



**MYANMAR CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (MCDP)**

**ECOTOURISM FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN  
INDAWGYI LAKE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY:  
ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



**MCDP Report No. 31**

Yangon, November 2013

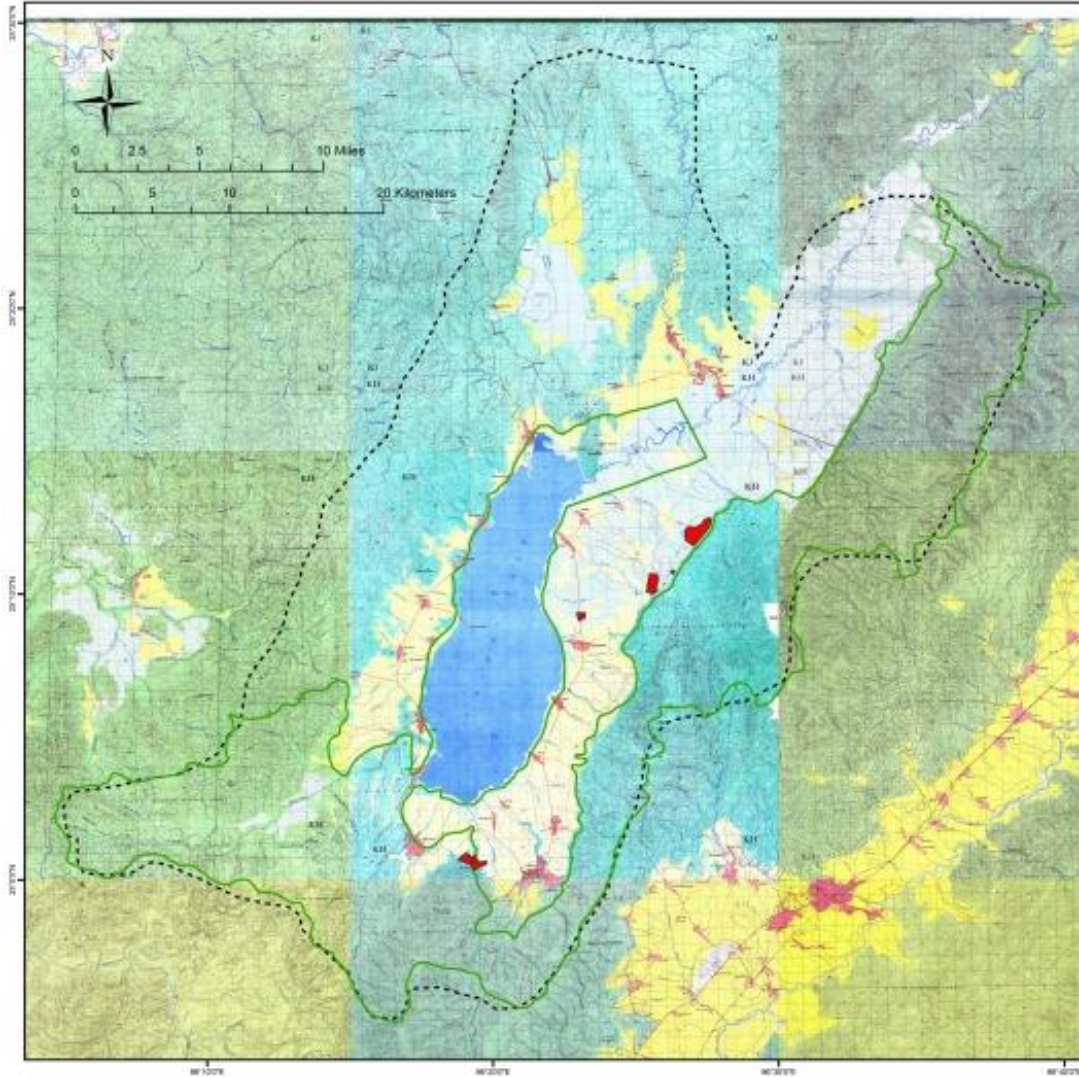
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<b>Cover image</b>	Members of Inn Chit Thu (Lovers of Indawgyi) Tourism Group undertaking kayak rescue training at Indawgyi Lake, November 2013. Credit: Gregory Klemm/MCDP (2013)
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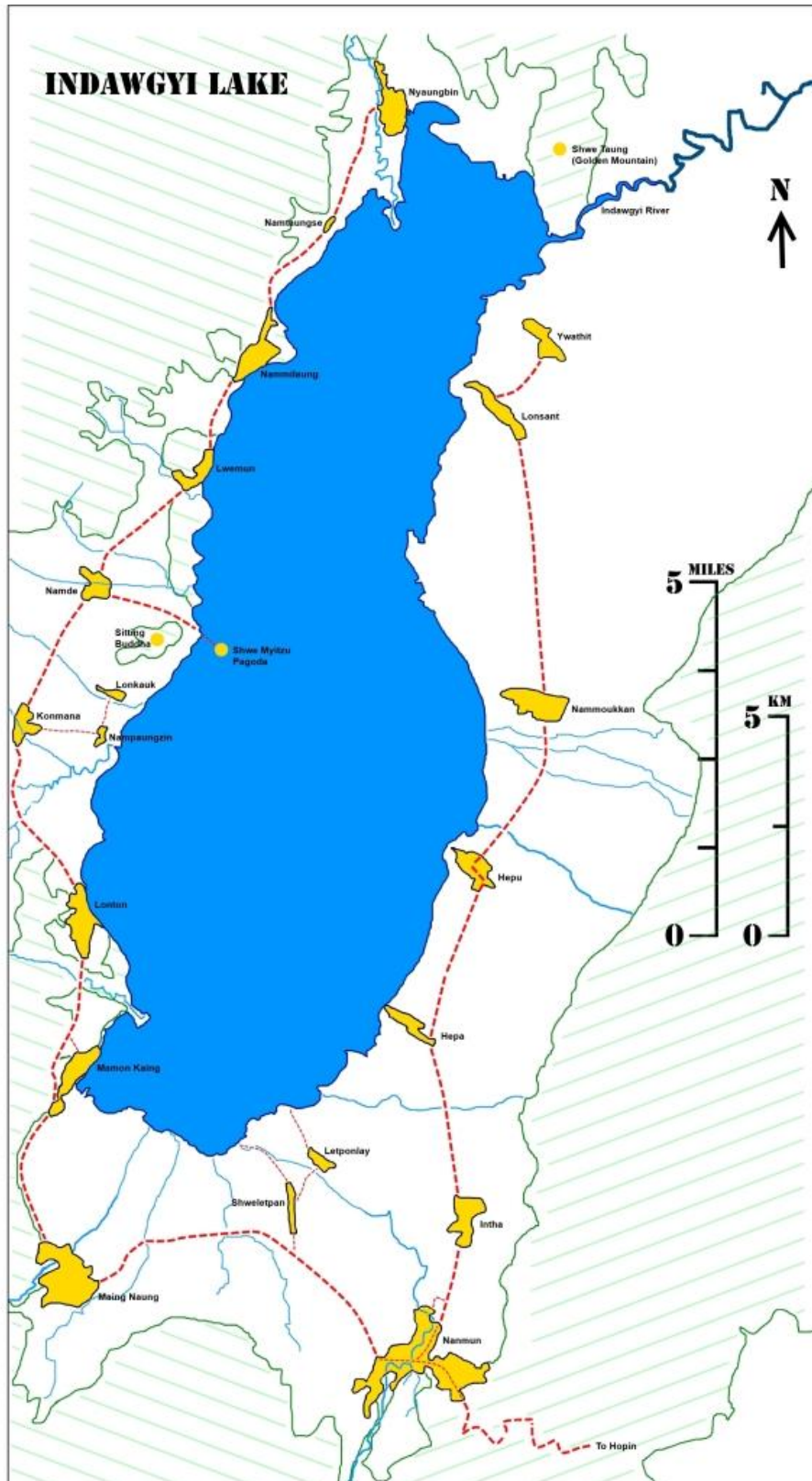
## I) MAPS

