



Pandaw Cruises

EXPEDITION No 4

THE LOWER GANGES RIVER

7 NIGHTS

There can be no river in the world as sacred as the Ganges River and an expedition on the Lower Ganges or Hooghly is one of the prettiest river journeys imaginable. The river wends its way through the lush countryside of West Bengal with its culturally significant towns crammed with temples and palaces. A rich and vibrant rural life abounds and there is never a dull moment as we sedately ply this pleasant waterway.

You will start or end our newly updated 7 night itinerary in either the former colonial capital of Kolkata or Farakka, location of the famous Farakka Barrage where the sacred Ganges flows into the Hoogly River. With one-way first class train ticket included between Farakka and Kolkata this is the perfect way to explore West Bengal in true Pandaw comfort and style.

From September 2024, Pandaw is happy to announce that our India expeditions will be all-inclusive, with complimentary local beers, spirits, mixers and soft drinks for all guests. Also included free of charge is select house wines during lunch and dinner only. Subject to availability.

Please note: We have a new 9 night Hooghly River expedition which will replace this itinerary from 2025 onwards. [Click here](#) to view our new itinerary.

YOUR SHIP - [RV KALAW PANDAW](#) / [RV KATHA PANDAW](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV KALAW PANDAW](#)

[MORE IMAGES OF THE RV KATHA PANDAW](#)

Cruise Price Includes: Transfer between meeting point Kolkata, Ship and drop off point Kolkata, 1st class express train from Kolkata to Farakka (24/25 Downstream), entrance fees, guide services (English language), gratuities to crew, main meals, local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes plus our India complimentary drinks package

Cruise Price Excludes: Flights, port dues (if levied), laundry, all visa costs, fuel surcharges (see terms and conditions), all beverages except local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes and tips to tour guides, local guides, bus drivers, boat operators and cyclo drivers.

Weather Condition Warning

River cruising on the Lower and Upper Ganges can be severely affected by fog during the months of December and January. This may impact the sailing schedules and the planned excursions. While every effort will be made to make up time and include all activities this is not always possible. Similarly temperatures can drop significantly overnight and in the early mornings, though during the day warmer temperatures can be expected. Winter temperatures can be below average with many destinations in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh experiencing long spells of cold.

UPSTREAM ITINERARY

2024-25 Departures

DAY 1

KOLKATA - BARRACKPORE

Transfer from your hotel or airport in Kolkata to embark and sail at noon. Sail past the old Danish colony of Serampore to Barrackpore to land and take a walk through the cantonment - past the Semaphore Tower, Government House, the Temple of Fame and Flagstaff House.

[MORE ABOUT KOLKATA](#)

DAY 2

CHANDENAGORE

Continue sailing upstream to Chandernagore, a French possession until 1950. Visit the 18th century church and Dupleix's House, erstwhile Governor-General of French India.

DAY 3**KALNA**

After breakfast sail upstream and land at the country town of Kalna and take rickshaws to see a group of some of Bengal's most attractive terracotta temples, as well as the unique Shiva temple with concentric rings made up of 108 lesser shrines. Sail on through the night to a mooring near Matiari.

[MORE ABOUT KALNA](#)

DAY 4**MAYAPUR**

Explore the village of Mayapur, the headquarters of the ISKCON movement with a new temple comparable in size to the Vatican and largely funded by Alfred B. Ford, the great grandson of car maker Henry Ford. Meet Krishna followers and walk through the pilgrims' bazaar.

[MORE ABOUT MAYAPUR](#)

DAY 5**MATIARI**

Visit the brass-working village of Matiari, a charming riverside village. Interact with the locals of Matiari and witness the whole primitive process of beating out brass water pots and other vessels. Continue cruising upstream and time permitting visit the battlefield of Plassey where, in 1757, Robert Clive, the Commander-in-Chief of British India, defeated Siraj-ud-Daulah, the last independent Nawab of Bengal, to change the course of Indian history. Moor close to Murshidabad for the night.

