



PRESS RELEASE

PANDAW ESCALATES EXPANSION IN INCREDIBLE INDIA

Pandaw boosts India offering, following high demand for the river cruise pioneer's 'The Lower Ganges' launch

Pandaw is set to ramp up its cruise offering in India, following the tremendous response to the news that the cruise pioneer will offer a Lower Ganges sailing from December 2018, as they position a Pandaw ship in the country for the first time.

Pandaw's rapid expansion plans for India include deploying two more ships to the region, adding three new itineraries or itinerary combinations and launching a range of new pre and post cruise tours of the mesmerising country.

"The response to our announcement in May that we will place our own ship, RV Orient Pandaw, on the Lower Ganges River from December 2018, has been truly phenomenal," said Pandaw founder, Paul Strachan. "The reaction from our customers and industry partners has been so positive that we have decided to significantly expand our offering in India."

"Pandaw will place two further river cruise ships in the country, sailing two new routes for us - the Upper Ganges, all the way to Varanasi, and the Brahmaputra, one of Asia's major rivers. We are also planning to take our sea-going vessel, the Andaman Explorer, to the region, where true to her name, she will sail amongst the Bay of Bengal's beautiful Andaman Islands."

"India is a fascinating country that offers the visitor a richness of experience that cannot be found anywhere else. This expansion of our India programme is a key objective for Pandaw and we will raise the bar in the region for cruising excellence."

In May, Pandaw announced the launch of 'The Lower Ganges' itinerary, which will sail from Kolkata to Farraka, and vice versa, onboard the stately *RV Orient Pandaw*, from 23 December 2018. This expedition will wend its way through the lush countryside of West Bengal, with its culturally significant towns crammed with temples and palaces.

Upper Ganges

Joining the programme is the 'Upper Ganges' itinerary, a 14-night voyage from Kolkata to Varanasi, the spiritual capital of India. Sailing from October 2019, the itinerary first echoes that of 'The Lower Ganges River', calling at Kalna, Matiari, Murshidabad, Jangipur and Farakka, before continuing towards the Upper Ganges, calling at Bateshwarsthan, Sultanganj, Mokama, Patna, Doriganj, Buxar, Ghazipur and finally, Varanasi. There are multiple stops and excursions daily, and passengers will revel in rich cultural experiences and the glorious scenery of the sacred Ganges. Prices start from \$4,671pp*, based on two people sharing a cabin.

Refresh for RV Katha Pandaw

To explore the Upper Ganges, Pandaw needs to position a ship that can suitably navigate the waters and landscape, and this requires a smaller vessel than chosen for the Lower Ganges. With 14 guest cabins, *RV Katha Pandaw* is the perfect ship for the 'Upper Ganges' itinerary, but first she will undergo a refurbishment. Once in India for the start of the new itinerary, guests will benefit from her new and refreshed facilities.

Brahmaputra

Pandaw has also announced that from October 2019, there will be a seven-night cruise on the Brahmaputra River, a major river which flows through China, India and Bangladesh. The downstream departure of the 'Brahmaputra' cruise will depart from Nimati Ghat, where guests will be welcomed onboard *RV Indochina Pandaw*, 30 cabin ship, which is being positioned in India for the first time.

The destinations visited include Sibsagar, Majuli, Auniati Satra, Bishwanath, Silghat, Kaziranga National Park and Guwahati. The 'Upstream' departure offers the same in reverse. This wildlife-rich region is a must for passengers keen to combine a cruise with the chance to spot tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, a myriad of birdlife and Ganges River dolphins. Prices start from US\$2,601*, based on two people sharing a cabin.

Pandaw has previously offered Brahmaputra sailings via a partner cruise operator, but this is the first time the cruise pioneer will place their own ship in the region, offering guests the full Pandaw experience.

The Andamans and Passage Across The Andaman Sea

Pandaw is incredibly excited to announce that their first sea-going vessel, *MY Andaman Explorer*, a 1960's motor yacht beautifully restored by Paul and Roser Strachan, will sail to and amongst the Andaman Islands. Glimpsed at from the sandy shores of southern Thailand, the Andaman Sea is an exquisite corner of the Indian Ocean, yet traversed only by the most intrepid of yachtsman. The archipelago offers an extraordinary ethnographic mix, incredible biodiversity and marine life, and many exquisite, uninhabited islands ringed by dazzling white sands.

