

PASSAGE through ASSAM

A journey along the mighty Brahmaputra River
aboard the RV Charaidew

21st November to 9th December 2018;
16th January to 3rd February & 13th February to 3rd March 2019



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 reside.



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 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 city tour of India's second largest city. 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 transfer to the RV Charaidew for embarkation. We will moor overnight in Guwahati.

Day 6 Guwahati to Ganesh Pahar. After breakfast, drive up Nilachal Hill to see the holy Kamakhya temple where, with its tantric rites and animal

sacrifice, the more squeamish may prefer to content themselves with the exterior. Visit the poignant Commonwealth War Graves before spending the remainder of the day cruising upstream.

Day 7 Cruising. Leaving the hills behind, we enjoy our first taste of the wilderness experience, sand banks like icebergs on either side. We may make a short stop to visit a bankside village, creating a sensation as we do. We moor for the night in a lunar landscape of sand islands, with hopefully the Himalayas in view and providing a contrasting backdrop in the distance.

Day 8 Tezpur. We cruise on to Tezpur, where 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 will take a walk in the village before returning to the ship.

Day 10 Kaziranga. Continue upstream, passing below a seemingly endless new bridge across the vast width of the riverbed, to moor at Steamer Ghat,



Great Hornbill



Hindu dance mask, Majuli Island



Shiva temple, Sibsagar



Sunset on the Brahmaputra River



Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros, Kaziranga National Park



Life along the Brahmaputra River near Vishnath



Tea-Picking



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata



Gee's Golden Langur Monkey, Guwahati

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. There are also good populations of tiger, wild elephant, sambar, swamp deer, hog deer, wild pig and many other species.

Day 11 Kaziranga. Disembark pre-dawn and drive to Kaziranga's Central Range for an early morning elephant safari, one of the best ways to get really close to the rhino and other animals. After breakfast at a lodge, we walk through terraced tea gardens and past a Karbi tribal village, then drive to a Mising tribal village, with their distinctive houses raised on piles. After lunch either take a jeep safari in the little visited Burapahar Range before returning to the boat or return directly to Steemer Ghat to visit a delightful nearby Assamese village and walk along a path alive with butterflies to a solitary temple on the river bank.

Day 12 Vishnath. This morning set sail upstream, with Kaziranga National Park on the right bank. At around midday we reach Vishnath, with an 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. The day 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 and 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 shall 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 one of the world's largest river islands 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 where we hope to catch a glimpse of some of the colourfully dressed tea pickers at work before we 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 S.E. 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 the ship 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 your 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 FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Cat	Cabin Description	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
1	Upper deck twin	£6195	£5895
2	Upper deck double for sole use	£7695	£7395

Price Includes: Economy class scheduled air travel, four nights at the Oberoi Grand Hotel (or similar) in Kolkata on full board basis, 13 nights aboard the RV Charaidew 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.

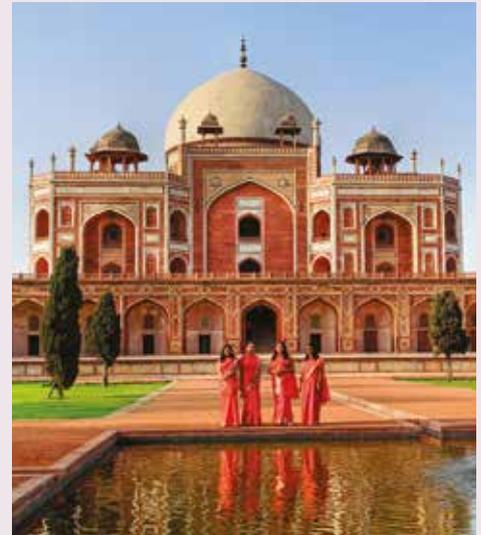
NB. Excursions, events ashore and ports are subject to change depending on entrance time allocations, venue schedules and river conditions. Elephant rides are subject to availability. Wildlife sightings are not guaranteed.

PRE-CRUISE RAJASTHAN EXTENSION

16th November to 25th November 2018; 11th January to 20th January
& 8th February to 17th February 2019



The Amber Fort, Jaipur



Mughal Emperor Humayun's tomb, New Delhi

Our exploration of India's largest state, Rajasthan, will take you back to a time when rulers displayed their power and wealth by erecting extraordinary monuments, buildings and temples so magnificent in stature that they remain, even today, some of the most beautiful and awe-inspiring ever constructed. The literal Hindu translation of the name 'Rajasthan' equates to 'land of the kings', and our carefully selected luxury hotels and array of sights and sounds on offer will indeed give you a taste of what it must have been like to be a Maharaja or Maharani purveying this most enchanting, colourful and vibrant region of India.