### a) Topographic map of Indawgyi Lake



Notes: Green line indicates Wildlife Sanctuary Boundary. Dotted black line is the general extent of the watershed for the lake. Community Forestry areas supported by the project are indicated in red.

b) Tourism map of Indawgyi Lake



## II) CONTENTS

i)	Maps	3
a)	Topographic map of Indawgyi Lake	3
b)	Tourism map of Indawgyi Lake	4
ii)	Contents	5
<b>1.</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1	This report	6
1.2	Definition of “ecotourism”	6
1.3	The authors	6
<b>2.</b>	<b>Current situation</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	Visitor numbers and duration	7
2.2	Visitors by nationality	8
2.3	Seasonality	8
2.4	Duration of Stay	10
2.5	Other visitor characteristics	10
2.6	Guide books and information	10
2.7	Tours and tour operator interest	11
2.8	Current factors influencing tourism numbers	11
<b>3.</b>	<b>Summary of Attractions</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1	Site Description	12
3.2	Natural attractions	12
3.3	Wildlife	12
3.4	Villages	13
3.5	Activities	13
3.6	Cottage Industries and Souvenirs	14
3.7	Cultural attractions	14
3.8	Summary	14
<b>4.</b>	<b>Short-term tourism potential</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Long-term tourism potential</b>	<b>17</b>
5.1	Recommendations	17
<b>6.</b>	<b>issues and risks</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Suggested itineraries</b>	<b>20</b>
7.1	Myitkina – Indawgyi Lake- Myitkyina	20
7.2	Southern Extension	20
7.3	Mandalay to Myitkyina	20
7.4	Prices	21
<b>8.</b>	<b>Benefits to communities and the environment</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Summary and Recommendations</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>Appendix 1: Field assessment itinerary</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Appendix 2: Action plan for Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group</b>	<b>26</b>

## **1. BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 This report**

This report is the result of an assessment of the ecotourism options in Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (ILWS). It involved a site visit and stakeholder consultations from 28 October to 12 November 2013 (see Itinerary in Appendix 1), and background research in Yangon, including tour operator surveys, in October and November. As part of the site visit, a community based organisation called Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group was formed to manage the rental of kayaks and bicycles, currently on loan from the MCDP, to tourists. The community group was also assisted in offering additional tourism products, including trekking and recreational fishing.

The assessment was conducted under the project “Building the capacity of local civil society groups to deliver services for sustainable natural resource management in protected areas in Chin and Kachin state.” The project is implemented as a partnership between the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, Fauna and Flora International, and the Myanmar Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association.

The opinions represented in this report are those of the author alone, and do not reflect any position of the involved national and international organisations.

### **1.2 Definition of “ecotourism”**

In this report, we take “ecotourism” to mean a form of low-impact tourism that helps protect the cultural and environmental values of a site of important natural heritage. The contribution to preservation should be “active”, rather than simply avoiding harm. An active contribution to protection and sustainable development in a site can come in several ways; financial support for protection activities, alternative incomes to local people to reduce the impacts of unsustainable activities, raising wider awareness of the importance of a site, or the active engagement of guests in conservation measures (eg, research tourism or voluntary participation in management activities).

### **1.3 The authors**

Gregory Klemm is an independent ecotourism advisor to FFI Myanmar and was the lead researcher on this project. He also was responsible for forming the community based organisation at Indawgyi Lake. Yen Aung Soe was research assistant and ecotourism trainer for the Indawgyi group. Mark Grindley is MCDP technical advisor and supervised the research.

## 2. CURRENT SITUATION

### 2.1 Visitor numbers and duration

Myanmar nationals were not included in the analysis of visitor numbers and duration as there was little evidence of Myanmar nationals visiting specifically for tourism purposes, outside of the Shwe Myitzu Pagoda Festival. The following figures are therefore only for foreign nationals.

Visitor numbers (Table 1) were taken from the records of IndawMaHar Guesthouse, which is the only guesthouse in ILWS where foreign visitors are currently able to stay. The records date back as far as the beginning of 2011, however, they consist of handwritten entries spread across a number of notebooks with duplications and known omissions. Therefore, they cannot be taken as being entirely accurate.

**Table 1.** Monthly foreign visitor numbers for ILWS (01 Jan 2011 to 12 Nov 2013)

Month	2011	2012	2013	Totals
Jan	9	2	1	12
Feb	14	7	1	22
Mar	5	2	6	13
Apr	5		1	6
May			5	5
Jun			2	2
Jul			8	8
Aug				
Sep				
Oct		1	7	8
Nov	1	1	8	18
Dec		4		4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>90</b>