DAY 6**MURSHIDABAD**

This morning, walk to the Khushbagh, a peaceful Mughal-style garden that encloses the tombs of Siraj-ud-Daulah – the last independent Nawab of Bengal – and his family. Continue a little way upstream to where the great Hazarduari Palace dominates the waterfront. Built by an English architect in 1837, the palace hosts an extensive collection of pictures, china, weapons and other objects. Carry on to visit the great Katra Mosque and Nashipara Palace before driving out to see the Katgola Palace. Built in classical Georgian style by rich local merchants, Katgola Palace represents the other side of the coin of the 'White Mughal' period when English and Indian cultures came close to fusion. Moor overnight on the riverbank across from town.

[MORE ABOUT MURSHIDABAD](#)

DAY 7**AJIMGANJ - FARAKKA**

Continue up the Hoogly which transforms into a charming waterway twisting and turning between banks lined with mustard fields and mango orchards. Morning walk through the fields of the delightfully sleepy village of Baranagar to visit its three gorgeous miniature terracotta temples. This is rural India at its most idyllic. Visit the Jain temples at Azimganj before continuing on to the Farakka barrage.

DAY 8**DISEMBARK FARAKKA**

After breakfast, disembark and receive a group transfer to your hotel or the train station in Farakka for your train journey back to Kolkata.

STATEROOM

The Pandaw stateroom is the most celebrated feature of our ships.

Finished in brass and teak, the main and upper deck rooms are very spacious at 168 square feet (15.6 sqm). Much loved by all our passengers we have ensured that with each ship we build the stateroom remains the same. Our cabins do not have mini-bars, satellite TV's, internet or phones. Pandaw passengers usually want to escape from the tiresome features found in international business hotels.

Many passengers describe life on board a Pandaw more like being a guest on a private motor yacht than a cruise ship. Where we go and what we see is intrepid in extreme. What you come back to is a floating base of discreet comfort, caring service and all the good things one looks for in life. All our cabins have the same size and Pandaw signature amenities. Choose from Main Deck, Upper Deck or Premium Upper Deck (Mekong only).

Special to Your Stateroom

- Fruit and flowers on arrival
- Kimonos and slippers
- Spa-branded amenities
- Unlimited mineral water

PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

ARRIVAL PARO

Welcome to Bhutan! Upon arrival you will be met by your local guide and offered a Tashi Khaddar – a traditional way to greet guests to Bhutan. We then drive to Thimpu, the capital city of Bhutan through the scenic Paro Valley, around 4 hours total. Upon arrival to Thimpu, check into your hotel before beginning your Bhutan adventure with a visit to the National Memorial Chorten. This prominent landmark serves as an ideal spot for engaging with locals who flock here to circumambulate the chorten, spin the large red prayer wheels, and offer their prayers at a small shrine within the complex. Before heading back to your hotel, take a leisurely stroll around Thimpu's main street and markets soaking in the vibrant atmosphere.

DAY 2

THIMPU

Following breakfast, make a brief drive north of the town to reach Buddha Dordenma, situated atop a hill within the serene Kuenselphodrang Nature Park. This remarkable statue brings to life an ancient prophecy originating from the 8th century A.D., which was unearthed by Terton Pema Lingpa, a discoverer of religious treasures. It is believed that this statue emits an aura of tranquillity and joy, extending its influence to the entire world. Afterwards we take a short hike to Changangkha Lhakhang, an easy walk of around 1.5 hours where you will be greeted by a magnificent sight of hundreds of prayer flags waving in the breeze, creating a colourful and spiritual welcome. After visiting the temple at the end of the hike, we head towards The Postal Museum to see Bhutan's collection of rare and unique stamps. After lunch we continue on the highlights tour of Thimpu with visits to the Textile Museum, Centenary Farmers Market and Zilkha Nunnery before ending the day at Trashichhoedzong, often referred to as the 'fortress of the glorious religion.' This remarkable edifice serves as the heart of both government and religion in Bhutan, housing the monarch's throne room and serving as the seat of the Je Khenpo, or Chief Abbot. Return to your hotel to unwind for the evening.

