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En route to Myanmar

TORY BURCH IN MYANMAR

The globe-trotting designer gets inspired on an unforgettable Southeast Asian vacation. By Christine Whitney

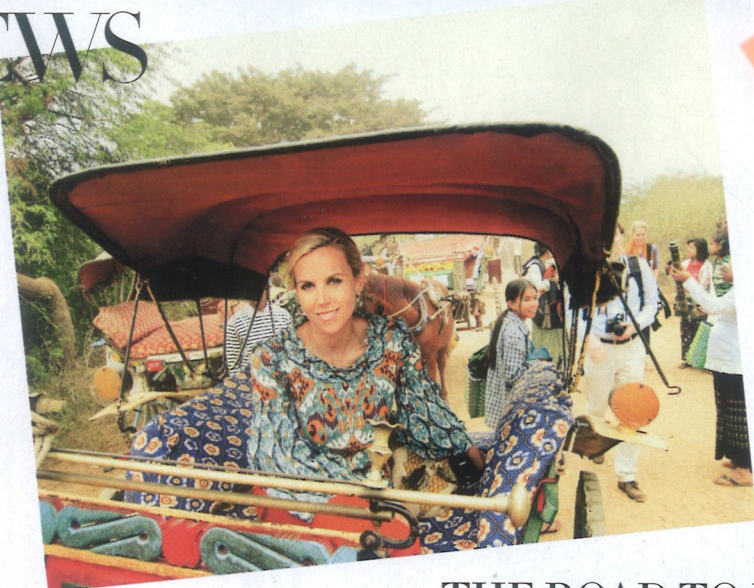


On the Irrawaddy River



Inle Lake

Tory Burch is known not only for her chic, colorful clothes but for her equally vibrant sense of adventure; the designer is constantly on the go. When she's not checking in on one of her brand's outposts in Rome, Beijing, or Dubai, she's often jetting from one exotic locale to another, in search of what might become the inspiration for her next collection. (The concept for a bright pom-pom necklace for Resort 2012 came from a New Mexico cactus, and spring's straw tote and raffia bag were made by an artisans collective in Madagascar.) Burch's most recent international exploit took her on an elaborate side trip from Thailand to the far reaches of Myanmar, a resplendent (its perimeter is one-quarter coastline) and culturally rich land with a checkered political past. Formerly known as Burma, the country has been under military rule since the 1960s, and it goes without saying that dictatorial regimes do not a popular resort destination make. But over the past year, Myanmar has shown signs of opening up to democracy as well as tourism, and Burch, always on the travel vanguard, was on the first flight. "It was a great opportunity to show my boys a part of the world that's going through incredible change right now," she says. ▶



THE ROAD TO BURMA

Tory and sons take the route less traveled

What inspired your trip? Myanmar is one of those magical places I had read about and always wanted to visit—for its crafts, its architecture, and the unique mix of cultural influences from neighboring China, India, and Thailand, as well as the British colonials.

Why now? It is such an exciting moment in Myanmar history. There is a real sense of hope for the future, and they are really opening up to tourism. We had the honor of meeting Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who recently won a seat in the Burmese parliament. She is one of the most extraordinary women I have ever met. She was under house arrest for 15 years but never lost hope and is determined to create a democratic country.

Where to stay: It was a little bit trains, planes, automobiles—and rickshaws—as we wanted to see as much of Myanmar as possible. Every place we stayed, from Yangon, the country's largest city, to beach resorts Ngapali and Ngwe Saung, was beautiful. But I especially loved the Inle Princess Resort. We were right on the shores of Inle Lake in small wooden chalets, which you approach by boat. Once in a while we'd row by floating tomato gardens—ingenious! The Burmese are working toward preserving this entire area.

On the menu: We ate fish everywhere we went, and it was all amazing. The entire trip was all about seafood prepared in a variety of ways—filleted, salted, and dried or as mohinga, a national dish of soup with rice noodles. I was in my element. Everything was fresh and spicy. At Ngapali Beach, my boys and I went down to the fish market to see the trawlers' catch for the day.

Chic souvenirs: I brought back incredible pottery, including some slim vases and bowls that I have been using at home, along with some traditional lacquerware made using a 1,000-year-old technique. In one of the local markets, I also bought a handwoven rattan minaudière.

Highlights? You can't help but be awestruck walking into temples like Yangon's Shwedagon Pagoda, which is covered in gold, or looking out over the thousands of ancient pagodas, temples, and stupas in the ancient city of Bagan.

They're not just tourist landmarks; there's a cultural and religious reverence that is so strong, it has and will outlast any regime. My boys and I took part in the Buddhist tradition of sweeping the floors (with carefully crafted colorful brooms) at Shwedagon Pagoda. It is said to ensure good luck and earn you "merit" in the next life. Another must is sailing the Irrawaddy River on the boat *Road to Mandalay*. It's the perfect way to see the countryside. There were no outside distractions—not even cell reception or Internet. It makes you wonder if you should make a habit of leaving all the iPhones and iPads behind when you go on vacation.

Above: Tory sees the sights in a traditional Burmese rickshaw

TORY'S ESSENTIALS

THE WALLET

"Our Concierge is perfect for traveling—it has multiple compartments for passports and currency."



Tory Burch travel wallet, \$295. toryburch.com.



Pachacuti hat, \$105. net-a-porter.com.

THE TEE

"Out of respect for the local culture, you can't wear anything too revealing—no tank tops."



Proenza Schouler top, \$475. Saks Fifth Avenue; 800-330-8497.

THE NOTEBOOK

"I brought a small Hermès travel diary where I wrote down my favorite moments from the trip."



Hermès agendas, \$380 each. hermes.com.



Sara Battaglia mochila bag, \$867. brownsfashion.com.

THE LUGGAGE

"Because we were moving around so much, we had to be well edited."



T. Anthony weekender bag, \$395. tanthony.com.

THE SHOE

"Flats are a must because you're walking, hiking, and getting in and out of boats all day."



Clinique Sun SPF 15 Face/Body Cream, \$21. clinique.com. **Bobbi Brown** SPF 15 Tinted Moisturizer, \$40. bobbibrown.com.



Dries Van Noten dress, \$1,448. Bergdorf Goodman; 212-753-7300.

Tory Burch sandal, \$250



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