



Pandaw River Expeditions

EXPEDITION No 2

THE UPPER GANGES RIVER

14 NIGHTS

In 2019 we inaugurated an 'all Ganges' voyage of one thousand miles from Kolkata to Varanasi. Due to the challenges of navigation and the obstruction of numerous pontoon bridges it has been decided to sail as far as Patna and then overland to Varanasi.

The sailing does though cover the best of the Ganges from the colonial splendours of Kolkotta, through the enchanting rural arcadia of West Bengal along the Hoogly and the great expanse of the Ganga itself with its pristine bird and wildlife and cultural treasures dotted along the banks. Though in the days of the British Raj paddle steamers plied this route on a regular basis, with the advent of the railways in India river navigation was abandoned and the rivers were allowed to silt up. Now thanks to a multi-million dollar investment from the Indian Government channels have been dredged and buoyed and hi tech GPS based aids installed enabling seasonal navigation.

Varanasi, said to be the oldest inhabited city on the planet is the most sacred city of Hinduism and a place of overwhelming beauty at the same time poignantly moving with its cremation ghats. Varanasi is surely the goal of any 'passage to India' and at the other end of the holy river stands Kolkata, in all its Raj-like magnificence. Between lies several of the most important Buddhist sites including Sarnath, Nalanda and Bodh Gaya and cities great and small and between urban centres and great pilgrim sites are expanses of empty river teeming with bird life, not to mention the Gangeatic dolphin.

No vessel could be more appropriate for a voyage on 'All the Ganges' than our

ultra shallow draft Pandaw K class ships that can reach as far as Patna from where passengers will travel overland to Gaya for a night and then on to Varanasi for two nights making this sailing eleven nights on board and three nights in best available hotels.

Important Notice:

The cruise schedule includes the latest information regarding your program, but last minute adjustments may occur. The schedule may shift due to the weather or to take advantage of unexpected opportunities. The exact time for each activity will be announced or posted by the onboard tour staff.

Please Note:

This itinerary passes through the state of Bihar. In this state it is illegal to serve any drinks containing alcohol. For this reason we will not be able to serve alcohol onboard the ship while in the state of Bihar. This will affect the Upstream itinerary from day 6 until the afternoon of day 12 and for the Downstream itinerary from day 3 until the afternoon of day 9.



Please Note due to local regulations, Pandaw has hired a local management company to run the day-to-day operations of our ships in India. Indus Expeditions operate under the management of Pandaw to deliver our expeditions and maintain our Pandaw owned vessels. Whilst Indus Expeditions make every effort to offer the highest levels of guest care and have been provided with full training and support from Pandaw and our local management, it should be noted that given the chaotic but often charming way in which India works there may remain some local quirks and differences in service from what you will find in South-East Asia!

YOUR SHIP - [RV KATHA PANDAW](#)

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

Cruise Price Includes: Transfer to/from Ship, entrance fees, guide services (English language), gratuities to crew, main meals, local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes.

Price Excludes: International flights, laundry, all visa costs, fuel surcharges (see terms and conditions), all beverages except local mineral water, jugged coffee, teas & tisanes, tipping for guide and drivers.

Please Note:

- Entry to the Bihar School of Yoga is subject to approval and may not always be possible.
- Lunch and dinner taken at local restaurants in Nalanda and Bodh Gaya will be vegetarian only given the nature of these pilgrim destinations.
- Laundry service is only applicable whilst onboard the ship and drinks taken at local restaurants will be chargeable directly with the venue.
- Due to the inclusion of flights in the revised itinerary, please provide copies of all travelling guest's passports to assist with bookings.
- We suggest to change money at a bank at the international airport before exiting (currently there is shortage of new money bills in India).

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 during 2019/2020 were well below average with many destinations in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh experiencing long spells of cold, the most extreme and severe since 1997.