DAY 3

THIMPU - PUNAKHA

Following breakfast, we will journey up to the picturesque Dochu-la pass, standing at an elevation of 3,088 meters. Here, we'll pause briefly to relish the panoramic views and appreciate the adorned chorten, mani wall, and fluttering prayer flags that adorn this high-altitude vantage point. We will witness a traditional prayer flag hoisting ceremony at Dochula before continuing our journey towards Punakha.

After a delightful lunch, we will visit the majestic Punakha Dzong, often referred to as the 'Palace of Great Happiness.' Following the dzong visit, we'll embark on a short excursion to Chimi Lhakhang, perched on a hillock in the heart of the valley and widely known as the "temple of fertility." It's believed that couples seeking to conceive a child can receive blessings here, often resulting in the fulfilment of their wish. The trail takes you across rice fields to the charming settlement of Pana, which translates to 'field.' Exploring the village near the temple offers unique glimpses into the daily life and traditions of the local villagers.

In the evening, enjoy a leisurely stroll in and around Punakha town.

DAY 4

PHUNAKA – PARO

After breakfast drive along the scenic highway to Paro before checking into your hotel. In the afternoon we will visit Ta Dzong, initially constructed as a watchtower and now housing the National Museum. The museum boasts an extensive collection that includes antique thangka paintings, textiles, weaponry and armor, household artifacts, and a diverse assortment of natural and historical treasures. The Ta Dzong visit will be immediately followed by a short walk along the trail leading to Rinpung Dzong, also known as Paro Dzong, which translates to the "fortress of the heap of jewels." This dzong boasts a long and captivating history. Along the wooden galleries that line the inner courtyard, you'll find exquisite wall paintings depicting Buddhist tales, such as the four friends, the old man of long life, the wheel of life, scenes from the life of Milarepa, Mount Sumeru, and cosmic mandalas.

In the evening, we'll head to Dema Farmhouse for a delightful dinner. At the farmhouse, you'll have the opportunity to experience Bhutan's national sport, archery, and immerse yourself in the local rural culture. Bhutanese farmhouses are renowned for their vibrant colors, intricate decorations, and their traditional construction methods, which eschew the use of a single nail. The majority of Bhutan's population still maintains a way of life that has endured for centuries, residing in modest, secluded farms and hamlets, enveloped by terraced fields of rice, maize, and buckwheat.

DAY 5

TAKTSANG MONESTARY

Drive to Satsam Chorten for a soft hike to Taktsang Monastery, also known as Tiger's Nest. The monastery is perched on a rocky ledge with a sheer drop of nearly 800m, overlooking the Paro Valley and the river. Recognized as one of the most hallowed places, it was visited by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646 and is a must-visit for all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime. The hike takes 4-5 hours round trip. While en route back to Paro town, make a stop at the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the 108 temples constructed in the Himalayas by Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo. The establishment of this temple marks the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.

This evening, take part in a traditional blessing & butter lamp ceremony at a village monastery. This is a sacred and deeply spiritual practice that holds significant importance in the country's Buddhist culture. Such ceremonies are often conducted in monasteries, temples, and sacred sites, attracting devotees seeking blessings, protection, and spiritual guidance. During the blessing ceremony, Buddhist monks, adorned in their vibrant robes, recite powerful prayers and mantras, invoking the blessings of Buddha and other enlightened beings. While lighting of butter lamps is a symbolic act representing the illumination of wisdom and dispelling darkness or ignorance.

DAY 6

PARO - KOLKATA

After breakfast transfer Paro International Airport for your flight to Kolkata. Free time in the evening to relax.

DAY 7

DEPARTURE

After breakfast, transfer to your ship.



DISCOVER

Ancient Kingdom of Bhutan & Kolkata Pre Tour 6 Nights

Combine your Pandaw river expedition with a visit to the ancient Kingdom of Bhutan, one of the world's most intriguing countries. Discover Bhutan's famous cliff-top monasteries, soaring mountain peaks and unique way of life.

This is a private tour.

Medium fitness is required for a soft hike on day 5.

