dry season with less rainfall.



Floating Market, Thailand



The Petronas twin towers, Kuala Lumpur

### 10 REASONS TO CRUISE HERE

**Exotic appeal** – from Myanmar’s lush landscapes pierced by gleaming golden temples to the flowing saffron robes of Thai Buddhist monks and Indian villages with curious children and wandering livestock that make up a rich tapestry of rural life.

**World-class cities** – soak up the 21st century buzz of modern metropolises including Singapore and Kuala Lumpur where shiny glass and chrome skyscrapers tower over skinny streets of colonial houses, laced with steaming stalls of street food.

**Temples & traditions** – religious rites of Buddhist monks across Thailand and Myanmar lend an evocative air in incense-filled temples, while Hinduism’s holy relics and deities across India bring a sense of spirituality.

**Food glorious food** – a melting pot of flavours, from India’s searing spices to the diverse tastes and textures of Singaporean specialities and the sweet/sour piquancy of Thai dishes that even include crisp-fried insects.

**Cultural overload** – a yin and yang blend of modern dynamism and ancient mysticism, of centuries-old legends and stories, traditional wai greetings in Thailand, mesmerising dances and intricacies of etiquette.

**Floating markets** – glide past boats piled high with tropical fruits and vegetables, wicker baskets, cans of oil and even Panama hats. These markets bob across Asia, though Thailand is where you’ll find the biggest ones.

**Walk on the wild side** – spot magnificent Bengal tigers, leopards and rhinos in the reserves of India, coo over baby elephants in Sri Lanka’s elephant orphanages, and take a night safari at Singapore Zoo.

**Historical legacies** – India’s rich seam of palaces and fortresses, the most famous being the Taj Mahal; Bangkok’s stately Grand Palace and ancient capital of Ayutthaya; and the breath-taking Shwedagon Pagoda in Myanmar’s former capital Yangon.

**Luscious landscapes** – from Malaysia’s fertile paddy fields and tropical jungle to India’s rugged mountains and coastline of sweeping golden sands. There are deserted castaway isles off Myanmar, while the Thai coast lays claim to ruggedly-beautiful limestone outcrops.

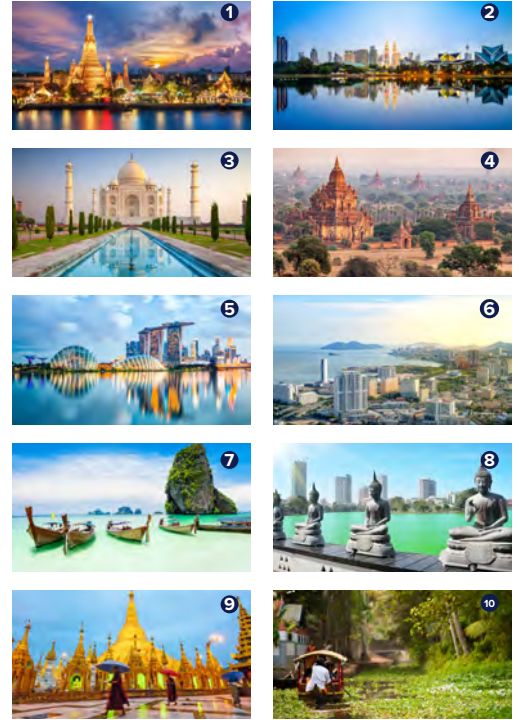
**Bucket list treats** – admire the views from Kuala Lumpur’s lofty 88-storey Petronas Towers; sip a Singapore Sling cocktail at the city-state’s legendary Raffles Hotel; and gaze in wonder at India’s iconic symbol of love, the Taj Mahal.