DOWNSTREAM ITINERARY

DAY 1

VARANASI

Varanasi, the oldest and holiest city of India established in the 11th century BC and today with over 2,000 living temples. Transfer from the meeting point to Sarnath and the Deer Park where the Lord Buddha gave his first sermon with its archaeological museum. Check-in to your hotel with time to freshen up before an evening cruise along the sacred river to witness the Aarti ritual. Enjoy a dinner at The Great Kebab Factory, a contemporary and stylish Indian restaurant specialising in delectable kebabs.

Overnight in the Taj Varanasi or similar

[MORE ABOUT VARANASI](#)

DAY 2

VARANASI

Take a sunrise boat cruise past the bathing ghats and observe the people as they come to the river to perform their morning prayers and rituals. Following breakfast explore the Old City on a walking tour through the ancient by-lanes and discover the colourful and chaotic life that exists. Return to the hotel and enjoy some time to relax before a village walk. Later enjoy a musical performance comprising a sitar and tabla.

Overnight in the Taj Varanasi or similar

DAY 3**BODH GAYA**

Board a flight to Bodh Gaya, a UNESCO World Heritage Site arranged around the Maha Bodhi temple where the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment in the 5th century BC. Spend time exploring this global centre of pilgrimage for Buddhists of all denominations and admire the many monasteries built in various national styles – Tibetan, Burmese, Thai, Japanese, etc.

Overnight in Oaks Bodh Gaya or similar

DAY 4**PATNA - EMBARK SHIP**

Drive to the archaeological site of Nalanda, the great 5th century Buddhist university. Discover the monumental red brick walls and stupas standing on the site of what was the longest running university in Indian history. Immerse yourself in the tranquil surrounds of this UNESCO World Heritage Site which is thought to have accommodated over 10,000 students and hosted Buddha Siddhartha himself. Continue your journey and embark your Pandaw ship.

[MORE ABOUT PATNA](#)

DAY 5**BARH**

Explore Barh, a town famous for Hindu ritual cremation at Urmanath and the Alakhnath Temple.

DAY 6**MOKAMA**

Stop at Mokama, once home to Jim Corbett the naturalist and protector of the Indian tigers. Surrounded by farmlands, Mokama has the second highest production of lentils in the country. Learn about the freedom fighters from Mokama such as Lalldin Saheb, whose during the freedom struggle was sentenced to jail during the British rule.

DAY 7**MUNGER**

Munger is now a large and industrialised city but has an interesting history. In 1762, Mir Qasim, the Nawab of Bengal, shifted his capital from Murshidabad to Munger, and established a firearms manufacturing centre here. Explore the Mughal fort, East India Company cemetery and step inside the Bihar School of Yoga founded in 1964 by Satyananda Saraswati. One of the leading yoga schools in the country. The institution has developed yogic techniques through a synthesis of traditional yogic, vedantic and tantric practices and contemporary health science.

DAY 8**SULTANGANJ**

Continue to Jahanigra Island, a place of pilgrimage with many rock carvings in high relief dating from the eighth century depicting aspects of Siva and Vishnu. In the evening moor off Sultanganj, with its pair of great granite rocks, one crowned with a mosque and the other a small temple dating from the 16th century.

DAY 9**BATESHWARSTHAN**

Sailing along this stretch of the river provides an opportunity to spot the rare Gangeatic dolphins. Land at Bhaglapur, a centre of silk production, and visit the 18th century mansion of the Collector, Augustus Cleveland. Passing the confluence of the Kosi river that flows down from Nepal, moor at the pretty town of Bateshwarsthan to uncover the 8th century Buddhist site of Vikramshila, one of the two most important centres of learning in India during the Pala Empire, along with Nalanda.

DAY 10**FARAKKA**

Enter a section of river rich in bird life, before stopping at Samtaghat, otherwise known as Raj Mahal. Cross from the Lower Ganges or Hooghly River to the Ganges itself through the Farraka canal and lock, that was constructed 1963-75. Passing into the great river the great Farraka barrage will be visible just downstream. This effectively dams the Ganges and strategically controls the flow of water into neighbouring Bangladesh.

DAY 11**MURSHIDABAD**

Continue cruising towards Murshidabad to where the great Hazarduari Palace dominates the waterfront. Explore the city, a hidden architectural gem along the river with dramatic, whitewashed, colonial-era structures including Katra Mosque and Katgola palaces.