Source: IndawMaHar Guesthouse records

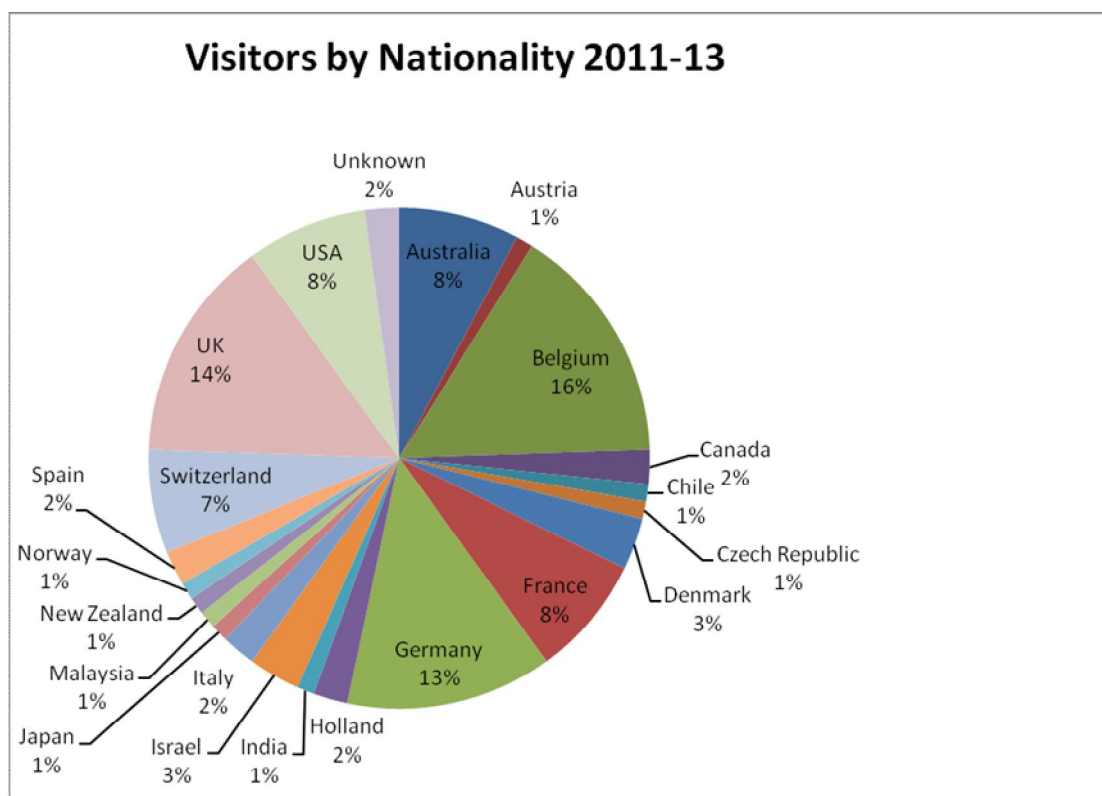
Of note here is that 2012 was a particularly slow season for tourism, with numbers dropping off significantly after April 2011. But the numbers have recovered to 2011 levels this year. This is likely due to the resumption of conflict in Kachin State in June 2011, including an incident where the Mandalay to Myitkyina railway line was bombed in November 2011, specifically at Mogaung Township which is between Myitkyina and Hopin (the closest station to Indawgyi Lake). Several tour operators spoken to said they had been advising clients not to visit Indawgyi Lake since the conflict increased. However, the visitor numbers in general are so low that it is not possible to read too much into them.

## 2.2 Visitors by nationality

Guesthouse records indicate that the majority of tourists to Indawgyi Lake come from Western Europe or the English-speaking world (USA and Australia), while there are very few visitors from the Asian market. While this does not match with overall foreign visitor statistics to Myanmar – within which Asian countries dominate – it is to be expected as the majority of Asian visitors are generally travelling for business or pilgrimage purposes.

It can be assumed from this data that the primary target market for Indawgyi Lake will be tourists from western countries.

Fig 1. Total foreign visitor numbers by nationality for ILWS (01 Jan 2011 to 12 Nov 2013)



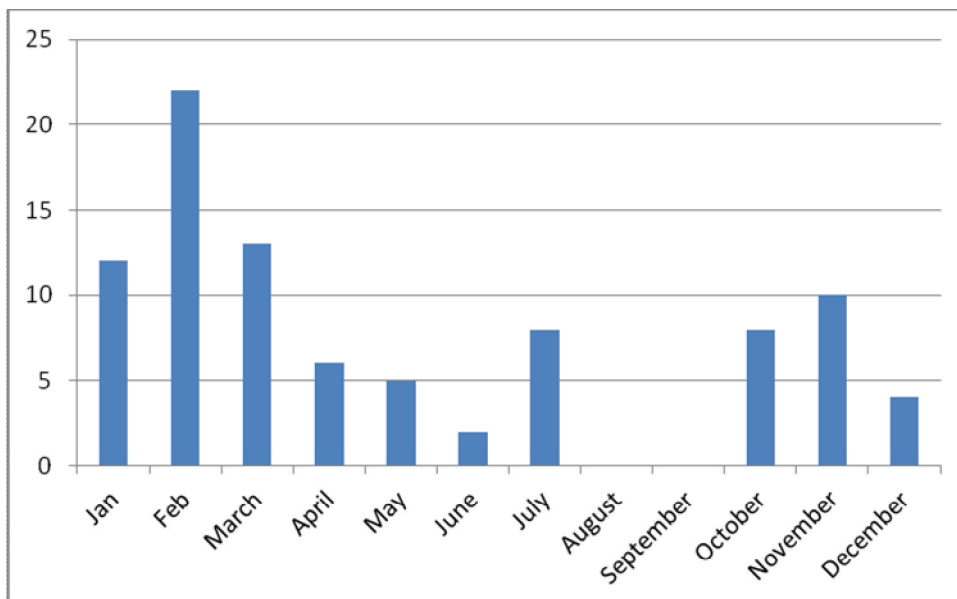
Source: IndawMaHar Guesthouse Records

## 2.3 Seasonality

Fig 2 shows a composite distribution of visitors by month over a 35-month period from Jan 2011 to Nov 2013, while Fig 3 shows figures for each of those 35 months.

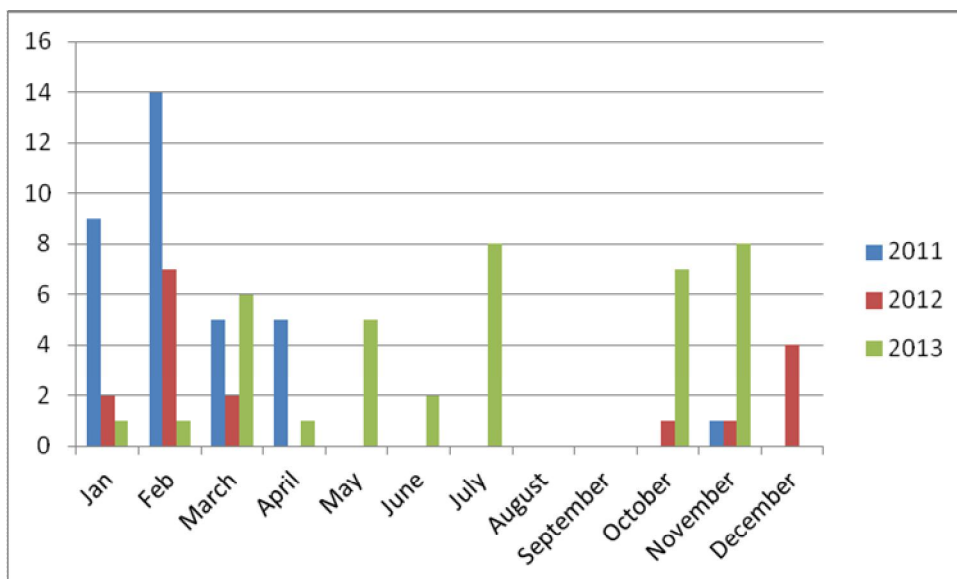


**Fig 2.** Aggregate visitor numbers by month, Jan 2011 to Nov 2013



Source: IndawMaHar Guesthouse Records

**Fig 3.** Disaggregated visitors numbers by month, Jan 2011 to Nov 2013



Source: IndawMaHar Guesthouse Records

Comparing these two graphs shows that seasonality at ILWS is largely as expected and correlates largely to the general pattern of tourism seasonality in Myanmar. It is not clear what is the reason for the eight visitors in July 2013, but it seems unlikely to reflect a long-term flattening of the tourist peak season.