Rates include:

Bhutan tourism visa, Bhutan Sustainable Development Tax, Six nights accommodation at advertised hotels (or similar based on availability), including breakfast and meals as advertised, excursion and entrance fees as per itinerary, one flight Paro – Kolkata including check-in luggage of 20kg,

entrance fees and taxes. Transportation by 7 seat Hyundai Sante Fe or similar

Note

- Please advice arrival/departure flight details in order to arrange the transfer accordingly
- The Bhutan visa is included in the price, please send us your passport scan for the application
- If you are staying in India before and after Bhutan then a multiple entry visa is required for India
- Check in time 14.00 / Check out time 11.00

* Please note that your hotel will be confirmed after we have received your deposit payment. Prices are subject to change. Hotel subject to availability. We will try to offer you an alternate accommodation if the requested hotel would not be available.

Passport Information

Please ensure you send Pandaw a copy of your passport at least 50 days prior to your travel date. Your passport must be:

- Ensure that it is the same passport that was used for the Bhutan visa application
- The passport validity can't be less than six months
- All passport will require at least 2 blank pages in their passport for Bhutan entry and exit stamp

PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

KOLKATA

Sbagata and welcome to Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. You will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel where the rest of the day is at leisure.

DAY 2

KOLKATA

Immerse yourself in city life with an early morning (pre-breakfast) visit to the vibrant flower market, one of Asia's largest. Wind through the mountains of marigolds and jasmine and watch as people buy flowers for temple offerings and prayers. Stroll down to the river to witness a traditional Akhara (subject to timing). Step inside and watch men of all ages practice a traditional form of wrestling known as kushti or pehlwani. We return to the hotel for your breakfast before continuing the tour of Kolkata.

Follow in the footsteps of the British Raj with a walking tour of colonial Kolkata. See Dalhousie Square, the prominent Writers' Building the former HQ of the East India Company, and step inside St John's Church with its painting of The Last Supper. Experience the serenity of the Victoria Memorial with a stroll through the splendid gardens. Admire the domed white marble hall built in memory of Queen Victoria and discover Victorian memorabilia and British Raj-era paintings. We take lunch in a local restaurant before enjoying the rest of the afternoon at leisure.

DAY 3

KOLKATA

Following a leisurely breakfast, transfer to your Pandaw for embarkation.



DISCOVER

Kolkata Pre Tour 2 Nights

Experience Indian life at full pace in Kolkata, this colourful and cultural city, perhaps India's most soulful city and certainly the most over looked. Discover the legacy of British Raj, stroll through India's largest flower market and sample some of the city's cuisine after your Pandaw adventure.

Rates include:

2 nights accommodation, arrival transfer with assistance, one full day exclusive city tour with English speaking guide and entry fees (Central Kolkata and walking tour or North Kolkata and Modern Art), mineral water with transfers and during sightseeing, Lunch at local restaurant, soft drinks / mineral water / tea or coffee.

PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

ARRIVAL NEW DELHI

Welcome to India! Transfer from airport to your hotel and enjoy the rest of your day at leisure.

Rest of day at leisure.

DAY 2

CITY TOUR OF DELHI

We start our exploration in India with a Heritage Walk around Delhi with a twist. The tour will be guided by former street children who have overcome adversity thanks to the work of Salaam Baalak Trust. We visit India's largest Mosque 'Jama Masjid' built in 1644 AD showcasing finest Islamic style of architecture and explore real life of Old Delhi through maze like streets of the iconic Ancient Bazaar 'Chandni Chowk' and Asia's largest Spice Market before saying goodbye to our morning guides from the Salaam Baalak Trust.

In the afternoon, we experience colonial-era Delhi at Lutyens Delhi including the Mahatma Gandhi Museum - Birla House and the Bangla Sahib Gurudwara temple. At the temple we also volunteer inside its Holy Community Kitchen that daily feeds over 10,000 devotees, pilgrims and homeless. We then visit the ceremonial boulevard Raj Path to witness Sir Edwin Lutyens' finest works from 1920's British Raj Era including colonial government buildings, India Gate, President House and Parliament House. We end the day at Connaught Place named after the Duke of Connaught and surrounds the central park of Delhi.