[MORE ABOUT MURSHIDABAD](#)

DAY 12**KHUSHBAGH**

Take a late afternoon 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. Later, cruise on past 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.

DAY 13**MAYAPUR**

Set off to discover the brass-working village of Matiari. Interact with the local artisans learn how these skilled craftsmen all specialise in a different process – from beating the metal, to etching the designs. Witness the whole process involved to create brass water pots, trays and other vessels. Continue sailing towards Mayapur to explore the vast new ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) temple which dominates the skyline. As the headquarters of ISKCON or the Hare Krishna movement, the temple receives over a million singing and dancing devotees a year from around the world.

[MORE ABOUT MAYAPUR](#)

DAY 14**KOLKATA**

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. On the way back to the ship explore the colourful local market full of fruit sellers and fish mongers. Sail past the Portuguese settlement of Bandel and the old Dutch settlement of Chinsura before arriving at Chandernagore, a French possession until 1950. Stroll along the riverside promenade, visit the 18th century church and Dupleix's House, the erstwhile Governor-General of French India. Moor overnight near Kolkata.

[MORE ABOUT KOLKATA](#)

DAY 15

KOLKATA - DISEMBARK SHIP

After an early breakfast receive a group transfer from the port in Kolkata to the disembarkation point hotel for your onward journey.

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

VARANASI

Namaste and welcome to Varanasi, one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world and the spiritual capital of India. From the rituals performed on the banks of the River Ganges to the narrow alleyways and local vendors in the Old City, Varanasi, (or Benares or Kashi as it is also known) promises an unforgettable experience. An important city for both Hindus and Buddhists, discover the significance to both these religions during your time in the city. Receive a warm Pandaw welcome and transfer privately to your hotel.

Spend the rest of the day easing into your accommodation, or step outside and explore the surrounding area.

Meals: none

Accommodation: Taj Ganges / Deluxe Room

DAY 2

VARANASI

Unpeel the layers of this amazing city with a choice of experiences that suit your interests.

Varanasi History

Following breakfast, you will be driven to the Ramnagar Fort, which was built in 1750 by the king of Benares Kashi Naresh Raja Balwant Singh, Fort.

Located on the eastern bank of the River Ganges, the fort was built in Mughal style and houses a museum and temple. The current king still resides in part of the fort. Later visit Banaras Hindu University (BHU), which was the

brainchild of the Madan Mohan Malaviya was a politician and two-time president of the Indian National Congress, who has a significant role in India's independence. The campus has sprawling gardens and libraries. Later return to your hotel where the remainder of the day is at leisure.

Visit an Ashram

Varanasi being a religious city, many Widow Houses have been constructed by philanthropists, NGOs and the government to give shelter to older widows. The Widow Ashram is one such place that provides widow's shelter before they die as it is believed that one who dies in Varanasi gets salvation. Spend time in the ashram and have an opportunity to interact and will understand their life.

Street Food Walk

Street food depicts the true essence of a city's culture and cuisine, for their distinct flavours and complicated recipes. Walk through the by lanes to some of the best local food places tasting some of the more unusual snacks available in the city including Malaiyo, Tamatar Chaat, Kalakand, Malai Toast, Maalpuas, Gol-Gappa, Banarasi Paan and much more!

Weaver's Colony

Varanasi is a famous centre for weaving and a visit to the weaver's colony is a unique opportunity to meet the artisans at work. Walk through the colony to know about the life of the weavers and the process of hand-weaving of the famous silk brocades and Banarasi sari. Step inside a number of private residences of the weavers and get an opportunity to interact with them.

Return to your hotel where the afternoon is at leisure. You may choose to indulge in a relaxing spa treatment or take a tuk tuk to the river's edge and sit down and soak in the atmosphere.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Taj Ganges / Deluxe Room

DAY 3

VARANASI

Following breakfast, head to the meeting point hotel to complete registration, meet your guide and begin your Pandaw adventure.