Data from all three years confirms that January to March is the peak time for tourism, which is directly linked to the Sanctuary’s attraction as a bird-watching destination.

Due to the condition of the road from Hopin to Indawgyi Lake and anecdotal evidence about the amount of rain from July to September, it would not be encouraged to

promote Indawgyi Lake as a rainy season destination anyway. However, it would be hoped that visitor numbers could be spread quite evenly over the remaining eight months of the year. For this reason, it is not recommended to place too much emphasis on the bird-watching attraction at ILWS, but instead to promote it as a natural destination and adventure destination. Overdue emphasis on bird-watching will lead to a continued tourism bottleneck between the months of January and February.

## **2.4 Duration of Stay**

Anecdotal evidence from Myitkyina based tourism stakeholders and the IndawMaHar Guesthouse Manager suggests that the average length of stay at Indawgyi Lake is only two nights. Proffered reasons for this were that the price of renting a motorboat for the day is quite high (60,000-65,000 kyat) and there are not many other activities for tourists there.

It should be noted that tourists who arrived in November 2013, once the kayaks and bicycles could be rented at the lake, stayed an average of three or four nights. However, this observation is based on only five visitors.

## **2.5 Other visitor characteristics**

There were no statistics available about age, visa type, or average spend of tourists. Therefore, it is not possible to build a more complete profile of the average visitor.

## **2.6 Guide books and information**

There is very little good quality travel information about Indawgyi Lake either in guidebooks or on online sources. Lonely Planet, the most popular guide book for independent travelers, has only a half-page blurb about the lake, with limited practical travel information and not enough positives listed to make it sound worth the effort.

Online, practical travel information is even more difficult to find, though some sources describe Indawgyi in more positive terms. That said, the highest ranking actual travel guide for Indawgyi Lake in Google search is a rather critical blog post:

<http://www.danielmcbane.com/travel-guides/southeast-asia/myanmar/indawgyi-lake/>

Two of the three biggest Myanmar travel websites ([www.myanmars.net](http://www.myanmars.net) and [www.myanmarburma.com](http://www.myanmarburma.com)) have only information that doesn't appear to be derived from an actual site visit, while [go-myanmar.com](http://go-myanmar.com) currently has no information.

It should be noted, however, that this situation has already been improved. Detailed information about Indawgyi Lake was prepared by the author following the field survey and provided to the Lonely Planet on 15 November, for inclusion in the next edition (scheduled for publication in July 2013). Likewise, [www.go-myanmar.com](http://www.go-myanmar.com) has also been supplied with detailed information to create an Indawgyi Lake destination section. These communications activities will be an ongoing contribution to support for sustainable tourism in Indawgyi from the project partners.

## 2.7 Tours and tour operator interest

A short survey of tour operators in Yangon revealed that the majority are not interested in Indawgyi Lake as a tour destination. Some mentioned the security concerns since 2011 as the primary reason, while others said that the attractions of the lake are not great enough to justify the distance and poor transportation options involved in getting there.

The majority of Myanmar tour operators prefer to send tourists to locations by private car or bus. Thus the standard of the road and the time it takes from Indawgyi Lake to any other tourism destination are likely to remain barriers to tour operator interest until they are improved.

## 2.8 Current factors influencing tourism numbers

Indawgyi Lake is already known as a travel destination amongst the world-wide bird-watching community and is likely to continue to attract visitors for that reason. Other factors drawing tourists to Indawgyi Lake are precisely for its isolation – a desire to get away from other tourists and visit a place where few other travellers go. Anecdotally, the natural beauty of ILWS and the cultural experience offered by its villages do not seem to be major factors in drawing tourists to the lake, likely because these aspects are not well-publicised other than by word of mouth.

Three chief factors inhibit tourism growth at Indawgyi Lake:

1. The security situation. This is not simply because it dissuades some tourists from visiting, but also because a number of other potentially interesting places in the vicinity of Indawgyi Lake are restricted areas for foreigners. This makes it difficult to place Indawgyi Lake into a broader tourism itinerary, with the only option to spend a significant amount of time on transport to get between there and any other destination.
2. The quality of the transportation infrastructure. The quickest way to get there is a five hour train journey from Myitkyina, followed by a two-hour taxi ride or minimum three hour shared jeep ride. Driving all the way from Myitkyina does not save much, if any, time over this option due to the quality of the road.
3. The lack of activities. Many visitors balk at the high price of boat rental, which is approximately three times the price of Inle Lake, and find themselves with nothing else to do except walk around a bit. Others spend the money on the boat for one day and then having 'covered' the area, leave after two nights.

The third factor has been significantly addressed by the creation of Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group. With cycling, kayaking, trekking and recreational fishing now on offer, Indawgyi Lake can pitch itself as an adventure destination with a greater variety of activities than anywhere else in Myanmar. This alone should help boost visitor numbers at the lake to a degree. However, the security issues and the quality of the road will continue to inhibit tourism growth.

### **3. SUMMARY OF ATTRACTIONS**

Indawgyi Lake has a number of attractions, which are described in more detail below. As already stated, the key things drawing tourists to the lake currently are the natural scenery, the opportunity to experience village life, and the relative isolation of the location. Indawgyi Lake is already known as a bird-watching destination and attracts a niche tourism market for this reason.

#### **3.1 Site Description**

The largest lake in Myanmar, and one of the largest in south-east Asia, Indawgyi Lake is roughly 24 km (15 miles) north to south and 10 km (6.2 miles) east to west at its widest point. It is surrounded by hills and mountains on each side, at varying distances from the lake shore. In between are agricultural lands, primarily for growing rice. There are 30 villages in the lake basin, most of them on or near the lake shore.

#### **3.2 Natural attractions**

Indawgyi Lake is a scenic destination and many tourists seem content to spend a good portion of their time simply enjoying the views. The lake, the mountains, the fields and the relative cleanliness and sense of isolation as compared to the more frequented tourism destinations in Myanmar can be considered a major attraction and one that will continue to entice visitors in the short-term. In the longer-term, effort will need to be made to ensure the environment is not degraded by litter, other waste and noise. Increased tourism could actually contribute to this degradation, and so it is recommended that visitor numbers are monitored as to what impact they are having.

Shwe Taung (Golden Mountain) is a great place for viewing the lake and the pagoda on top adds to the appeal. However, due to its distance from Lonton, it can only really be reached by motor-powered boat as a day-trip.

Otherwise, the lake and the surrounding mountains provide opportunities for a number of popular adventure tourism activities, as outlined in section 3.5 below.

