

ASSAM & THE MIGHTY BRAHMAPUTRA

A journey through Northern India's Assam region
aboard the MV Mahabaahu

15th to 27th January; 29th January to 10th February
& 11th to 23rd November 2020

SPECIAL
OFFER - SAVE
£300
PER PERSON

NOBLE CALEDONIA

Assam, the Indian state that lies south of Tibet and Bhutan and north of Bangladesh and the mighty Brahmaputra River which flows through it, offers a plethora of experiences and sights for the naturalist, birdwatcher and cultural traveller. Join us aboard the MV Mahabaahu as we traverse the river in comfort visiting national parks, temples, monasteries, tea plantations and tribal villages. Running for some 1800 miles from its source in the Tibetan Himalaya to its delta in the Bay of Bengal, the river scenery is quite unlike anything you will have witnessed before.

Within striking distance of the river are a number of significant national parks and amongst the many highlights of our river expedition will be the time spent exploring the World Heritage Site at Kaziranga where the world's largest population of one horned rhino reside. In addition to the large numbers of rhino, the region is home to elephants, wild buffaloes and the elusive tiger. Fresh water dolphins reside in the river and with over four hundred varieties of migratory and domestic birds, this is one of the greatest natural habitats of wildlife outside of Africa with National Geographic referring to the area as the Serengeti of India.

The history, wildlife and tribal culture of this region of India are unique and will be brought to life by our expert local guides. 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 and this unusual journey is one for 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.



Kallabore Tea Estate

Our View

"Due to the increasing popularity of our river cruises along the Brahmaputra River we have chartered the MV Mahabaahu, a luxurious vessel whose operators have a long-established presence in Assam and a wealth of local expertise. We have designed the itinerary around a seven night cruise in order to offer the intrepid traveller a true taste of this remarkable region without having to leave home shores for a prolonged period of time. The MV Mahabaahu has only recently been built and offers considerable comfort across all five of her decks. Her size, facilities and refinement set her apart from most of the cruise ships in this region and, when not ashore sightseeing or spotting some of India's finest wildlife you can take a dip in the pool, enjoy a massage treatment or simply enjoy lazing on the top deck whilst watching life unfold on the riverbank."

Julian Hartley – Product Manager

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. Dinner will be 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 followed by a visit to Kolkata's vibrant and colourful flower market. Following time here, we will take in what is arguably one of the best ways to see Kolkata, sailing along the River Hooghly by local boat. Return to the hotel before enjoying dinner at a local restaurant tonight.

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. After 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 on arrival drive up 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. We continue on to the MV Mahabaahu and following embarkation and an orientation of the vessel, we will visit Peacock Island (time permitting), famous for being one of the smallest river islands in the world and home to the endangered Golden Langur monkey. Enjoy Welcome Dinner and Drinks on board.

Day 6 Guwahati to Orang Point. Setting sail early in the morning, you may wish to start your day with some invigorating yoga, or simply sitting in one of the many public areas and enjoying the passing scenery. After breakfast we will enjoy a talk by one of the vessel's experts before dropping anchor and visiting one of the local villages, learning much about how the nomadic people in this region spend their lives. Continue sailing, with lunch on board, until the early evening when the vessel will moor at a deserted sandbank where a bonfire and barbecue will be prepared.

Day 7 Sail to Silghat. After breakfast and a morning talk, we will spend our time enjoying the ship's facilities and the breathtaking scenery before having lunch.



Colourful Indian Roller



Elephant, Kaziranga National Park.



Traditional dancer, Majuli Island



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata

Afterwards, head off by jeep to Kaliabore Tea Estate where, within these spectacular grounds (tea estates are often referred to as gardens for good reason), we will learn much about the manufacture of this most English of drinks. We will continue to a jute mill, where ecologically friendly gunny bags are produced using a system of spinning and drawing, manufactured by the most wonderful machines. We return to the vessel for a cultural evening with dinner.

