



BAGAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE

Bagan was the capital of the Kingdom of Pagan from the 9th to the 13th centuries. This kingdom was the first to unify the area that is now Myanmar, establishing the Burmese culture and ethnicity, as well as Theravada Buddhism, in the region. Over this period of rule, as the city and kingdom grew in influence and stature, over 10,000 temples were built on the plains surrounding the capital next to the Irrawaddy River.

After Mongol invasions eventually led to the fall of the Kingdom of Pagan, the city was reduced to a small settlement, never to recover its former glories. The area did, however, remain a destination for Buddhist pilgrimage. A few hundred temples were added between the 13th and 20th centuries, but the extensive earthquake damage over the years means that only 2200 temples remain, in varying states of repair.

Indeed, over the last 500 years many of the existing temples have been renovated – a process that, continuing to this day, has yielded mixed results. It is said to be due to the government's insensitive 'updates' in the 1990s (including a golf course and modern watch tower) that Bagan has not attained UNESCO World Heritage site status, although it is once again being considered. But the area is large enough, and there remains so much of what is original still to see, that none of this stops the temples of Bagan being a unique wonder to behold.