

NEW DEPARTURE DATES RELEASED DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND

SPECIAL
OFFER - SAVE
£300
PER PERSON

ALONG THE MIGHTY BRAHMAPUTRA

A river journey through Northern India's Assam region
aboard the RV Charaidew II

20th November to 8th December 2019;
18th December 2019 to 5th January 2020
& 15th January to 2nd February 2020

NOBLE CALEDONIA

Think of Assam and your first thoughts probably involve tea and maybe temples. Certainly it is not noted for its tourism, mostly because of the lack of acceptable accommodation and transportation. This is a great pity, as this state that lies south of Tibet and Bhutan and north of Bangladesh has so much to offer the naturalist, bird watcher or cultural traveller. One of the world's great rivers, the Brahmaputra runs for some 1800 miles from its source in the Tibetan Himalaya to its delta in the Bay of Bengal. Nothing can prepare the traveller for the vastness and emptiness of this great water highway, as myriad channels ply through seemingly endless archipelagos of sand islands. Within striking distance of the river are a number of significant national parks. Among these is the World Heritage Site at Kaziranga, where the world's largest population of one-horned rhino resides.



This unusual journey will appeal to those who wish to witness this extraordinary area, its diverse cultures and marvellous wildlife but who are weary of the more well-trodden paths around the world. The roads may be poor and the tourist infrastructure very much in its infancy, but that is precisely why we find this region so exciting. Now is the time to visit before big business moves in with the resort hotel chains and all other paraphernalia that 21st century tourism entails. For these voyages along the Brahmaputra River we are working with our associates, Assam Bengal Navigation, an Indian/British joint venture based in Guwahati whose directors have a wealth of experience in operating river vessels in India. We have chartered the RV Charaidew II from them and the vessel is specially designed for the navigational conditions on the Brahmaputra.

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Kolkata, India. Fly by scheduled indirect flight from London to Kolkata.

Day 2 Kolkata. Arrive in the morning and transfer to the Oberoi Grand Hotel for a three night stay. Following lunch at the hotel, enjoy an afternoon tour of India's second largest city which is regarded as the intellectual, artistic and cultural capital. Dinner will be at our hotel this evening.

Day 3 Kolkata. Following breakfast and a leisurely morning at our luxurious hotel, we will enjoy lunch in a local restaurant followed by a visit to Kolkata's vibrant and colourful flower market. Following time here, we will take in what is arguably the best view of Kolkata, whilst sailing along the River Hooghly by local boat. Return to the hotel before enjoying dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 4 Kolkata. This morning our excursion will focus on the wonderfully opulent and eccentric Marble Palace, displaying some incredible and varied works of art; South Park Cemetery, the last resting place of many of Kolkata's early British settlers and The Mother House, the former home and last resting place of Mother Theresa. Following lunch in a local restaurant, we will return to our hotel for an afternoon at leisure. Dinner will be at our hotel this evening.

Day 5 Kolkata to Guwahati. Depart on a morning flight to Guwahati and then drive up to Nilachal Hill to see the holy Kamakhya temple. With its tantric rites and animal sacrifice, the more squeamish may prefer to content themselves with the exterior. Also visit the poignant

Commonwealth War Graves before transferring to the RV Charaidew II for embarkation. After approximately an hour's sailing, we will moor for the night in Kurua on the north bank.

Day 6 Guwahati to Ganesh Pahar. Today is spent cruising upstream and the vessel may encounter strong currents. We will have time to pause and stretch our legs at a small local village with its lush green fields of vegetables and corn.

Day 7 Cruising. Leaving the hills behind, we enjoy our first taste of the wilderness experience, sand banks like icebergs on either side. We will stop at a bankside village, creating a sensation as we do, and see the local weavers at work in their homes and then stroll through sugarcane plantations. We moor for the night in a lunar landscape of sand islands, with hopefully the Himalayas in view to provide a contrasting backdrop in the distance.

Day 8 Tezpur. We cruise on to Tezpur, where after lunch we visit the 6th century Da Parbatia temple ruins, with a beautifully carved portal, and explore the town by cycle rickshaw. We will stop at Cole Park with Medieval stone carvings saved from sites all over the region, and aim to pass by the bungalow once lived in by Alexander Bruce, pioneer of the tea industry. Our ship will be waiting at the town's waterfront for us to re-board.