The Itinerary

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

Day 2 Delhi. Arrive in the morning and transfer to the five-star Sheraton hotel. After lunch at the hotel enjoy an afternoon city tour taking in the sights of India Gate, Qutub Minar, the tallest brick minaret in the world, and Humayun's Tomb, an architecturally stunning monument, UNESCO World Heritage Site and considered by many to have been the inspiration for the Taj Mahal.

Day 3 Delhi to Jaipur. Today we will continue our exploration of Delhi visiting Jama Masjid, one of the largest mosques in India, Gandhi's cremation site and we will enjoy a rickshaw ride through one of the oldest markets in India's capital city. Enjoying lunch en route, we will drive to Jaipur (approximately six hours), where we will check-in to the luxurious Jai Mahal Palace hotel for dinner and our two night stay.

Day 4 Jaipur. This morning we will head out by jeep to the magnificent Amber Fort which, being perched high on a hill, commands a dominant view over Amer town and Maota lake. The fort is known for its blend of Hindu and Rajput styles and, being over 400 years in age is steeped in history. We then visit Hawa Mahal, a 200-year-old iconic honeycomb structure of 953 windows built so that women could observe the street festivals below that they were not permitted to attend. After lunch at a local restaurant we will visit City Palace and then the Jaipur observatory, showcasing a collection of architectural, astronomical instruments. This evening witness an Aarti ceremony followed by dinner at our hotel.

Day 5 Jaipur to Jodhpur. We drive to Jodhpur today (approximately six hours) with a stop for lunch en-route. Following check-in to the

opulent Umaid Bhawan Palace this evening will be at leisure with dinner arranged at the hotel.

Day 6 Jodhpur. On our tour this morning we will explore Mehrangarh Fort, one of the largest forts in the whole of India, perching 400 feet above Jodhpur and housing a number of palaces with intricate carvings and lavish courtyards behind its thick walls. Following lunch at a local restaurant, we will enjoy a jeep safari to Bishnoi Village where we will be able to sample rural life in Rajasthan and see local people working in traditional textile industries.

Day 7 Jodhpur to Deogarh. Today we will drive to Deogarh (approximately four hours), a small town known for its luxurious resorts and strong associations to the ruling and royal Indian families. After lunch at our hotel, The Deogarh Mahal, we will take time in the afternoon to enjoy a walk through this historic place.

Day 8 Deogarh to Udaipur. After breakfast we will drive to Udaipur (approximately three hours) visiting Ranakpur Temple en route. This Jain Temple, built in the 15th century and taking approximately 50 years to build, is a wonder to behold, amongst its splendour being 1444 carved pillars, no two being the same. We will break for lunch in a local restaurant before arriving at the wonderful Taj Lake Palace for a two night stay.

Day 9 Udaipur. This morning's exploration commences with a visit to City Palace which was built over a period of 400 years and includes architectural contributions from several rulers of the Mewar dynasty. We will then enjoy a relaxing walk around a major garden complex within Udaipur whilst also taking time to see Jagdish Temple and the Heritage Transport Museum, housing an eccentric and fascinating display of automobiles and memorabilia. Following a traditional Rajasthani meal, we will enjoy a boat ride of Lake Pichola.

Day 10 Udaipur to Guwahati, Assam. After breakfast, we will transfer to Udaipur domestic airport for our indirect flight to Guwahati where we will embark the RV Charaidew and join day 5 of the main itinerary.

Prices per person Based on double occupancy

Twin: £2995 Single: £4795

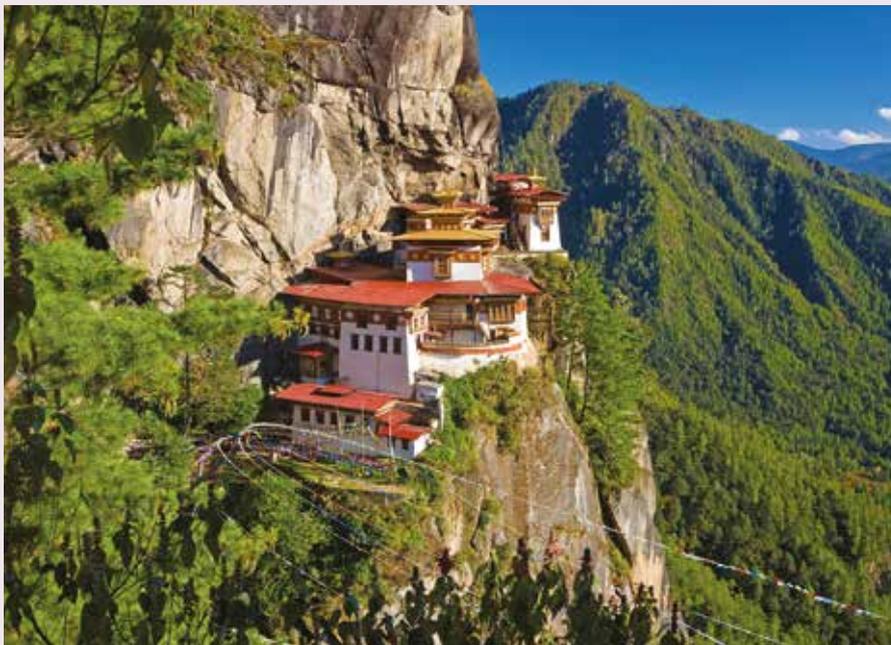
Price Includes: Eight nights hotel accommodation as described (or similar) on full board basis, flight from Udaipur to Guwahati, excursions as described, Tour Manager, local guides, gratuities.

