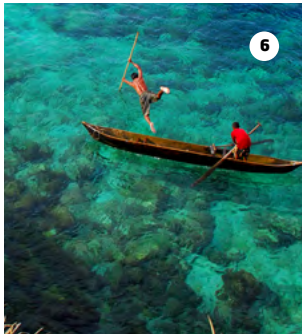


PEOPLE OF THE GOLDEN LAND





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INTRODUCTION

Tattooed faces. Brass neck rings. Elongated earlobes. Sea gypsies.

These are some of the reasons why Myanmar is teeming with tourists ever since it opened its doors to international tourists after several decades of staying away from the limelight. The ethnic groups of the nation are equally distinctive, with vibrant culture and traditions that shape their identities that have become their pride.

Tourists will be able to learn about their culture that includes physical features, lifestyle, traditions and clothing that highlights the diversity of the people of Myanmar. This e-guide will lead you to some of Myanmar's most distinguished ethnic groups and their authentic identities that remain true to traditions in a modernised era.



CHIN

TATTOO-FACED WOMEN

Be sure to visit the villages in Chin State to meet the women of Chin who have tattooed faces. This tradition began decades ago; to avoid having their daughters taken away to be wedded to royalty or rich merchants, parents of young girls tattooed their daughters' faces to make them appear undesirable.

This practice is already banned by the authorities of Myanmar. Tourists will only find older women in the village with tattooed faces as younger women no longer want to have their faces inked. Unfortunately, this limited encounter with such a unique ethnic group will diminish as time passes.



COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

Head over to Sorlong Village and participate in the Community-Based Tourism Project that was established in Chin State in 2017. This initiative provides visitors with a memorable encounter with the villagers and tattoo-faced women while learning about their culture and traditions. The locals will bring tourists to climb Khaw Nau Sone Mountain, dance and also drink traditional wine together.



HIGHLIGHTS

These tattoos are traditionally done, which means each job is fully made by hand. It is an excruciating process that takes two days to complete.

The Chins can identify their own people through the different tattoo patterns on each woman's face.

Initially practised to make young girls seem undesirable, this tradition has evolved into a symbol of beauty and pride for a long time within the state.

SALONE PEOPLE

The Sea Gypsies of Mergui, or the Moken, come from the distinguished Salone group. The Salone people spend most of their lives living on the sea around Myeik Archipelago by living on small boats.

They earn and support their families by foraging for precious sea products and pearls.



HIGHLIGHTS

The Salone people only go to land during the monsoon season, when the sea is too rough for their small boats to withstand the waves. This is when they celebrate Salone Festival, normally held in February.

Visit Thanintharyi Region in February and witness this ethnic group celebrate Salone Festival by singing folk songs, cooking, eating Salone feast, diving and performing spiritual dances.

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

A proposal has been made to initiate a Community-based Tourism Project in Kaw Thauung. Myeik is an archipelago with plenty of natural wonders at sea, making it one of the best destinations to have this initiative.



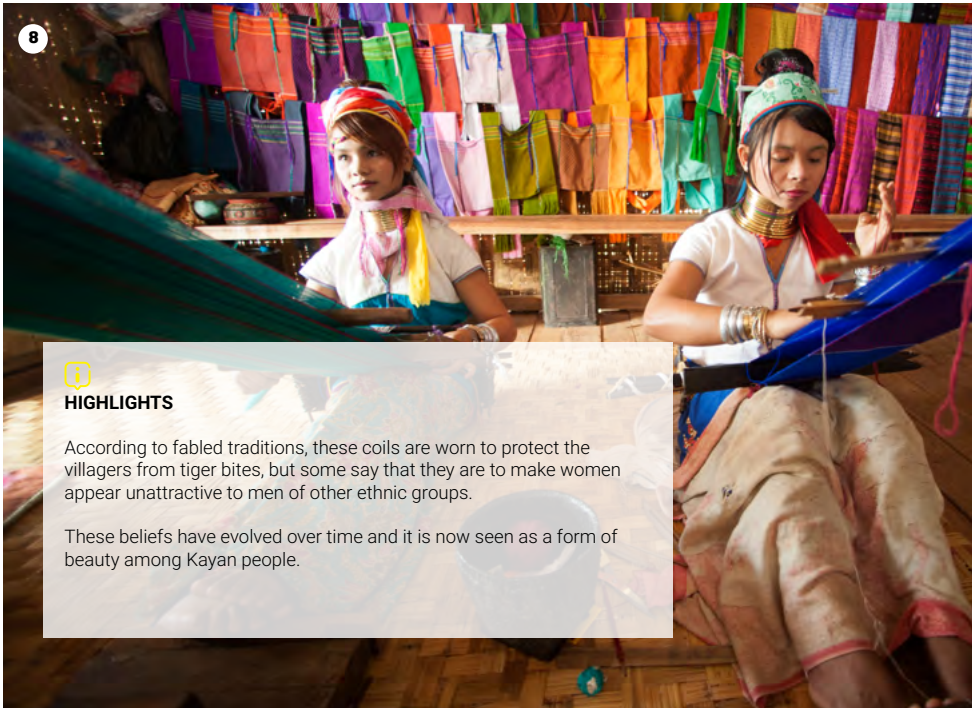


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KAYAN

Tourists flock to Kayah State to witness the women who don brass neck rings. Named the 'long neck women', the women of the Kayan group have elongated necks due to the number of brass rings they have been putting around their neck for years.

This tradition has been practised for generations, and young girls even start as early as 5 years old. However, they do have a limit to how many brass rings their necks can hold – 35.



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HIGHLIGHTS

According to fabled traditions, these coils are worn to protect the villagers from tiger bites, but some say that they are to make women appear unattractive to men of other ethnic groups.

These beliefs have evolved over time and it is now seen as a form of beauty among Kayan people.

KAYAH

Also found in Kayah State, women of the Kayah ethnic group are known to wear elaborate and heavy earrings. The earrings are made of a variety of materials, such as amber stone, silver and other metals.



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HIGHLIGHTS

Women of this ethnic group have elongated earlobes. In the past, the holes would be filled with heavy amber stones and silver, making their earlobes permanently elongated. Now, it is more common to spot them wearing thick metal earrings.

Kayah women always pair their traditional outfit with belts and elaborate necklaces that are made from silver coins. This became one of the ethnic group's distinctive characteristics that stands out from other groups in Kayah State.



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HERE'S A FUN FACT:

Kayah elders drink lots of wine, and some solely drink wine instead of water!



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COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

Kayah State is rich with cultural diversity and tradition. Tourists will be able to interact with the people of the ethnic groups and learn about making handicrafts and silversmithing. The locals are known to be friendly and warm to tourists, and they will even invite their guests to a huge feast to taste the famous Kayah sausage and rice wine. Some of the villages involved are Pan Pet Hta Nee La Leg, Daw Ta Ma Gyi and Htay Kho.