Day 9 Nameri National Park. After an early breakfast we drive for some two hours to the Nameri National Park at the foot of the blue hills of Arunachal Pradesh, the old North East Frontier Agency. Here we take a float trip of around two hours duration down the Jia Bhoreli River through the park, with excellent birdwatching (look out for the great hornbills) and



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata



Hindu dance mask, Majuli Island



Great Hornbill, Nameri



Sunset on the Brahmaputra River



Colourful Indian Roller, Kaziranga National Park



Elephant herd feeding amongst vegetation, Kaziranga National Park



Tea-picking



Shiva temple at Sibsagar



Gee's Golden Langur Monkey, Guwahati

perhaps the chance of sighting wild elephant. After lunch we take a village walk before returning to the ship.

Day 10 Kaziranga. Continue upstream, passing below a seemingly endless new bridge across the vast width of the river bed, to moor at Steamer Ghat, a lovely beach backed by jungle-covered hills. In the afternoon we drive to Kaziranga's Western Range for a jeep safari and to scan the wilderness from an observation tower. Kaziranga is a World Heritage Site and, with a population of well over 1000 one-horned rhinoceros, it is the best place in the world to see these beasts.

Day 11 Kaziranga. Today we will drive to Kaziranga's Central Range for further jeep safaris. We hope to encounter many of Kaziranga's endemic wildlife which includes good populations of wild elephant, sambar, swamp and hog deer, wild pig, plus hundreds of types of birds, flora, fauna and of course, the elusive Bengal Tiger.

Day 12 Vishnath. This morning we set sail upstream, with Kaziranga National Park on the right bank. At around midday we reach Vishnath, with its Ahom-period Shiva temple. There are other later temples too, and we walk through the town before re-boarding and setting off again, with Kaziranga still on the far bank.

Day 13 Cruising. Today is spent on the river and we have a good chance of spotting Gangetic dolphin.

Day 14 Kaziranga. This morning we land and take a jeep safari in Kaziranga's little-visited Eastern Range, with grasslands much favoured by rhino, where you might spot the rare Bengal florican. Returning to the boat, we continue our cruise upstream.

Day 15 Cruising. Another day spent cruising upstream. We will take time to pause and walk through a bank-side village, getting an insight into the life of rural India.

Day 16 Majuli Island. Around breakfast time, we should reach Majuli Island, supposedly the world's largest river island, and possessing unique Hindu monasteries famed for their dance-drama performances - the whole island is now shortlisted for future UNESCO World Heritage status. We visit a monastery at Auniati with an eclectic museum and attend a dance performance at Kamalbari Monastery, before cruising across to Neamati Ghat on the opposite bank.

Day 17 Sibsagar. We visit a tea estate this morning and see all the processes of tea production (factory inoperative between December and mid-March) then drive for about an hour to Sibsagar, the one-time capital of the kings of Assam. Shan by origin (Assam and Siam share the same derivation) but converted to Hinduism they ruled Assam for some 700 years until the 1820s, and their culture and architecture is a strange and delightful amalgam of Indian and South East Asian. We will see temples with stupa like profiles, and palaces of distinctive form - note the crocodiles and rather erotic caryatids that adorn the roof of the Rang Mahal. For the record book, the temple tank here is believed to be the world's largest hand-excavated reservoir. We return to our vessel which will have cruised up to Dikhou Mukh, close to Sibsagar, and spend our last night on board. (Dependent on river conditions the last night may be spent at Neamati, close to Jorhat).

Day 18 Assam to Kolkata. Disembark after breakfast for our flight to Kolkata. On arrival we will transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 19 Kolkata to London. Depart this morning by scheduled indirect flight, arriving into London this evening.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £300 PER PERSON OFF THE PRICES SHOWN BELOW FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Cat	Cabin Description	Nov 2019 & Jan 2020	Dec 2019
1	Queen Stateroom - Main Deck	£5595	£5795
2	Double Stateroom - Upper Deck	£5995	£6195
3	Luxury Suite - Upper Deck	£6995	£7195
4	Single Stateroom - Main Deck	£7995	£8195
2	Double Stateroom - Upper Deck for sole use	N/A	£8395

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Four nights hotel accommodation in Kolkata on full board basis • 13 nights aboard the RV Charaoidew II on full board basis • Shore excursions • Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes • UK airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance, Indian visa, camera fees in national parks.