Day 8 Kaziranga National Park and Bishwanath Ghat. This morning we will head out to one of the finest examples of conservation and ecology in India, Kaziranga National Park. Following extensive efforts to cultivate the beasts, sighting of one horned rhino within the park is remarkably common and, during our two safaris, one in the Western range by jeep and also, a spectacular elephant safari, we will be given the very best chance of getting close to all of Kaziranga's endemic wildlife. While the rhinos themselves are reason enough to visit, the park is home to over 50 other mammals, 40 reptiles and over 500 birds including wild elephants, hog deer, crested serpent eagles and of course, the Bengal tiger. After lunch back on board our vessel and time to relax, this afternoon we visit a cotton and silk weaving

village where we can glimpse how the locals live and of course, have the chance to purchase some of their wares.

Day 9 Kaziranga National Park Eastern Range. Taking the Mahabaahu's two tenders, we will travel along the waterfront of Kaziranga where we will be able to explore its rich and varied wildlife. Having the vessel's tenders will afford us a further perspective of the national park as lizards, otters, birds, and larger mammals, such as rhino and elephant congregate along its riverbanks. Return to the vessel for lunch and, later today, enjoy a cookery demonstration of some local cuisine by the Mahabaahu's accomplished head chef. Tonight, dependent on mooring conditions, we will return to the solitary banks of the Brahmaputra for a further bonfire under the stars.

Day 10 Mishing Village. The Mishing people are the second largest tribal group in North-East India, with a population of over a million in Assam alone. Today, we will pause by the banks of the river to explore a Mishing village with its characteristic 'Chang Ghar' houses on raised platforms. All Mishing women are expert weavers and during our time we will be provided with a demonstration of the skill used in making typical Assamese dresses and precisely how to don their tribal clothing. On returning

to our vessel, enjoy a traditional Assamese evening.

Day 11 Majuli Island. Majuli is the world's largest river island and possesses unique Hindu monasteries famed for their dance-drama performances – the whole island is now shortlisted for future UNESCO World Heritage status. On today's excursion, we will witness a traditional cultural performance before travelling to Kamalabari monastery to witness Vaishnavite priests carrying out their ritualistic ceremonies. After lunch on board our vessel, we head by jeep 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. For the record book, the temple tank here is believed to be the world's largest hand-excavated reservoir. We return to our vessel for a farewell dinner.

Day 12 Assam to Kolkata. Disembark after breakfast for our flight to Kolkata. On arrival transfer to the Oberoi Grand Hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 13 Kolkata to London. Depart this morning by scheduled indirect flight, arriving into London this evening.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

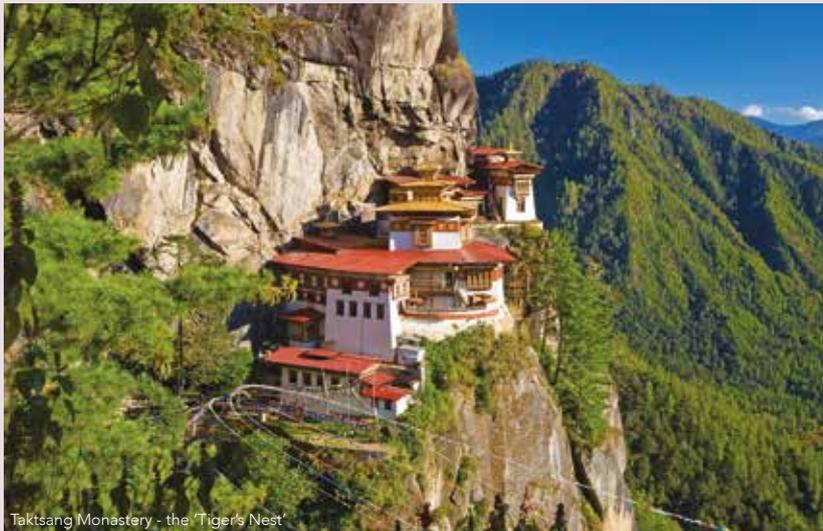
SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £300 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Cat	Cabin Description	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
C	Superior cabin without balcony on Parshuram or Gadadhar Singha Deck	£4595	£4295
B	Superior cabin with private balcony on Gadadhar Singha Deck	£4895	£4595
A	Suite with private balcony on Gadadhar Singha Deck	£5295	£4995
C	Superior cabin without balcony on Parshuram or Gadadhar Singha Deck for sole use	£6595	£6295