Meals: Breakfast



DISCOVER

Varanasi Pre Tour 2 Nights

Gain a deeper appreciation of Varanasi, the spiritual capital of India before your Pandaw cruise. From the rituals performed on the banks of the River Ganges to the narrow alleyways and local vendors in the Old City, Varanasi, (or Benares or Kashi as it is also known) promises an unforgettable experience.

Rates include:

2 nights accommodation, 2 buffet breakfasts, one way transfer by air-conditioned Innova, visit to the Ramnagar Fort with English speaking guide is included (however you can change with any of the following options: food walk (duration 3 hrs), walking tour to the Widow Ashram (duration 3 hrs),

visit to the weaver's colony (duration 3 hrs)), bottled water during sightseeing and excursions, monument entrance fees, all currently applicable taxes

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

KOLKATA - NEW DELHI

Transfer to Kolkata airport for your domestic flight to New Delhi. After arrival, transfer to your hotel. Rest of day at leisure.

Meals: none.

DAY 2

CITY TOUR OF DELHI

Today's tour includes heritage rich Old and New Delhi including a Heritage Walk inside India's largest Mosque 'Jama Masjid' built in 1644 AD showcasing finest Islamic style of architecture. Explore real life of Old Delhi through maze like streets of the iconic Ancient Bazaar 'Chandni Chowk' and Asia's largest Spice Market. Experience colonial-era at 'Lutyens Delhi' including Mahatma Gandhi Museum 'Birla House', Temple 'Bangla Sahib Gurudwara' and volunteer inside its holy Community Kitchen that daily feeds over 10,000 devotees, pilgrims and homeless. Visit Ceremonial Boulevard 'Raj Path' to witness 'Sir Edwin Lutyens' finest works from 1920's British Raj Era including Colonial Government Buildings, India Gate, President and Parliament House from outside. Journey to the City Centre Market 'Connaught Place' named after the 'Duke of Connaught' and surrounds the central park of Delhi.

Transfer back to your hotel.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.

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'. If time permits, visit marble workshops renowned for finest Mughal artwork. Enjoy traditional Indian Chai Tea prepared and served on-spot along with Indian delights.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.

DAY 4

AGRA - 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.

Continue the jewel of India's crown, the royal heritage state of Rajasthan, and arrive in its pink colored 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 stepwells is a geometric wonder where Royals used to picnic, and today a popular spot through the film 'Best Exotic Marigold Hotel'. Check-in at your hotel in Jaipur.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.

DAY 5

JAIPUR

Begin the day with a morning ceremony of Indian turbans and stoles. Explore the uphill located Amber Fortress, a “must see” of Jaipur. Built in the 16th century by Rajput commander ‘Raja Man Singh I’, the fortress offers magnificent hilltop views with an intricate Mirror Palace and fine blends of Hindu- Rajasthani architecture. Next a photo-stop outside the Water Palace ‘Jal Mahal’ located in the center of ‘Man Sagar Lake’ housing various migratory birds. Arrive in the heart of the Old City to visit the Astronomical Observatory ‘Jantar Mantar’. Visit the residence of the Royal Family locally called Jaipur City Palace and Museum. Built in 1700 AD by ‘Raja Jai Singh II’, this Palace is a paradise of Royal heritage history as it houses rare galleries from the British Raj and Rajput Era. Later, take a walking tour through Jaipur’s most colorful bazaars. Visit Jaipur’s most distinctive landmark: The Palace of Winds, ‘Hawa Mahal’ built in a unique pink-colored beehive design that is certainly hard to miss.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.

DAY 6

JAIPUR - DELHI

Travel back to Delhi (5 hrs) for a last overnight near Delhi airport.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.

DAY 7

DELHI DEPARTURE

Transfer to Delhi airport.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.



DISCOVER

India's Golden Triangle 6 Nights Post Tour

We are pleased to present this unique opportunity to combine a fabulous 7-night cruise exploring lower Ganges and a 6-night tour of the Golden Triangle visiting most popular cultural gems in historic Delhi, Agra, the Taj Mahal and the imposing capital of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

This is a private tour.