#### **3.3 Wildlife**

In terms of wildlife, Indawgyi Lake is best known for its birds. As a stopover on the East-Asian – Australasian Flyway, the lake is teeming with migratory birds between December and March. Migration season had not begun at the time of the field trip, however, it was said that the sheer number of migratory birds in the sanctuary during those months is a striking sight. At other times of year, the lake is home to a significant number of species.

Otherwise, Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary is home to some rare mammals and gibbons, however these are not often encountered. Domesticated elephants are also kept in a number of villages and tourists can see these when they are not working in the forest.

It is not recommended to focus on promoting Indawgyi Lake as a wildlife destination. Too much focus on the bird-watching attraction of the lake will cause a concentration of tourists during the migratory months while the aim should be to spread tourists as evenly as possible over the eight months outside of rainy season. Any promotional

material disseminated to a mainstream audience should mention the migratory bird attraction in passing, with a caveat that the sanctuary may become quite crowded with birdwatchers at that time. Niche promotional material should be sent through channels that will reach the world-wide bird-watching community to promote Indawgyi Lake for the migratory season months.

As the other animals mentioned above are not frequently encountered (apart from the elephants), it is best not to mention them in any promotional material. Doing so would likely lead to disappointment amongst tourists.

One purpose of the “Environmental Education Center” in Nam Mon is to educate visitors, but it is currently failing at this due to the lack of information in English. Also, the location is dusty and unattractive, and far from the lake or accommodation. It is recommended at some point that a similar center, with information and displays in English, be built in a more convenient location for tourists – eg, near the accommodation in Lonton, and preferably on the lake shore. The centre could also be used as a hub for tourist services, eg, as an in-kind office space for the Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group.

For now, it would make sense to find a different purpose for the centre, or at least remove the sign until a suitable solution is found.

### **3.4 Villages**

The various villages around Indawgyi Lake are a current attraction for tourists visiting the lake and should continue to be promoted as such. Several of the villages are especially picturesque and will continue to impress tourists into the future. However, the main factor of tourist interest currently is the extremely welcoming nature of the villagers, which is due largely to the fact that local people have seen so few tourists. This cannot be expected to remain in the longer-term (eg, more than ten years). However, in the shorter-term this will remain a strong experiential attraction for tourists. In the interim, attention should be given to making local culture, folklore and history more accessible to foreign visitors, either through the posting of English-language information or the training of local tour guides. This will help to ensure the longer-term viability of the villages as tourist attractions.

Local people at the lake are predominantly ethnic Shan, but there are also ethnic Kachin and Burmese living there. One member of Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group noted that this was an attraction of the lake: that several different ethnicities live there in harmony. However, as noted by another member of the Group, the various traditions of the different peoples (ie. traditional dress, etc) have not been strongly retained at Indawgyi Lake. Therefore, this aspect is not of significant interest to tourists, at least not without the provision of interpretive guiding.

### **3.5 Activities**

As mentioned, until this year very few tourism activities were available at the lake, other than touring the lake by motor-powered boat and bird-watching. With the formation of Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group by the MCDP this November (2013), the following tourism services are now available:

- Kayaking
- Cycling
- Trekking
- Recreational fishing

*With the addition of these products, Indawgyi Lake now offers the most varied outdoor activities of any destination in Myanmar.*

However, all these activities can currently only be offered as day trips, with tourists required to return to Lonton in the evening. As the security situation improves and restricted areas become accessible to foreign visitors without a permit, it is strongly recommended that longer itineraries for these activities be designed. Offering one or two night kayaking, trekking and cycling trips from Indawgyi Lake would make it even more competitive against other popular outdoor destinations in Myanmar such as Inle Lake and Hsipaw/Kyaukme. Eventually, kayak or bike trips down the Indaw and Mogaung rivers may also be feasible.

### **3.6 Cottage Industries and Souvenirs**

Very little was noted in the way of cottage industries or possible souvenirs at Indawgyi Lake. One shop in Lonton produces Kachin rice wine, however, production is not consistent. Instead it is produced in large batches and then stored, so cannot be considered a permanent attraction.

Sticky rice production was noted in Nammoukkan Village. This is an interesting process to watch and is of some tourist interest. However, sticky rice production is not uncommon in many Myanmar villages and bringing tourists to such places produces little additional income for the business.

The only locally produced handicrafts noted were bamboo mats and hats. The hats are common purchases for tourists, but are not unique to Indawgyi Lake, while the mats are too large for tourists to carry. There would be some scope for using bamboo weaving skills to create souvenirs better suited to tourist consumption. However, this was not pursued further as part of this research.

### **3.7 Cultural attractions**

The major cultural attraction at Indawgyi Lake is Shwe Myitzu Pagoda, which is positioned on the lake itself, linked to the shore by a walkway which is submerged except in the drier months. The Pagoda is an impressive sight, especially when illuminated at night, but is more of an adornment to the lake rather than a major attraction for foreign visitors in itself.

Most of the villages have monasteries and pagodas of their own. However, given the prevalence of pagodas and monasteries throughout Myanmar, these again serve as more of an adornment to the aesthetic of the villages than an attraction in themselves. The monastery and pagoda on Shwe Taung (Golden Mountain) are also more adornments to the general scenery rather than attractions in themselves.

Nammilaung Village boasts a striking woven cane Buddha image and an old teak monastery, which are worth noting as attractions in more detailed travel information.

### **3.8 Summary**

Indawgyi Lake boasts a number of attractions to entice tourists. Key marketing messages to be delivered would include words such as 'pristine', 'untouched', 'isolated', and 'adventure'. Overall, it is recommended that Indawgyi Lake be promoted as an untouched and beautiful natural destination with pretty villages,

welcoming people and great adventure activity products. This is the message the MCDP is currently using to promote the site and the Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group.

As stated, the migratory birds are a strong attraction, but to avoid a concentration of tourists it is not recommended to promote this aspect through mainstream channels. This attraction should, however, be further promoted to enthusiastic bird-watchers.

## 4. SHORT-TERM TOURISM POTENTIAL

With the offering of additional tourism products through Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group, combined with the promotional efforts undertaken as part of this project, the apparent lessening of concern about the security situation amongst tourists and the continued growth in Myanmar visitor arrivals in general, the following estimates for tourist arrivals have been derived:

**2013/14 season:** Based on the apparent increase in arrivals already seen this season, combined with the promotional efforts that will have immediate effect (ie. provision of information to online sources), it is expected that at least 100 tourists will visit Indawgyi Lake this season.

**2014/15 season:** With a more detailed description in the Lonely Planet guide book (scheduled for publication in July 2014) and the impact of the longer-term promotional efforts (ie. articles in printed media) it is expected that upwards of 250 tourists will visit Indawgyi Lake.

**2015/16 season:** By this stage with online word-of-mouth and trip reports becoming more prevalent, assuming that the tourism products are well-managed by Inn Chit Thus Tourism Group, upwards of 500 tourists would be expected.