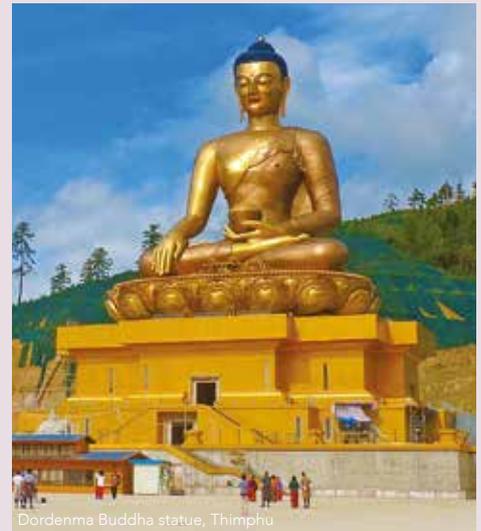
PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Four nights hotel accommodation in Kolkata on full board basis • Seven nights aboard the MV Mahabaahu on full board basis • Shore excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes • UK airport taxes.
Not Included: Travel insurance, Indian visa, camera fees in national parks.

BHUTAN POST-CRUISE EXTENSION

27th January to 3rd February; 10th to 17th February & 23rd to 30th November 2020



Taksang Monastery - the 'Tiger's Nest'



Dordenma Buddha statue, Thimphu

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 the National Memorial Chorten, a monument to peace and prosperity, and the Buddha Dordenma statue which is 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, fruits 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 (3,088m/10,130ft), 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.

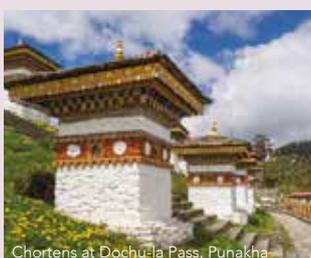
Day 4 Punakha. After breakfast you will be taken to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Temple (it is a 30 minute hike from the car park up to the Temple). Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten stands out on a beautiful ridge above the Punakha valley, built by Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck. 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, being 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.



Chortens at Dochu-la Pass, Punakha



Traditional Bhutanese masked dancers

PRICES PER PERSON Based on double occupancy

Twin: £2995: Single: £4195

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, gratuities, Tour Manager, Bhutan visa fee, tourism fee.

Not Included: Travel insurance, camera fee.

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).

MV MAHABAAHU



Superior twin-bedded cabin



Superior double-bedded cabin with balcony

For our exploration of Assam and the great Brahmaputra River we have chartered the MV Mahabaahu, a stylish and elegant vessel which accommodates 46 guests. The vessel has a total of five decks and facilities include a swimming pool, spa and restaurant and an open top deck from where you can watch the busy life of the waterside villages pass by as well as watch for wildlife.

Your Cabin/Suite

All cabins and suites are furnished in traditional Assamese fineries and feature ample closet space, television, hairdryer, in-house telephone, in-room safe and a choice of bed configuration (double or twin). The en-suite bathrooms include spa-branded amenities, bathrobes and slippers. There are two suites located on the ship's Gadadhar Singha Deck which measure a generous 283 square feet and include an outside balcony with chairs. The nine superior cabins with balcony, also located on the ship's Gadadhar Singha Deck, measure 206 square feet and the 12 superior cabins without balcony, located on both the Gadadhar Singha Deck and Parshuram Deck, measure 150 square feet.