Rates include:

Six nights accommodation at advertised hotels (or similar), including breakfast, excursion and entrance fees as per itinerary, one domestic flight Kolkata – Delhi 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
- Radisson Blue Agra Compulsory meals: Christmas Eve Gala Dinner (24DEC) USD 68 per person and New Year's Eve Dinner (31DEC) USD 156 per person
- Radisson Blue Agra, peak surcharge 20DEC-05JAN per room per night USD 99
- Taj Jai Mahal Palace, Jaipur Compulsory meals: Christmas Eve Gala Dinner (24DEC) USD 212 per person and New Year's Eve Dinner (31DEC) USD 283 per person
- Taj Jai Mahal Palace Jaipur, peak surcharge 20DEC-05JAN per room per night USD 216
- Oberoi Amarvilas Agra, peak surcharge 20DEC-05JAN per room per night USD 332
- Oberoi Rajvilas Jaipur, peak surcharge 20DEC-05JAN per room per night USD 903

* 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.

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

ARRIVAL NEW DELHI

Transfer to airport for your flight Kolkata - New Delhi, followed by transfer to your hotel. Rest of day at leisure.

Meals: none.

DAY 2

CITY TOUR OF DELHI

Today's tour includes heritage rich Old and New Delhi including a Heritage Walk inside India's largest Mosque 'Jama Masjid' built in 1644 AD showcasing finest Islamic style of architecture. Explore real life of Old Delhi through maze like streets of the iconic Ancient Bazaar 'Chandni Chowk' and Asia's largest Spice Market. Experience colonial-era at 'Lutyens Delhi' including Mahatma Gandhi Museum 'Birla House', Temple 'Bangla Sahib Gurudwara' and volunteer inside its holy Community Kitchen that daily feeds over 10,000 devotees, pilgrims and homeless. Visit Ceremonial Boulevard 'Raj Path' to witness 'Sir Edwin Lutyens' finest works from 1920's British Raj Era including Colonial Government Buildings, India Gate, President and Parliament House from outside. Journey to the City Centre Market 'Connaught Place' named after the 'Duke of Connaught' and surrounds the central park of Delhi.

Transfer back to your hotel.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.

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'. If time permits, visit marble workshops renowned for finest Mughal artwork. Enjoy traditional Indian Chai Tea prepared and served on-spot along with Indian delights.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.

DAY 4

AGRA - NEW DELHI AIRPORT

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.

Transfer back to Delhi airport (4 hrs).

Note: We advise to book flights out of Delhi 17.00 or later for international, or 16.00 or later for domestic.

Meals: breakfast at your hotel.



DISCOVER

Delhi & Taj Mahal 3 Nights Post Tour

Visit historic Delhi influenced by 1850's British Raj and 1630's Mughal Empire. Continue to Agra to marvel at one of the World's greatest monuments: the Taj Mahal.

This is a private tour.

Rates include:

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

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
- Radisson Blue Agra Compulsory meals: Christmas Eve Gala Dinner (24DEC) USD 68 per person and New Year's Eve Dinner (31DEC) USD 156 per person
- Radisson Blue Agra, peak surcharge 20DEC-05JAN per room per night USD 99

- Oberoi Amarvilas Agra, peak surcharge 20DEC-05JAN per room per night USD 332

* 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.

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

KOLKATA - PARO

Transfer to airport for domestic flight Kolkata - Paro.

Welcome to Bhutan! Pick up at Paro international airport. After Lunch in the city, drive on a winding road to Thimphu (one hour), the capital of Bhutan.

Visit Tashichho Dzong, Bhutan's most impressive building. It has traditionally been the seat of the Druk desi or 'Dharma Raja', the head of Bhutan's civil government, an office which has been combined with the kingship since the creation of the monarchy in 1907. It houses the throne room of His Majesty the King of Bhutan and is the summer residence of the venerated monastic community. The current Dzong is the impressive result of a redesign of the original medieval structure sanctioned by the Third King, His Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, when he moved the capital to Thimphu from Punakha.

Meals: lunch depending on arrival time.