These estimates are possibly on the conservative side, but assuming no further work is done in tourism product development in the interim, and the inhibiting factors mentioned in Section 2.4 do not change, anywhere from 500 to 1000 tourists in the 2015/16 season would be considered a success by the MCDP.

If this number is achieved, the revenue generated would be substantial for local businesses, service providers such as guides and bus operators, and the Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group. With an entry fee there would also be more funds for conservation management of the wildlife sanctuary.

The most important factor outside the control of this project in these estimates are that Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group manages their tourism products effectively and tourists therefore leave Indawgyi Lake with a good impression.

It should be noted that IndawMaHar Guesthouse, the only accommodation currently available for foreign visitors, has 12 beds. Theoretically, this is sufficient to accommodate 960 tourists staying an average of three nights if visitor numbers are spread evenly from October to May. In reality, visitor numbers are unlikely to be spread evenly and overflow during peak months is likely to occur once tourist numbers reach 500 per season. Presumably, if this happened the Indawa 2 Guesthouse, which currently isn't actively accommodating foreign visitors, would resume doing so as a short-term solution. Otherwise some other overflow option is needed, which is something the MCDP will discuss with stakeholders.

Once visitor numbers start to reach saturation of existing accommodation, there would be scope for opening another low-impact guesthouse, preferably in another village on the lake (Hepa, Hepu, Lwemun or Nyaungbin would be logical choices). To further increase tourism benefits to the community, such a guesthouse could be operated under the same community-based model that Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group is operating under. This could potentially be a viable community based tourism project for an interested donor or investor.



## 5. LONG-TERM TOURISM POTENTIAL

The longer-term potential for tourism at Indawgyi Lake will be influenced to a large extent by external factors. Firstly, any change to the two inhibiting factors noted in Section 2.4 could lead to a sizeable increase in visitor numbers.

A change in restricted areas around Indawgyi Lake would lead to the opening of a huge number of new tourism itineraries. Just a few possibilities would include:

- An overnight kayaking trip up the Indawgyi River to Chaungwa Village or beyond
- Overnight or two night trekking tours in various areas around the lake
- The possibility of combining a visit to Indawgyi Lake with other interesting nearby attractions that are currently restricted, including Tanai Tiger Reserve or Hpakant

An upgrade of the road would lead to greater interest from tour operators and also an increasing number of independent travellers willing to make the journey.

Assuming those inhibiting factors are removed, it will be important to plan for the possibly substantial increase in tourism numbers according to the principles of sustainable tourism. Indawgyi Lake can currently be sold as an untouched, off-the-beaten-track, natural destination with welcoming people. A substantial increase in tourism would likely make that marketing message unviable, and new ways to promote the destination would need to be found.

Other influences besides tourism will probably make the greatest changes to the current state of Indawgyi Lake. However, if Indawgyi Lake is to be viably sold as an ecotourism destination in the future, then it should be ensured that tourism at least does not significantly contribute to those changes.

### 5.1 Recommendations

For this purpose, the following basic recommendations on future tourism development are given:

- New guesthouses should be low-impact, built according to best standards in environmentally friendly construction and should be spread at different villages around the lake. This is to ensure:
  - that as many as possible local people possible have economic opportunities in tourism;
  - that tourism doesn't place too much strain on any one single village (hotels and guesthouses require a lot of water and power and also produce a lot of additional waste);
  - increased tourist convenience, allowing tourists to visit another side of the lake and stay overnight.
- Where possible, there should be an opportunity for guesthouses to be run under a community guesthouse model, where employees are paid but profits are used for community and environmental conservation projects.

- Any outside investors should be held to the CSR standards as outlined in the Responsible Tourism Policy endorsed by the Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. For hotels, this includes things like employing local people, sourcing food products locally, and actively engaging with the community in which they operate.
- Efforts should be made to reduce excess waste from tourism. In particular, plastic water bottle usage could be reduced by the compulsory installation of a water purifier at every guesthouse with guests encouraged to refill their bottles with that water for a small fee.
- The use of motor-powered boats for tourism purposes should be kept as low as practicable. This is due to the water and air pollution which could disturb fish and bird populations and also the noise pollution which will negatively affect the tourism experience. The current high price of motor-powered boat hire provides a good barrier to their overuse in this regard.
- It is vital that economic benefits of tourism are spread locally. If this does not occur, local people are likely to become indifferent or even antagonistic towards tourists, as they will eventually come to view them as an inconvenience that do not provide any benefits. This would further detract from one of the current key marketing messages for Indawgyi Lake.

## 6. ISSUES AND RISKS

The following is a list of identified risks for tourism development at Indawgyi Lake and recommendations for risk mitigation.

No.	Risk	Mitigation
1	No medical care for serious injury or illness; The death of a tourist tarnishing the image of the destination.	This risk exists in many off-the-beaten-track destinations in Myanmar and cannot be eliminated. It should be ensured that the following safety practices are enforced: helmets are compulsory for tourists on motorbikes; people employed in tourism are trained in first aid; emergency procedures are in place for evacuation of tourists, both from villages that have guesthouses and for injuries that occur outside the villages (eg. on trekking trips); basic medical care is available within the villages where tourists stay for at least early diagnosis of serious illness and treatment of minor injuries.
2	Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group will lose motivation or structure without continued guidance.	<p>FFI employees will check in on the Group during their visits to the lake, checking on their sales records and records of meeting notes, determining whether they are making good progress and are well-organised. The Group was left with an action plan to be completed by mid-December (Appendix 2). It should be checked that these tasks have been completed and new tasks have been set.</p> <p>It is further recommended that a volunteer be sought to spend a period of 60 days at Indawgyi Lake to work with the Group. Their roles would be to deliver an 'English for Tourism' course for at least 10 hours per week, and also work with the group to ensure their product development and organisational methods are sound and structured. At the end they would produce a report outlining their work and further recommendations.</p> <p>Organisations such as SST Tourism (through their <a href="http://www.ResponsibleMyanmar.Org">www.ResponsibleMyanmar.Org</a> portal) and Tourism Transparency (<a href="http://www.tourismtransparency.org">www.tourismtransparency.org</a>) regularly receive requests from volunteers for such assignments. The volunteer would pay their own costs, but would need to be provided with business visa support, pre-arrival guidance, and a briefing in Yangon before being sent to Indawgyi Lake.</p>
3	Development at Indawgyi Lake, including tourism development, begins to make it an unattractive destination for eco-tourism	<p>As outlined in Section 5, best practices in sustainable tourism should be adhered to in managing the future growth of tourism at Indawgyi Lake.</p> <p>Furthermore, a flexible approach to marketing Indawgyi Lake as a tourism destination should be taken, meaning that if the current marketing messages become unviable, new ones can be found. As an example, refer to Section 3.4 where it is noted that the extremely receptive nature of local people to tourists is unlikely to last in the longer-term. Therefore, the training of local people to act as interpretive guides or providing more information about local culture and folklore, and attractions related to them, should be planned.</p>

## 7. SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

As noted, it is difficult to tie Indawgyi Lake to a broader tourism itinerary due to its distance from any other noteworthy destination that is open to foreign visitors. However, as part of this research, Myitkyina was also explored for linkage into tourism itineraries, while the possibility of linking Indawgyi Lake to Katha and an Ayeyarwaddy River cruise was also investigated.

