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The hotels are full or eye-wateringly expensive, creased dollar bills are worthless and credit cards are widely refused - welcome to Burma, Asia's next big tourist destination.

The South-East Asian nation, once shielded from international eyes by a brutal military junta and a travel boycott supported by democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, has become a must-see for many travelers.

"Because the country has been so isolated, the deeply Buddhist 'Land of the Golden Pagoda' resonates with a strong sense of place, undiluted by mass tourism and warmed by genuine hospitality," the New York Times said in January, ranking the country third on its list of the top 45 destinations of 2012.

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