Not Included: Travel insurance, camera fees.

NB. Minimum numbers are required for this extension to operate.

POST-CRUISE BHUTAN EXTENSION

9th December to 16th December 2018; 3rd February to 10th February
& 3rd March to 10th March 2019



Taksang Monastery - the 'Tiger's Nest'



Traditional Bhutanese masked dancers



National Memorial Chorten, 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 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: £2695 Single: £3995

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).



Twin Cabin



On Deck

RV CHARAIDEW

For our voyages along the Brahmaputra we have chartered the delightful RV Charaidew from our associates, the Assam Bengal Navigation company. The 38 metre twin-engine, steel hulled vessel accommodates just 24 guests and is well suited to the challenging conditions of the Brahmaputra River.

Your Cabin

The vessel has ten generous-sized comfortable twin-bedded and two double-bedded air conditioned cabins located on the Upper Deck. All cabins measure 4.5 metres by 3.4 metres and are en-suite with shower and WC. Bathrooms have shaver sockets, a hairdryer and a selection of boutique toiletries. All cabins feature individually controlled air conditioning facilities and under-bed storage for clothes and suitcases. Built-in wardrobes with hanging and shelf space also contain individually programmable electronic safes. Each cabin has a large window with sliding glass panes as well as fly screens, while two comfortable rattan armchairs are well-placed for admiring the passing scenery.

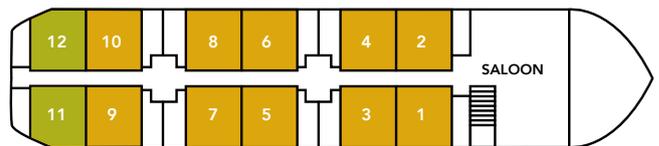
Your Space

Extensive use has been made of eco-friendly laminated panelling to furnish the vessel and most fabrics onboard have been hand-woven by tribal people in remote villages. There is a spacious saloon on the Upper Deck which overlooks the bow of the vessel and extends to an outside area through sliding glass doors. The saloon is well equipped with comfortable furniture crafted from natural material and local fabrics. There is also a bar area and well-stocked library with DVDs available to watch on the television facilities. The Sun Deck has ample seating in both shaded and outside areas in addition to an honesty bar for beer and soft drinks and a complimentary tea and coffee station. The vessel's dining room is located on the Main Deck. Whilst Wi-Fi is not available, a dongle can be rented for use on your own laptop.

