

2025 DEPARTURE DATES RELEASED DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND

NOBLE CALEDONIA

SPECIAL  
OFFER - SAVE  
£300  
PER PERSON

A photograph of two rhinos in a lush green field. Two small black birds are perched on the backs of the rhinos. The rhino in the foreground is looking towards the camera.

# ALONG THE MIGHTY BRAHMAPUTRA

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

15<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February & 12<sup>th</sup> February to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2025

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. After lunch at the hotel, enjoy an afternoon tour of India's second largest city which is regarded as the intellectual, artistic and cultural capital. See the Victoria Memorial and St Paul's Cathedral Church before we meet for dinner at our hotel this evening.

**Day 3 Kolkata.** After breakfast and a leisurely morning at our luxurious hotel, we will enjoy lunch in a local restaurant. Later, 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 tonight.

**Day 4 Kolkata.** A morning 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, the vibrant and colourful flower market and The Mother House, the former home and last resting place of Mother Theresa. After lunch in a local restaurant, we will return to our hotel for an afternoon at leisure before meeting for dinner tonight.

**Day 5 Kolkata to Guwahati.** Return to the airport this morning for our flight to Guwahati. On arrival we transfer to the RV Charaidew II moored at Pandu port. Enjoy lunch while cruising downstream to Sualkuchi. An afternoon walk will take us through Sualkuchi, a bustling little town that is the centre of Assamese silk production and offers a chance to visit weaving workshops. Witness the whole process of silk manufacture, from cocoon and spinning, then dyeing to hand-weaving into exquisite mekhela chadars (a two-piece sari, the traditional attire of an Assamese woman). We then sail up to dock close to the great Saraighat bridge.

**Day 6 Guwahati.** This morning we 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. Return to the ship and continue sailing before we moor for the night in Kurua on the north bank.

**Day 7 Cruising.** During our morning of cruising we will stop at a bankside village where we have a chance to meet the villagers. The rest of the day is

spent on board as we watch life unfold on the riverbanks and jungle covered hills that rise on either side. This evening we will be treated to a cooking demonstration on board.

**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 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.





Victoria Memorial, Kolkata



Elephants, Kaziranga National Park.



Colourful Indian Roller, Kaziranga National Park



Shiva temple at Sibsagar



Gee's Golden Langur Monkey, Guwahati

**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 before driving 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. 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.



Great Hornbill, Nameri

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

**SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £300 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY**

Cat	Cabin Description	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
1	Queen Stateroom - Main Deck	£6795	£6495
2	Double Stateroom - Upper Deck	£7195	£6895
3	Luxury Suite - Upper Deck	£8195	£7895
4	Single Stateroom - Main Deck	£9295	£8995

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Four nights hotel accommodation in Kolkata on full board basis • 13 nights aboard the RV Charaidev II on full board basis • Local wine, beer & soft drinks with meals • 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 DARJEELING EXTENSION

2<sup>nd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> February & 2<sup>nd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025



Darjeeling



Tea plantation, Darjeeling



Tiger Hill, Darjeeling



The Elgin, Darjeeling



Deluxe Room, The Elgin



Timber Bar, The Elgin

Join us after your cruise for an exploration of the picturesque town of Darjeeling, the "Queen of the Hills" lying amidst the slopes of the Lesser Himalayas.

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 Kolkata to Darjeeling, India.** After breakfast transfer to Kolkata Airport for our flight to Bagdogra. On arrival we will transfer by road (approximately 3 hours) to Darjeeling. Check in this afternoon and enjoy free time before we meet for dinner tonight. (B, D)

**Day 2 Darjeeling.** This morning we will take a ride on the Toy Train, a narrow-gauge course which began operation in 1881 and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. The train ride combines heritage, the marvel of engineering and is one of the best ways to experience the natural beauty of Darjeeling. From the train we will see the local markets, towns and bridges as well as passing through some lush green hills, jungles and tea farms with the mesmerising view of snow-covered Himalayan peaks and the world's third highest peak, Kanchenjunga as a backdrop. After free time for lunch we will take a walk around Darjeeling, discover how the town was established as the summer capital of the British and view some of the colonial buildings and the stories connected to them. (B, D)

**Day 3 Darjeeling.** Early risers have the option to visit nearby Tiger Hill for a sunrise view before returning to the hotel for breakfast. Later we spend time at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute which preserves and teaches about past mountaineering expeditions, especially about the Mount Everest Expedition by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, since the early 20th century. Continue to the Zoological Park which is the only specialised zoo in India, internationally recognised for

its conservation breeding programmes of Red Panda, Himalayan Newt, Snow Leopards, Tibetan Wolf and other highly endangered animal species of the Eastern Himalaya. The afternoon is free to explore at your own pace before we meet for dinner tonight. (B, D)

**Day 4 Darjeeling.** Today we visit one of the tea estates where we can walk through a tea garden on the gentle hill slopes of Darjeeling and see the tea processing methods before enjoying a freshly brewed cup. Our final afternoon is free to explore at your own pace. (B, D)

**Day 5 Darjeeling to Kolkata.** After breakfast we transfer to Bagdora Airport for our scheduled flight to Kolkata. On arrival transfer to our hotel for some free time before we meet for dinner. (B, D)

**Day 6 Kolkata to London.** After an early breakfast transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London. Arrive this afternoon. (B)

Prices per person Based on double occupancy

Twin: £1895 Single: £2395

**Price Includes:** Economy class scheduled return air travel between Kolkata and Bagdora, four nights hotel accommodation at The Elgin Darjeeling, overnight hotel accommodation in Kolkata, meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner), Indian wine, beer and soft drinks included with lunch and dinner, excursions, Tour Manager, gratuities.

**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.



## RV CHARAIDEW II

We are delighted to have chartered the RV Charaidew II for our scenic cruises along the Brahmaputra River. Launched in January 2019, 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.

### 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.



Category 2 Cabin





Saloon



Category 3 Cabin



Category 4 Cabin



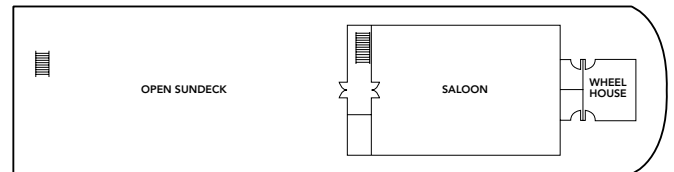
Sun Deck



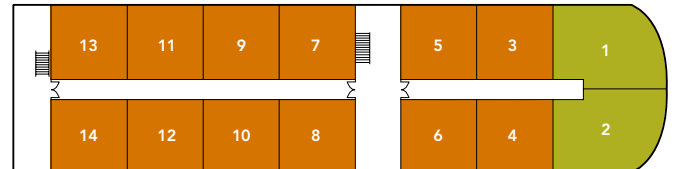
Dining Room

## DECK PLAN

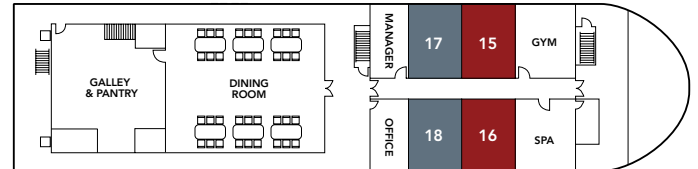
### SUN DECK



### UPPER DECK



### MAIN DECK



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

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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: Asian one horned Rhino, Assam.