### 7.1 Myitkina – Indawgyi Lake- Myitkyina

**Day 1:** Arrival in Myitkyina

**Day 2:** Morning trip to the riverside market for sunrise. Half-day trip to the confluence of the Malikha and Maykha Rivers (ie. the start of the Ayeyarwaddy), stopping at Jaw Bum for a view of the surrounding landscape. For adventure tourists, this could possibly be extended to a full-day trip with the addition of a half-day hike in the nearby hills (requires further investigation) and taking the boat back to Myitkyina. For other tourists the rest of the day could be spent visiting Wai Maw Village, where the local blacksmiths producing various knives provide some attraction.

**Day 3:** Myitkyina to Indawgyi Lake. Either by private car (around 7 hours) or by taking the 7:40am train to Hopin (4.5-5 hours), followed by private car to Lonton (2 hours) or shared pick-up truck (3-6 hours).

**Day 4-5 or 6:** Indawgyi Lake activities: recommend at least two days with different activities on each day (eg. one day kayaking, one day cycling, one day trekking, etc).

**Day 6 or 7:** Return to Myitkyina by private car, or taxi plus train from Hopin, or shared pick-up truck plus train from Hopin.

**Note:** due to the unpredictability of arrival times for north-bound trains from Hopin, it would not necessarily be recommended to return to Myitkyina by train. It would probably be better to instead continue south.

### 7.2 Southern Extension

**Day 7:** Return by private car to Hopin, being dropped at the train station. Alternatively take the first shared bus from Lonton (7am), arrive in Hopin just after 10am. Take the 12pm train south to Naba (4-5 hours). Arrive in Katha around 5-6pm.

**Day 8:** Exploring Katha, particularly the George Orwell related sights and the outskirts of town which are particularly scenic.

**Day 9:** Take the 5am express boat to Mandalay. Arrive Mandalay around 6pm.

**Note:** the express boats aren't well-equipped for tourists and 13 hours can be a rather long journey. This journey could be split up with a stop at Kyaukmyaung for the Ayeyarwaddy Dolphin protection zone and pottery attractions (scheduled arrival time in Kyaukmyaung is 2pm) and possibly at another stop closer to the halfway point. From Kyaukmyaung it would also be possible to continue to Shwebo and then to either Mandalay or Bagan by bus. However, these options were not investigated.

### 7.3 Mandalay to Myitkyina

Due to the long train journey from Mandalay to Hopin and the unpredictable length of the journey (average time seems to be around 16 hours), this option is only likely to appeal to budget tourists. Budget tourists could then be encouraged through travel guides to back-track as far as Naba on the train and then take the boat south from

Katha, making the journey into a more interesting looping trip. Continuing north to Myitkyina would not be advised for as long as there is no possibility to continue from Myitkyina to Bhamo by boat or bus.

#### **7.4 Prices**

Element	Price	Notes
Flight Yangon to Myitkyina	Approx. \$140 one way	Various airlines, daily flights
Myitkyina Day Tour by private car	60,000 kyat	Expensive – would be good to look for cheaper options
Private car hire for 2 nights, 3 days, Myitkyina to Indawgyi Lake return or being dropped at Hopin train station on return	630,000 kyat	Additional fee for each additional day spent at the lake.
Train Myitkyina to Hopin	\$6 upper class	
Taxi from Hopin to Lonton	80,000 – 100,000 kyat one way	
Shared pick-up truck from Hopin to Lonton	5,000 kyat	8,000-10,000 kyat for more comfortable front seat
Train from Hopin to Katha	\$5 upper class, \$2 ordinary class	Additional hour by pick-up truck from Naba to Katha for 1000 kyat; private taxi also possible
Express boat from Katha to Mandalay	25,000 kyat (foreigners)	
Myitkyina Accommodation	Budget – around 10,000 kyat (YMCA); Mid-range – around 25,000 kyat (Hotel Pantsun); Higher-end – around 60,000 kyat (Hotel Madira)	
Lonton Accommodation	7,000 kyat per person (foreigners)	IndawMaHar Guesthouse (only option)
Katha Accommodation	Budget - 6,000 kyat (Ayarwady Guesthouse); Mid-range – 20,000 kyat (Eden Guesthouse)	

## 8. BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

As stated, the authors feel that attracting between 500 and 1000 tourists to Indawgyi Lake in the 2015/16 tourism season. Based on the lower end of those figures and assuming the current state of Indawgyi Lake doesn't change significantly, the following economic benefits to communities could be expected:

- The average tourist could be expected to spend around \$20 on the services offered by Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group over the course of their stay. This would equate to a revenue of \$10,000 per season. Meanwhile, the only major expenses they will incur are the replacement of equipment for around \$5000, budgeted for over a four year period. This would mean that for the 2015/16 season \$8750 of their income would be injected directly into the local economy, largely in the form of wages for the provision of tourism services.
- Meanwhile, the Group has stated they wish to use their profits for environmental conservation and community projects, providing further benefits to the environment and community.
- Tourists staying an average of 3-4 nights, aside from accommodation, will spend approximately 10,000 kyat per day on food and peripheral shopping. Based on 500 tourists per season, that would equate to an additional injection of approximately \$12,500 into the local economy per year.
- Increased tourism and the involvement of local people in tourism will develop capacity in areas such as English-language skills, business management and guiding.
- Increased tourism will allow small-scale entrepreneurs the opportunity to open further viable tourism-oriented businesses, such as a massage service or cooking classes for local food.

Increased tourism could also create the following environmental benefits:

- Within the next two years it is recommended that the Sanctuary introduce an entrance fee of \$10. In collecting this fee, there should be a clear explanation in English of how the money will be used, preferably listing the individual projects it will be used for. This is because there is still a degree of scepticism amongst tourists to Myanmar about how money collected as entrance fees is used. This would amount to \$5,000 for environmental conservation projects per year.
- As stated, Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group also intends to use their profits for environmental conservation projects.
- It is hoped that tourism will provide more economic opportunities for local people, leading to:
  - Alternative employment for people who might otherwise engage in environmentally damaging activities such as logging
  - A better awareness among the community of the economic value of pristine nature, creating a greater desire to preserve it

## 9. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of this project, the Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group was formed and additional tourism products became available at Indawgyi Lake. Combined with this project's marketing aspect, we expect at least 500 tourists to visit Indawgyi Lake in the 2015/16 tourism season. This will be the easiest indicator available to measure the success of this project.