NB. Excursions, events ashore and ports are subject to change depending on entrance time allocations and river conditions. Wildlife sightings are not guaranteed.

POST-CRUISE BHUTAN EXTENSION

8th December to 15th December 2019; 5th to 12th January & 2nd to 9th February 2020



Taksang Monastery - the 'Tiger's Nest'



National Memorial Chorten, Thimphu



Traditional Bhutanese masked dancers

Join us after your cruise for an exploration of Bhutan – the 'Land of the Thunder Dragon' – nestled between India and the Tibetan Plateau in the heart of the Himalayas. Bhutan offers a fascinating insight into a Buddhist culture and this is a unique opportunity to explore this little-visited country, steeped in tradition with warm and hospitable people. Added to this, we will be surrounded by some of the most incredible scenery in the world; rugged snow-capped mountain ranges, the breathtaking Taksang Monastery perched on a cliff-top and beautiful Himalayan landscapes dotted with colourful prayer flags.

The Itinerary

Day 1 Kolkata to Thimphu Valley, Bhutan. After breakfast transfer to Kolkata Airport for your flight to Paro. On arrival at Paro airport, you will be met and transferred to Thimphu, the modern capital town of Bhutan and an exciting blend of tradition and modernity. Check in to your hotel for a two night stay and visit both National Memorial Chorten, a monument to peace and prosperity, and the Buddha Dordenma statue, one of the largest Buddha rupas in the world.

Day 2 Thimphu Valley. Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital city in the world, is the seat of government. Today's full day of sightseeing includes a visit to Thimphu's National Library with its vast collection of Buddhist texts and manuscripts, the Institute of Traditional Medicine, Thimphu handicrafts emporium and the botanical gardens in Serbithang with its large display of flora, fauna, fruit orchids and Rhododendrons. In the evening, take a stroll along the town's main street.

Day 3 Punakha. After an early breakfast depart for Punakha (three hours drive approximately). Drive up to Dochu-la pass (3,088 metres), stopping briefly to take in the view and admire the chortens, Mani walls, and prayer flags which decorate the highest point on the road. On arrival check-in to your hotel and then visit Punakha Dzong, built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel to serve as the religious and administrative centre of the region.

Day 4 Punakha. After breakfast, you will be taken to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Temple (it is a 30 minute hike from the car park up to the Temple). Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten stands out on a beautiful

ridge above the Punakha valley, built by Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck. It took nine years to build and Holy Scriptures rather than engineering manuals were consulted to construct this four-storey temple. It is a fine example of Bhutanese architecture and artistic traditions. In the afternoon, you may choose to visit Nalanda Monastery, a monastic school shrouded in history and intrigue.

Day 5 Paro. This morning we set off early for Paro (four hours drive approximately) through beautiful valleys that encapsulate Bhutan's rich culture, scenic landscape, myths and legends. Following lunch at a local restaurant we visit the National Museum with its intriguing collection of artefacts reflecting the Kingdom's heritage. We then head to Rinpung Dzong (Paro Dzong) situated at a commanding height overlooking Paro valley. Check in to your hotel for a two night stay and this evening we will visit a traditional farmhouse.

Day 6 Paro. In the morning, take an excursion to Taksang Monastery, also known as Tiger's Nest. The walk to the nest is relatively steep, however the Monastery itself and the views from its walls are simply breathtaking. In the afternoon visit Drukgyel Dzong before returning to our hotel for dinner.

Day 7 Paro to Kolkata to London. After an early breakfast transfer to the airport for your flight to Kolkata where day use rooms will be available at a hotel until our afternoon transfer back to the airport for the scheduled indirect flight to London.

Day 8 London. Arrive this morning.

Prices per person Based on double occupancy

Twin: £2895 Single: £4095

Price Includes: Return air travel between Kolkata and Paro, six nights hotel accommodation in Bhutan on full board basis, day room in Kolkata with lunch provided, excursions, Tour Manager, local guides, gratuities, Bhutan visa fee, tourism fee.

Not Included: Travel insurance.