DAY 2

THIMPU

After breakfast visit the Memorial Chorten, also known as the Thimphu Chorten, a large Tibetan-style Buddhist Monastery with golden spires and bells. It was built in 1974 to honor the memory of the third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck.

Continue to the Folk Heritage Museum: A three storied traditional building houses this museum. Established in 2001, the museum provides a glimpse into the traditional Bhutanese material culture and way of life. The artifacts remind the visitors about how the rural Bhutanese live today.

Visit National Institute of Zorig Chusum and the National Library of Bhutan which was first established in 1967 under the patronage of HM Queen Ashi Phuntso Choden (1911–2003), with a small collection of precious texts. Learn about how handmade paper from plants at the Junghi Paper Factory. The traditional handmade papers are widely used for religious scripts, packing materials, hand-carry bags, lampshades, envelopes and calendars.

The National Institute of Traditional Medicine strives to merge the allopathic and traditional systems of healing. A large laboratory and a production facility inside the institute monitor and ensure the quality of the components like the plants, minerals, precious metals etc. The institution also produces Bhutanese medicines and they have a plot inside their premise where they grow different herbs and plants.

Visit the Bhutan Postal Museum which was established in November 2015 to celebrate the 60th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The main objective of the museum is to tell the story of Bhutan's progress and development through the lens of the evolution of communications and postal system in the country.

Meals: breakfast at hotel.

DAY 3

THIMPU - PUNAKHA

After breakfast, we take the Dochula pass, located 30 km from the capital, on the way to Punakha which offers a 360-degree of beautiful panoramic view of the Himalaya mountain range. The 108 chortens that adorn the beauty of this place were built by Queen Mother to commemorate the Bhutanese soldiers who were killed when fighting the Indian rebels in 2003. The pass is also popular spiritual place for both locals and tourists because of an important temple that is located on the crest of Dochula pass.

Visit Chimi Lhakhang: located near Lobesa, Punakha stands on a round hillock and is flanked by hundreds of prayer flags. Built in 1499, this monastery is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kinley or 'the Divine Madman'. An accomplished master of Mahamudra Buddhist Tradition, he is also known as the 'Mad Saint' for his unorthodox ways of teaching Buddhism by singing, humor and outrageous behavior.

Continue to Drukpa Kinley, also a cultural icon in Bhutan around whom countless yarns, fictions, stories and legends have been spun. In founding the site, it is said that Lama Kunley subdued a demon of Dochu La with his "magic thunderbolt of wisdom" and trapped it in a rock at the location close to where the chorten now stands.

Meals: Breakfast at hotel and lunch box.

DAY 4

PHUNAKA – PARO

After breakfast, visit the Punakha Dzong, also known as Pungtang Dechen Photrang Dzong (meaning 'the palace of great happiness or bliss'), the administrative centre of Punakha dzongkhag. Constructed in 1673, it is the second oldest and second largest dzong in Bhutan and one of its most

majestic structures. Punakha Dzong was the administrative centre and the seat of the Government of Bhutan until 1955, when the capital was moved to Thimphu.

Drive to Paro then and visit the National Museum and Paro Dzong.

The National Museum of Bhutan is housed inside the revamped circular Ta-dzong building, an ancient watchtower above the Paro Dzong. This unusual round building is said to be in the shape of a conch shell. The original building was constructed in 1656 and then converted into a museum in 1968, housing some of the finest specimens of Bhutanese art, including masterpieces of bronze statues and paintings gathered from different parts of the country.

Some of the handicrafts items cover the history and cultural heritage of more than 1500 years. The National Museum has in its possession over 3,000 works of Bhutanese art, rich holdings of various creative traditions and disciplines that represent a remarkable blend of the past with the present. Paro Dzong is one of the most impressive and well-known dzongs in Bhutan. One of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture, it is also known as the Ringpung Dzong, which means 'fortress on a heap of jewels'. It is the administrative seat of the district of Paro. The dzong was built in the 16th century and was used on numerous occasions to defend the Paro Valley from invasions by Tibet. Unlike most of the other dzongs in Bhutan, it survived the massive 1897 earthquake mostly unscathed, though it was almost burnt to the ground by a fire in 1907. All-important relics were lost to the fire and nothing could be salvaged except for the Thongdrol, a 20x20 meter-wide Thangka. The Thangka is displayed annually during a ceremony called Paro Tshechu. The Dzong was however rebuilt the following year.