In order to achieve this, and to realise the benefits outlined in Section 8, and for the future sustainable development of Indawgyi Lake, the following recommendations are made:

### Must Have

- Continued support for Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group for the next year. This will include checks from FFI staff during their visits and an attempt to recruit a volunteer to spend two months working with the group (refer to Section 6)
- Clear emergency procedures and guidelines in the event of an accident or illness involving a tourist, as well as enforced safety regulations (refer to Section 6, Risk 1)

### Nice to Have

- A Sanctuary entrance fee of \$10 should be introduced by the start of the 2015/16 tourism season (October 2015). This will provide additional income for environmental conservation.
- A water purifier should be provided to IndawMaHar Guesthouse to set the example of environmentally responsible tourism practices at Indawgyi Lake. **Note:** these can be purchased for 67,000 kyat. At a price of 300 kyat per refill (ie. cheaper than bottled water), the investment will be repaid in just over 200 refills. Due to the small cost, this money could be collected through an honours system (ie, users are trusted to put in what they think they have used), minimising fee collection. Alternatively, with a small additional room charge the purified water could be made complementary.
- Training for key stakeholders in the management of Indawgyi Lake in the concepts of sustainable tourism
- Training for local people in tourism as a business and concepts of sustainable tourism, allowing them more opportunities to become involved and to have a stronger, better-informed voice in any future tourism developments that might affect them.
- Future tourism development is managed according to principles of sustainable tourism (Refer to Section 6, Risk 3)
- An upgraded Environmental Education Centre located in a more convenient place for tourists (Refer to Section 3.3)

## APPENDIX 1: FIELD ASSESSMENT ITINERARY

A field assessment was conducted by MCDP from October 28th to November 12th 2013 to investigate tourism options in the sanctuary and discuss possibilities with stakeholders.

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Mon 28 <sup>th</sup>	Flight Yangon to Myitkyina. Arrived Myitkyina early evening. Arrangements made for following day.
Tue 29 <sup>th</sup>	Meetings conducted with two Myitkyina-based tour operators, two accommodation providers, immigration officers (at the airport and in the town) and the local representative of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT).
Wed 30 <sup>th</sup>	Day trip around Myitkyina, exploring attractions around the town with a view to building a broader tourism itinerary for Indawgyi Lake. Visit to the confluence and Wai Maw Village. Evening second meeting with MoHT representative.
Thurs 31 <sup>st</sup>	Early morning train to Mohnyin. Meeting with Sanctuary warden. Evening train back to Hopin.
Fri 1 <sup>st</sup>	Morning taxi to Lonton, stopping at the Environmental Education Center and BANCA office in Nanmun en route. Afternoon meeting with park rangers in Lonton and the Friends of Wildlife organisation.
Sat 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Orientation boat trip around Indawgyi Lake, stopping at Hepu, Nyaungbin and Nammilaung and Shwe Myitzu Pagoda. Bird-watching en route.
Sun 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Second boat trip on Indawgyi Lake, venturing up the Indawgyi River as far as possible and climbing Shwe Taung. Evening – 1 hour meeting with participants interested in forming a tourism CBO.
Mon 4 <sup>th</sup>	Motorbike road to Nanmun. Tested a potential trekking route with a local guide. Trek later packaged as Nanmun Mountain Trek.
Tue 5 <sup>th</sup>	Fishing with guesthouse manager in the morning. First test of kayaks – return to Mamon Kaing Village. Afternoon interview with guesthouse manager.
Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	Full-day kayak trip – northern route. Stopping at Sitting Buddha, Lwemun, Nammilaung and Shwe Myitzu Pagoda. Exploration of east side of lake by motorbike.
Thur 7 <sup>th</sup>	Motorcycle trip heading north along main road, up to Nyaungbin and back. Further exploration of villages in this area. Interview with Lonton police officer in the afternoon.

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## MYANMAR CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (MCDP)

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Fri 8 <sup>th</sup>	First sale – bicycle rental. Full-day kayak trip – southern route. Going south from Lonton to Mamon Kaing, along the southern shore, then up to Hepa. Coming back across the lake to Lonton at sunset.
Sat 9 <sup>th</sup>	Second sales – kayak hire and bicycle hire. Preparation for workshop. Afternoon test of recreational fishing trip by canoe.
Sun 10 <sup>th</sup>	Morning kayak training. Afternoon workshop session, formulation of Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group.
Mon 11 <sup>th</sup>	Completing handwritten maps and information for Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group's services. Tour Guide training and kayak training conducted with group members. Evening relocation of equipment to agreed contact point for the Group.
Tue 12 <sup>th</sup>	Morning departure to Hopin. Midday train to Naba. Arrival in Katha early evening.

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## APPENDIX 2: ACTION PLAN FOR INN CHIT THU TOURISM GROUP

The following action plan was left with Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group. All tasks were to be completed by mid-December.

Type	No.	Task
Organisational structure – documents to be agreed upon and recorded	1	Membership rules, including requirements for meeting attendance, participation and satisfactory completion of assigned tasks, as well as voting rules for decisions and procedures for admission of new members. Set a date for a monthly meeting
	2	A list of members and their roles and responsibilities.
	3	A mission statement which states how the group intends to use their profits and two or three potential ideas for projects
	4	Emergency procedures for injury or non-return of tourists
Infrastructure	5	Construct a shelter for the kayaks which allows them to be stored upside down and off the ground (on a rack) with shade all day. It must also have shaded space to store the paddles and hang the life jackets.
	6	Purchase a small torch for each kayak (to be given to people who rent them along with the life jacket)
	7	Create an “Inn Chit Thu Tourism Group” sign to be displayed at the tourist contact point.
	8	Prepare fishing hand lines (would suggest at least 10m length, but refer to local knowledge), each with a sinker, 2 or 3 good hooks and attached to a plastic spool.
Product Development	9	Create a contact book of providers for each service
	10	Try to negotiate a lower price for boats and canoes; especially for boats doing a drop-off/pick-up service (eg. to start a trek at Nyaungbin) and for recreational fishing (ie. half-day)
	11	Produce guidelines for tourists on fishing size limits and protected species
	12	Create and organize at least two new trekking routes (Nyaunbin – Shwe Taung return; and Hepa, up into the mountains, return to Hepu are recommended).
	13	Attempt to find a more interesting way to Hepa (avoiding Nanmun) by bicycle. If not possible, then a more interesting southern/eastern cycling itinerary from Lonton.
	14	Think of at least three new tourism products (either new routes for existing services, or entirely new products) that could potentially be offered. Record these ideas.

15	Call BANCA office (Ph. 731 72458) and find a better contact number for Ko Ren Ko (Nanmun Mountain trekking guide)
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**Notes:** The monthly meeting (**Task 1**) should be used to review completion of tasks, review sales / income / customer feedback and to set new tasks for the following month.

I would suggest one or two people take on **Tasks 1 & 3** and then submit it to the group for feedback and revisions.

**Task 8:** People will probably pay 40,000 kyat for this service, but 30,000 kyat would sell better. This also relates to **Task 10**. If they have to pay 40,000 kyat then give them 4 hours of fishing time instead of 3 hours.