DAY 3

AGRA

Drive to Agra, the Mughal Era city that is home to the wonder of the world Taj Mahal! After check-in at the hotel, continue with a Heritage Walk inside India's finest Mughal fortress The Red Fort of Agra, an acclaimed UNESCO heritage site and the imperial residence of 16th century rulers of the Mughal Dynasty. In late afternoon we visit Mehtab Bagh or moonlit garden where some of the best views of the Taj Mahal can be found without the crowds. Built in the traditional Charbagh style of Mughal gardens by Emperor Babur, the first emperor of the Mughal dynasty.

DAY 4

TAJ MAHAL - JAIPUR

Start the day with a Sunrise Grand Tour of the Taj Mahal, which was built in 1630 by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal who died giving birth to their 14th child. Combining Islamic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish and Indian design elements, it's an awe-inspiring structure of elegant domes and white marble, which changes colour along with the light – pink at sunrise, pearly white in the afternoon and silver-gold in the full moon. Return to the hotel for breakfast before checking out.

Continue the jewel of India's crown, the royal heritage state of Rajasthan, and arrive in its pink coloured capital city Jaipur. Enroute visit spectacular Underground Step-wells Chand Baori that lie hidden deep in the village of Abhaneri. This 10th century built zigzagged stepwell is a geometric wonder where Royals used to picnic, and today a popular spot thanks to the film Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. Check-in at your hotel in Jaipur.

DAY 5

JAIPUR

We begin the day early with a visit to the flower market before breakfast. Travel by electric tuk tuk operated by another local NGO The Pink City Rickshaw Company who provide employment and training to women from low-income households in Jaipur.

After breakfast at the hotel we visit some of the most famous sport in Jaipur, including Jaipur City Palace, Palace of Winds, Jantar Mantar Observatory, Amer fort plus spend some time roaming the local bazar. Following a full day of adventure, return to your hotel and enjoy the evening at leisure.

DAY 6

JAIPUR - DEPARTURE

Check out of your hotel and transfer for your domestic flight to your departure point. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel and enjoy the rest of the evening at your leisure before you join your expedition in the morning.

DAY 7

PANDAW EMBARKATION

Check out of your hotel and transfer for your domestic flight to your departure point. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel and enjoy the rest of the evening at your leisure before you join your expedition in the morning.



DISCOVER

The Golden Triangle - 6 night Pre Tour

Explore India's 'Golden Triangle,' three of the most iconic cities in India on this curated 6-night extension tour to your Pandaw Expedition. Taking in the delights of India's capital, New Delhi, the unmissable Taj Mahal at Agra, and the pink city of Jaipur, this is the perfect tour to complement a Ganges or Brahmaputra river expedition and complete your grand tour of India.

Rates include:

Six nights accommodation at advertised hotels (or similar), including breakfast, excursion and entrance fees as per itinerary, one domestic flight including 20kg check-in luggage.

Note

- Please advise arrival/departure flight details in order to arrange the transfer accordingly
- Apply for Indian visa before departure
- Check in time 14.00 / Check out time 11.00

* Please note that your hotel will be confirmed after we have received your deposit payment. Prices are subject to change. Hotel subject to availability. We will try to offer you an alternate accommodation if the requested hotel would not be available.

River Conditions Warning!

The rivers you will sail on are subject to seasonal rises and falls of water level, in some places as much as 30 metres. Water levels can change dramatically overnight and a sudden rise can impede our progress upstream considerably and even prevent us from passing under certain bridges. A sudden fall can result in our being unable to get into certain places or go as far upstream as we would hope. Groundings on sandbars are not infrequent and are part of the excitement of any Pandaw expedition. Published itineraries are indicational only and subject to sudden change. In such events alternative itineraries will be provided and we do our best to ensure that if a stop is missed we make up for it with another stop. Passengers are thus forewarned and expected to be flexible and patient. River cruising in Asia can be a dramatic and adventurous experience - not like cruising the controlled waterways of Europe or America. Note also that we operate in areas with little or no developed infrastructure and subject to the strictures of local officialdom. Be prepared for this and it is all more the fun!

Useful Links

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[General Information & Life on Board](#)

[Visa Information](#)