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### 10 KEY ATTRACTIONS



- 1. Bangkok** – one of Asia’s most intoxicating hubs, the Thai capital is a mesmerising mix of markets and shopping malls, shrines, temples and street stalls while at its heart lies the spectacular Grand Palace.
- 2. Kuala Lumpur** – with a skyline dominated by the 452m tall Petronas Twin Towers (formerly the world’s highest building) and pierced by minarets, this city blends exotic and modern, fuelled by the buzz of its Chinatown.
- 3. India’s Golden Triangle** – this iconic route combines the serene beauty of the Taj Mahal at Agra with the frenetic pace of capital New Delhi and the colourful, heady ambience of the “Pink City” of Jaipur.
- 4. Bagan** – Myanmar’s ancient capital is its beating heart, a magical collection of 3,000 or so temples and stupas spread over a vast plain stretching as far as the eye can see – best viewed from early-morning hot-air balloon rides.
- 5. Singapore** – scratch beneath the surface of this vibrant Asian powerhouse with the swanky Marina Bay area, and you’ll discover ethnic neighbourhoods – Chinatown, Little India and the Arab Quarter – overflowing with local culture and colour.
- 6. Penang** – a popular tourist draw, this Malaysian island is famed as a diverse, cosmopolitan melting pot with flawless sandy beaches and a fascinating history evident in a rich legacy of colonial buildings.
- 7. Phuket** – Thailand’s biggest island brims with dazzling white-sand beaches and pumping party resorts set to a backdrop of exquisite natural beauty with the dramatic limestone karsts of James Bond Island at Phang-Nga Bay.
- 8. Colombo** – Sri Lanka’s busy capital reflects a fascinating blend of the island’s Dutch, Portuguese and British roots with a rich mix of colonial buildings that sit alongside the temples and Buddha statues dotted through the city.
- 9. Yangon** – dominated by the gleaming Shwedagon Pagoda, covered in gold leaf and precious gems, Myanmar’s foremost city offers a heady mix of markets brimming with silks, spices and handicrafts, along with pagodas and statues of Buddha.
- 10. Cochin** – there’s no escaping the vibrant past of this ancient trading port in the Indian state of Kerala, where spice warehouses, churches and huge Chinese fishing nets are reminders of the merchants who came here.

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Sunset at the beach, Koh Kood, Thailand



Singapore's Satay Street food market



The Nine Arches Bridge, Sri Lanka.



Taj Mahal in sunrise light, Agra, India



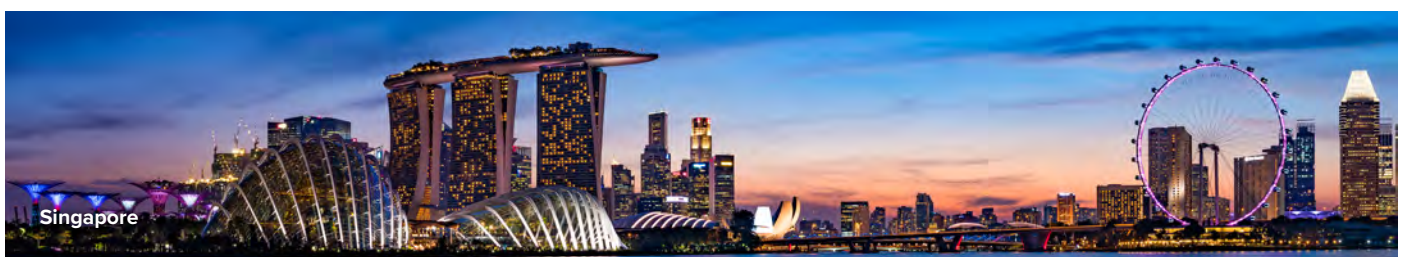
Goldeon Rock, Myanmar



People celebrating Holi festival of colors, India

### 10 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

- 1. Pick your time** – Far East cruises run year-round, but choose your dates carefully to avoid monsoons. The best choice of cruises tends to be in winter when more ships sail to the region.
- 2. It's not all at sea** – remember that some of the must-see sights in Asia involve a lengthy overland journey, and sometimes even require an overnight stay.
- 3. Stay another day or two** – with cruises departing and arriving at major cities such as Singapore, which is one of the main Asian hubs, Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur, there is plenty of scope to add on city stays.
- 4. Size is everything** – smaller ships can delve into remote archipelagos, squeeze into smaller harbours and ports and, in the case of Bangkok, even sail up the Chao Phraya River close to the centre of the city.
- 5. Differing durations** – take your pick from shorter sailings of seven nights to two or three weeks. Some longer cruises will venture to Australia, the South Pacific or the Middle East.
- 6. Beware pickpockets** – crowded markets can be rich pickings for such petty crimes, so keep an eye on your belongings and don't flash expensive watches and jewellery.
- 7. Watch your street food** – Asian street food is legendary, but hygiene standards can be variable, so get recommendations, check out the food carts and watch how the food is being stored and cooked.
- 8. Have some respect** – Asian society is full of etiquette and traditions, so take time to read up on the do's and don'ts and make sure you abide by them.
- 9. Transfer times** – some larger cruise ports can be far from the city. The transfer from Port Klang to Kuala Lumpur is around a 90-minute drive, and from Laem Chabang to Bangkok it is two hours.
- 10. Dollars a-go-go** – US dollars are generally accepted in the major cities of many Asian countries, including in the markets, but in villages away from main tourist areas they are less likely to be taken.



Singapore