Meals: breakfast at hotel and dinner with local family.

DAY 5

PARO TAKTSANG SOFT HIKE

Drive to Satsam Chorten for a soft hike to Taktsang Monastery. The name Taktsang means "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. It is said that in the second half of the 8th century, Guru Padma Sambhava known as the second Buddha in Bhutan, meditated at the spot where the monastery is situated having alighted there on the back of a flying tigress.

The hike takes about 4 hours back and forth. Once you reach the view point of the monastery you have the option to visit the monastery which takes another hour hike.

The first monastery was constructed 1694, but in 1998 a tragic fire destroyed most of the original buildings - which have since been painstakingly restored to their former glory.

Later visit Kyichu Lhakhang, a Buddhist temple in Paro. It is one of the oldest monasteries in the country built in the 7th century by the Tibetan King Songsten Gampo.

After visit a Farm House where your dinner will be arranged with the local family.

Meals: breakfast at hotel.

DAY 6

DEPARTURE

After breakfast transfer Paro International Airport.

Meals: breakfast at hotel.



DISCOVER

Ancient Kingdom Of Bhutan Post Tour 5 Nights

Direct flights between Kolkata and Paro make it now possible to combine a 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:

Five nights accommodation at advertised hotels (or similar), including breakfast and meals as advertised, excursion and entrance fees as per itinerary, one flight Kolkata – Paro including check-in luggage of 20kg, Bhutan visa and permit fees.

Note

- Please advise 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

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

KOLKATA

Following breakfast on board your Pandaw ship, disembark and transfer to the meeting hotel where your river cruise adventure ends. Sbagata and welcome to Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. Experience Indian life at full pace in this colourful and cultural city, perhaps India's most soulful city and certainly the most over looked. During the British Raj, Calcutta as it was known, was the Jewel of the East and the capital until 1911. Discover Tagore, India's

greatest poet, Victorian buildings, an ancient potters village and sample some of the city's best food.

If your room is available, check-in and freshen up before travelling to North Calcutta. Passing several universities and academic institutions stop off at the Marble Palace one of the more unusual Bengali mansions of this area. Built by a wealthy Bengali merchant, Raja Rajendra Mullick, in 1835, still today some family members reside here. With a Neoclassical style, this fascinating and ornate home, houses an eclectic mix of statues, porcelain, Belgian glass chandeliers and English, Dutch and Italian paintings.

Continue on to the home of the multi-talented poet, novelist, musician, painter and playwright, the famous Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. His grandfather Dwarkanath Tagore built this grand mansion in the 18th century, and the museum showcases the life of the family in 19th century, and their involvement in the Bengali Renaissance.

Head into the artisan hub of Kumartuli or the Potters' Market. Wander the winding lanes and watch as idols of Hindu gods and goddesses are created out of river clay, bamboo and straw before being painted and elaborately dressed for the city's numerous festivals.

Return to your hotel where the afternoon is at leisure. You may choose to step out to explore the lively atmosphere of New Market with its many vendors and shops; visit CIMA, the Centre for International Modern Art and admire the latest exhibition or take High Tea at Flurry's, an old Calcutta institution on Park Street.

Meals: none

Accommodation: The Lalit Great Eastern Hotel / Premier Room

DAY 2

KOLKATA

Immerse yourself in city life with an early morning 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.

Follow in the footsteps of the British Raj with a walking tour of colonial Kolkata. See Dalhousie Square, now known as B.B.D. Bagh, in the political heart of the city. Admire the colonial buildings, including 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, with the city's residents dressed as the apostles. In the gardens discover the monument built by Lord Curzon to the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Sample traditional recipes from both sides of the border as well as Anglo-Indian and colonial cuisine with lunch at Oh! Calcutta.