NB. Minimum numbers are required for this extension to operate. Please note that the high altitude of this tour may affect some travellers and so you are advised to seek medical advice before booking. A good level of physical fitness will be required for the excursion to Taksang Monastery (although horses can be hired to take you up part of the way).



RV CHARAIDEW II

We are delighted to have chartered the RV Charaidew II for our scenic cruises along the Brahmaputra River in 2019 and 2020. Due to be launched in September 2018, this charming vessel features a range of comfortable cabins, all with French balconies. Accommodating a maximum of just 34 passengers and with an equal number of crew, the vessel will be sure to provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere on board. With its expansive Sun Deck there is ample opportunity to watch the world gently pass by as you relax on board your floating hotel.

Your Cabin/Suite

The ship has four grades of cabin categories. The two suites, being the largest cabins on board, are situated at the bow of the Upper Deck and measure a spacious 350 square feet. The 12 Upper Deck twin/double cabins take up the remainder of the Upper Deck and measure 240 square feet. There are two Main Deck double cabins (with fixed queen size bed) that measure 170 square feet, the same size as the two Main Deck single cabins that occupy the same deck. All cabins have sliding glass door windows that lead on to a French balcony and include stylish en-suite bathrooms with bathrobes and slippers. The cabin amenities also include a safe, mini-bar, tea/coffee making facilities, a hairdryer and boutique toiletries.



Twin Cabin

Your Space

Spread over three decks, the onboard facilities include the Main Deck dining room where delicious regional and international cuisine will be served in a single seating. On the same deck you will find a gym with a good range of facilities and a spa that offers a wide range of treatments. The ship's large Sun Deck is a perfect place to observe everyday life and to be on the lookout for the many species of birds and animals that congregate along the banks of the river. On the Sun Deck itself is the ship's saloon and bar, so refreshments, respite and shade will never be too far out of reach even when busy observing the comings and goings of this most magnificent river.

Your Dining

Meals are always taken in an open seating arrangement to allow you to meet and mingle with your fellow travellers. Breakfast and lunch are served buffet style and feature hot and cold dishes whereas dinner is served to your table. The cuisine is a selection of regional specialties and international dishes; Assamese cuisine generally being much milder than other regional cuisines of India. Tea, coffee and mineral water are available without charge and complimentary bottled water can always be found in your cabin and will be replenished each day.

Life On Board

The vessel offers comfortable surroundings and provides a welcoming and informal atmosphere on board. The friendly crew of 34 will do their utmost to ensure your stay is enjoyable, informative and agreeable throughout. A daily briefing by the Cruise Director will give you information on the next day's activities and English-speaking local naturalist guides provide insider knowledge into the local culture, horticulture and history of the region.



Lounge



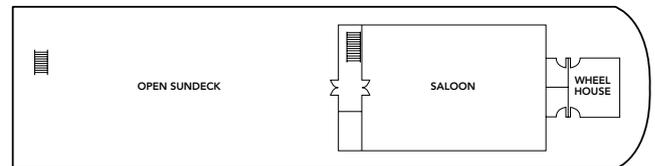
Sun Deck



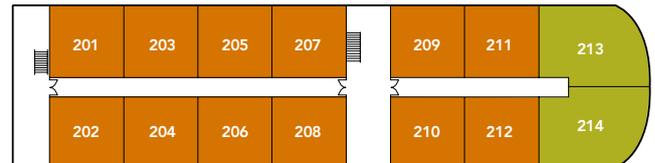
Dining Room

DECK PLAN

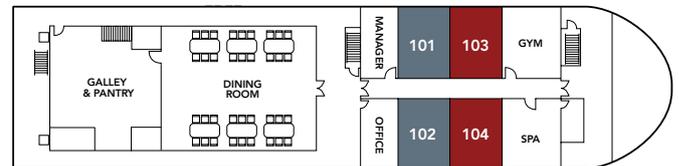
SUN DECK



UPPER DECK



MAIN DECK



■ CATEGORY 1
 ■ CATEGORY 2
 ■ CATEGORY 3
 ■ CATEGORY 4

Please note that the images shown are of the RV Sukapha, a sister vessel to the RV Charaidev II. Whilst the décor may differ slightly the overall look and design of the vessel once launched will be very similar to the images shown.

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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request. Ports and itinerary subject to change.
 Cover image: One-horned rhino, Kaziranga National Park.