From February 2020, and for the first time ever, Pandaw will be offering two ten-night expeditions across this sea, exploring both Burma's Mergui Archipelago and India's Andaman Islands. Both areas have until recently been closed by their respective governments and such an expedition would not have been imaginable.

The 10-night 'Passage Across The Andaman Sea', a true voyage of a lifetime, begins with a meet in Thailand, crosses the river border to Kawthaung in Burma, explores Coxcombe and Boulder Islands, then crosses into the Bay of Bengal. After arriving in Port Blair, the capital of the Andamans, the ports of call include South Andaman Island, Havelock and Lawrence Islands, Diglipur and Mayabunder. Passengers start their homeward or onward journey with a flight from Port Blair. Prices start from US\$4,800pp* plus port taxes, based on two people sharing a cabin.

Pandaw has also revealed plans for three seven-night expeditions exploring the Andaman archipelago, starting from Port Blair. In February & March 2020, 'The Andamans' will be a unique opportunity to explore the paradise waters around the islands, enjoy expeditions into the interior of the larger islands to view the rainforest rich in orchids, swim off white sandy beaches, snorkel in coral reefs and hike jungle trails. Prices start from US\$3,980pp plus port taxes, based on two people sharing a cabin.

Perfect in Partnership

All of Pandaw's new India itineraries are combinable, via a non-stop flight between Kolkata and Port Blair, which allows passengers with an appetite for an incredible adventure to experience both sea and river expeditions.

New Pre and Post-Cruise Tours

Pandaw has also launched a range of pre or post cruise tours of some of India's other key cultural highlights and 'bucket list' hotspots, which will be available for guests who book India cruise itineraries but wish to explore further. The new tours include:

- **Exploring Kolkata, 2 Nights** - Hotel stay and full-day city tour for guests to visit Kolkata's highlights before or after a Pandaw cruise.
- **India's Golden Triangle, 6 Nights** - Pre and post extension which combines a Pandaw cruise with a tour of the Golden Triangle for guests to experience the cultural gems of Delhi, Agra and Rajasthan.*
- **Delhi & Taj Mahal & Kolkata, 4 Nights Pre Tour / Delhi & Taj Mahal, 3 Nights Post Tour** - Four-night pre-cruise includes time in New Delhi and Agra, before passengers fly to Kolkata to join a cruise. Three-day, post-cruise extension finishes in Delhi.
- **Ancient Kingdom Of Bhutan & Kolkata Pre Tour, 6 Nights** - Direct flights between Kolkata and Paro make pre-cruise visit to the ancient Kingdom of Bhutan possible, before passengers fly back to Kolkata to join a cruise.
- **Maharajas' Express, 5 or 9 nights** - Winner of the World's Leading Luxury Train Award many times over, a journey on the Maharajas' Express is a sumptuous experience, offering a peek into the kaleidoscope that is India.

* All Pandaw prices include local transfers, excursions, entrance fees, guide services, all main meals, local drinks (soft drinks, water, tea, spirits & beer), crew gratuities and cycling equipment (watersports equipment available on Andaman Explorer). International flights are always additional. Prices quoted in US\$ and are chargeable at rate of exchange at time of booking in UK£.

PRESS INFORMATION

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About Pandaw

Pandaw is the pioneer of boutique river expeditions throughout Southeast Asia. The unique design of Pandaw's small but powerful shallow-draft ships, beautifully hand-crafted in teak and brass, allows them to sail through a tapestry of remote rivers and coastal routes in Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and China.

The original company, known as the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, founded in 1865, was acquired by Paul and Roser Strachan in 1995. Renamed Pandaw, following the discovery and acquisition of this last remaining Clyde-built steamer, the company has consistently cruised through new frontiers, pushing the boundaries beyond its original home of Burma. Pandaw brought its unique concept and style to expeditions along the Mekong River through Indochina in 2003, and pioneered the first routes on both the Red River in Northern Vietnam and the Upper Mekong through Laos into China in 2015.

Pandaw believes in giving back to society. Paul Strachan, Founder & CEO, established the Pandaw charity in 2008 to support education and healthcare efforts in Burma. The charity is entirely sponsored by donations from Pandaw passengers and a profit share from Pandaw's expeditions.

For reservations and more information, call 0208 326 5620 or go to www.pandaw.com.