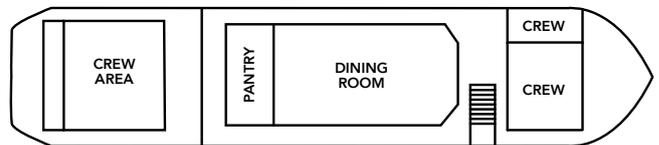


Lounge

UPPER DECK



MAIN DECK



■ CATEGORY 1 ■ CATEGORY 2

Your Dining

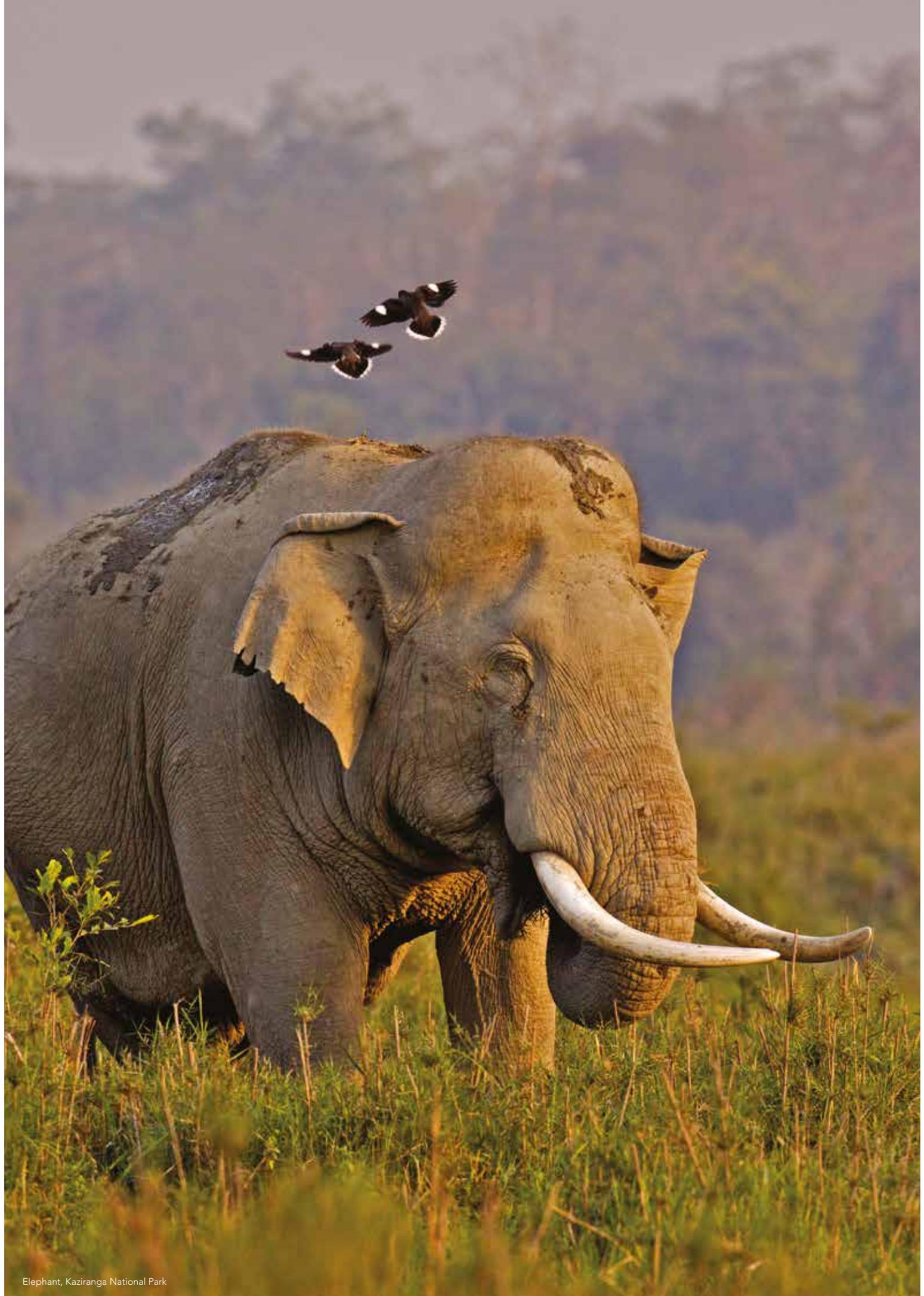
The single seating dining room is located on the Main Deck and provides a varied cuisine of both Western and Assamese dishes for lunch and dinner. Assamese food is generally prepared without chillies to accommodate for Western taste, but hotter versions are available on request. There will always be a vegetarian option available, and most dietary requirements can be catered for given previous notice to Noble Caledonia in writing. A good selection of local Indian beer, wines and spirits are available and a full range of wines, spirits and beer is available at an extra cost on board.

Life On Board

The atmosphere on board is informal and friendly. Each evening before dinner there will be an informal briefing in the saloon regarding the programme for the following day and what that entails whether it be a rickshaw ride, visiting and meeting with a rural village community, an elephant safari or excursion by mini-bus. Whilst sailing you can relax on the Sun Deck, taking in your surroundings while the onboard naturalist will be available to identify birds and wildlife. In the evenings, enjoy a drink in the saloon with fellow guests, perhaps enjoy a film, partake in a game of cards or browse the onboard library.

For your Comfort, Safety and Security

The RV Charaidew meets all statutory safety requirements, and a full safety briefing is given on boarding. You are welcome to visit the bridge and observe the master and pilot at work navigating their way through the shallows and sandbanks of the river. Often embarkation and disembarkation will be by means of the country boat which acts as the tender. Moving from ship to country boat to shore is secure and easy with plenty of railing, while ever-willing crew members are always on hand to assist.



Elephant, Kaziranga National Park



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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request. Itinerary subject to change.
Cover: Front - Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros, Kaziranga National Park; Back - Assam tea plantation