Later, 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. End the day in the Maidan, the city's largest urban park and the "lungs of Kolkata", watching as people come together over a game of cricket.

Meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Accommodation: The Lalit Great Eastern Hotel / Premier Room

DAY 3

KOLKATA

Following a leisurely breakfast, relax before transferring privately to the airport for your onward journey.

Meals: Breakfast



DISCOVER

Kolkata Post 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, departure transfer with assistance, one half day North Kolkata tour, one full day exclusive city tour with English speaking guide and entry fees (Central Kolkata and walking tour), mineral water with transfers and during sightseeing, lunch at Oh Calcutta with soft drinks /

mineral water / tea or coffee

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

DAY 1

ARRIVAL BAGDOGRA

Following breakfast transfer privately to Kolkata Airport for your flight to Bagdaogra. Receive a warm Pandaw welcome on arrival into Bagdogra Airport, and journey by road to your accommodation. Spend the rest of the day easing into your magical surroundings or step outside and stroll the main square and mingle with Nepalese, Bhutanese, Tibetan people and domestic Indian tourists.

Meals: Dinner

Accommodation: The Elgin Darjeeling / Deluxe Room

DAY 2

DARJEELING

Darjeeling's rich tapestry of cultures is yours to explore today. Hop aboard the UNESCO World Heritage-listed small-gauge Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, or "Toy Train", for a breathtaking ride to Ghoom, the world's second highest railway station. The toy train is a marvel of engineering passing through many small towns and is India's oldest mountain railway route. Explore Ghoom Monastery, with its colourful prayer flags fluttering in the wind before returning to town.

Continue to the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, founded in 1954, just after Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first scaled Everest. Visit the Darjeeling Zoo, home of the Snow Leopard Breeding Centre. Then see locals making handicrafts and carpets at the Tibetan Refugee Centre.

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: The Elgin Darjeeling / Deluxe Room

DAY 3

DARJEELING TEA ESTATE

Depart early by road, through lush tea gardens to the sublime Glenburn Tea Estate situated on a hillock above the banks of the River Rungeet. Unwind on the the 1,600-acre private estate before an introduction to the specialised art of growing and crafting Glenburn Tea. Visit the tea fields, interact with the tea pickers and follow the journey of "two leaves and bud" into the tea factory, ending with a tea tasting session to discover the incredible variety of flavours and aromas that come from a single bush through the different seasons. Learn why this region is home to almost a quarter of India's tea production.

Enjoy a lunch at the Bungalow followed by a gentle afternoon hike or some down time on one of the peaceful verandas soaking in the views. In the evening take drinks by the bonfire, followed by a sit-down four course dinner with your hosts and other guests in residence.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Glenburn Tea Estate / Suite

DAY 4

DEPART BAGDOGRA

Following a leisurely breakfast, leave the snow-tipped peaks and terraced tea plantations of Darjeeling behind and transfer privately to Bagdogra Airport for your onward journey.

Meals: Breakfast



DISCOVER

Darjeeling Post Tour 3 Nights

Nestled high in the Himalayas in the north of West Bengal, Darjeeling, the crown jewel of British colonial hill stations is rightly known as the "Queen of Hills". Spend time soaking in the views and learn the secrets to producing that famous cup of tea.

Rates include:

Accommodation on Twin Sharing, 2 nights accommodation in Darjeeling (New Elgin / Deluxe Room) on MAP (Room with breakfast and dinner), 1 night at Glenburn Tea Estate (Suite) on AP (Room with breakfast, lunch and dinner), one way transfer from Kolkata Airport to Kolkata Hotel, one way flight from Kolkata to Bagdogra with 20kgs of checked luggage, arrival and departure transfers from Bagdogra Airport and local sightseeing as per itinerary by exclusive Innova / Scorpio / Xylo, English speaking escort at Darjeeling on Day 1 & Day 2, mineral water throughout tour, all entry fees as per itinerary, Toy Train ride tickets (subject to availability at the time of booking), all parking & porter charges.

Note

- Additional nights can be added at The Glenburn Estate

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](#)