Your Space

Spread over five decks, the ship has a number of public areas and facilities to ensure that you remain comfortable and relaxed throughout your journey. These include a lounge and bar with a well-stocked library, massage and treatment room offering traditional Ayurvedic therapies, steam and sauna room, Jacuzzi, hair salon and a beauty room. There is also a swimming pool and small outside gym area and a large sun deck –

the Donyi Polo Deck – with its own seating area and bar where you may relax and observe life on the banks of the river. The restaurant seats all passengers in one sitting and is also the room where the lectures will be held. The facilities also include a hospitality bar, pool table, tea and coffee station and a lift that services all decks other than the Donyi Polo Deck.

Your Dining

Meals are taken in the vessel's single-sitting Mungri Mungram restaurant located on the vessel's Rudra Singha Deck. The restaurant seats all passengers in an open seat arrangement and the food reflects the flavours of the region, whilst also offering an extensive selection of western dishes. There is an onboard bakery and breakfasts and lunches are a full buffet with both western and Indian delicacies being offered. Vegetarian options are available and dietary requests can be catered for on request. Dinners are served and will often be themed, the restaurant team taking great pride in showcasing the many cuisines and dishes from around India. A 24 hour tea and coffee station is available.



Sun Deck



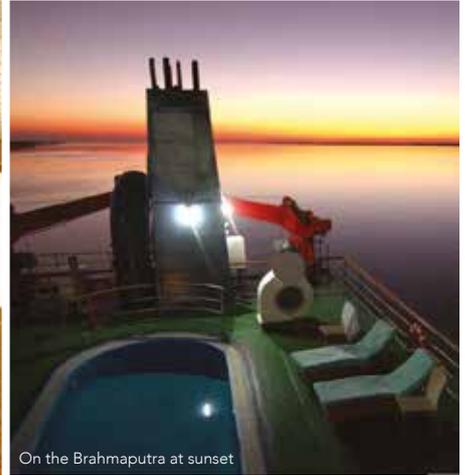
Soma Lounge



Delicacies from the onboard bakery



Mungri Mungram Restaurant



On the Brahmaputra at sunset

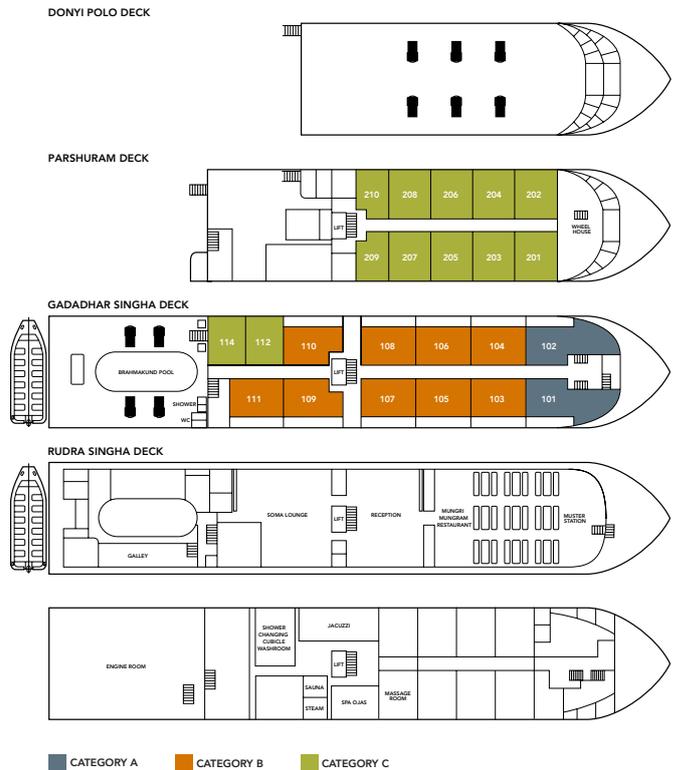
For your Comfort, Safety and Security

The MV Mahabaahu meets with health and safety measures implemented and enforced by the relevant governing bodies and a full safety briefing will be given upon embarkation of the ship. Crew members are always on hand to assist should you require and the vessel will be escorted by the local River authorities, offering additional support and assistance if at all required.



Brahmakund Pool

MV MAHABAABU DECK PLAN



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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
 Cover image: Elephant, Kaziranga National Park.