

Cruising, Asia Style

Adventurer Joe Yogerst sets sail on the sun-kissed Indian Ocean.



Joe Yogerst

Coconut-palm-shaded strands where yours are the only footprints in the sand are an essential honeymoon requirement for those seeking a secluded sojourn. However, when paired with monkeys scampering across a tropical beach and towns that give you a police motorcycle escort because you're the first tourists who have visited the place in more than 60 years, your trip of a lifetime is something transformative. All of those things—and more—transpired during my recent cruise through Southeast Asia. Over a two-week sail from Myanmar, down the eastern edge of Indian Ocean, we stopped in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore to experience not only the magic of the region across city and back-country landscapes, but also the enchantment of traveling well off the beaten path.

• IT'S EDUCATIONAL

The cruise began in Yangon, the largest city of Myanmar. Sitting on the Rangoon River, the metropolis is hands-down one of Asia's most colorful urban areas. One night we marveled at a spectacular fireworks display over the river. On another I joined a contemplative meditation workshop with Buddhist monks at Shwedagon Pagoda. The World Heritage Site dazzles with an estimated three billion dollars worth of gold and gemstones.

Later in the journey, at the old colonial city of Malacca on the Malay Peninsula, we scooted around town in pedal rickshaws. Here, we toured the Chinese Temple near Jonker Street. Malaysia's oldest temple, the ornate space is home to three disciplines—Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The layout adheres to feng shui principles. Shopping in the surrounding area is tops, with handicrafts, food items and the usual souvenirs to be found along Jonker Street.

• SUN-KISSED SANDS

Anchoring off Lampi Marine National Park in southern Myanmar, we snorkeled around pristine reefs, walked along empty beaches and hiked over winding jungle trails. Since our visit coincided with a holiday, we celebrated with the locals. Known as the Sea Gypsy people, the population lives across the 800 islands that comprise →



MYANMAR
Young Buddhist nuns at Shwedagon Pagoda.

MALAYSIA
The country has epic resorts.

TRAVEL TIP: *Everything is up for negotiation. Hagglng is expected across Southeast Asia. However, do not bargain if you see a sign saying "fixed price."*



MALAYSIA
Local taxi service.

THAILAND
Koh Phrayam island is one of the country's largest.



THAILAND
Surf's up.



MALAYSIA
The peninsular country is home to a variety of religions.

