



A tea picker in Assam

Assam and Brahmaputra River Cruise

22 March – 1 April 2018

With Kohima Extension

22 March – 4 April 2018



Jon Baines
tours



Brahmaputra River at sunset

This journey along the Brahmaputra takes you through Assam, the biggest of India's stunning and anthropologically rich Northeast States. Lying along the length of the Brahmaputra Valley, Assam (also known as Ahom, from the dynasty that gave the region its name) is notable for its wildlife, its distinctive cuisine, a rich artistic heritage with its own dance forms and a plethora of magnificent Hindu temples. Journey along the Brahmaputra River on your own private boat, flanked by gold-green rice fields and tea estates on either side, the blue mountains of Arunachal in the north and the rugged, lush highlands of Meghalaya and Nagaland to the south. After the tour there is the option to continue to Kohima in Nagaland and learn more about its tribal cultures and the Battle of Kohima during WW2. Throughout the cruise, John and Susi Richardson will give talks relating to the history of the region.

Arrive in Delhi and join the connecting flight to Guwahati in the afternoon. Transfer to the hotel and settle in before dinner.

Next morning take a sightseeing tour of Guwahati, visiting the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery, Assam State Museum and the most famous tantric temple

in Assam, the 17th century Kamakhya Temple. Dedicated to the Goddess Durga, this temple is a popular pilgrimage site. In the afternoon continue to the village of Sualkuchi, renowned for its silk production and traditional textiles.

The following morning set out for Steamer Ghat to board your river cruise. Stop for lunch at the MISA Polo Club, the former home of a planter, and arrive at Steamer Ghat to board the ABN Charaidew in the afternoon, meet the crew and have a background briefing.

Rise very early next day to drive to Kaziranga National Park's Central Range for a game drive. One of the last pristine wilderness areas in



The tantric temple at Kamakhya



Rhinos in Kaziranga National Park (top);
Visit Umananda Temple in Vishnath (above)

eastern India, it is inhabited by the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses, as well as many mammals, including tigers, elephants, panthers and bears, and thousands of birds. Return to the boat for breakfast and cruise upstream with the Kaziranga National Park on the right bank. Disembark at Vishnath to see its temples, including the Ahom period Shiva temple, before returning to cruise upstream, keeping an eye open for wild elephants on shore.

Spend the next few days at a leisurely pace onboard as you cruise upstream, looking out for wildlife and stopping to explore remote riverside villages. Watch out for the Gangetic dolphin (the Ganges river dolphin), which can be seen in this area. Arrive and spend the night at Dhansiri Mukh.

The following morning take a jeep into Kaziranga's little-visited Eastern Range, where you may see rhinos and the rare Bengal Florican,

a species of bustard. Return to the boat in the afternoon and continue your cruise.

Next day stop to explore a traditional village, still largely built of wood and bamboo, and gain insight into traditional tribal life on the riverbanks.

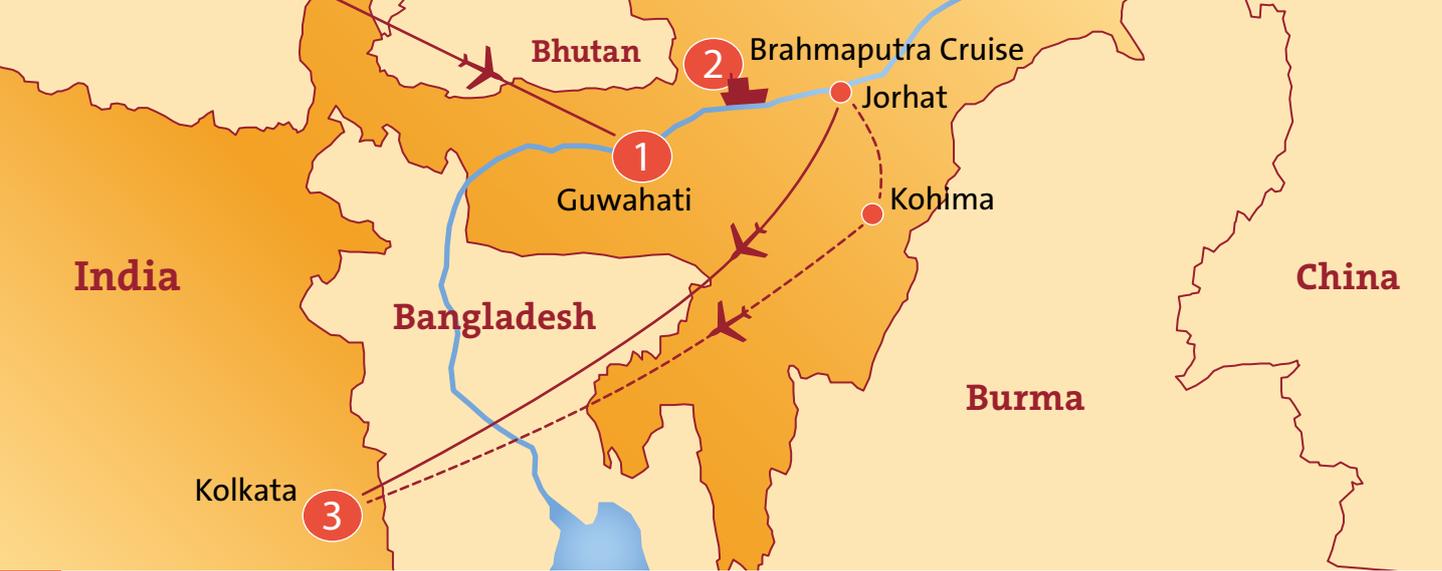
The following day visit Majuli Island, reputedly the largest river island in the world. The focus point of a Neo-Vaishnava sect, a Hindu reform movement dating to the 15th century, the town is remarkable for its music, dance and drama. Visit two monasteries to explore this rich culture, hearing superb music and chanting and watching an authentic dance and drum performance. Afterwards cruise to Neamati Ghat on the opposite bank.

Visit the Horu Charai tea estate next morning and see how Assam's famous tea is produced before driving to Sibsagar, the one-time capital of the kings of Assam. These kings were Shan by origin but converted to Hinduism and their resulting cultural and architectural legacy is a distinctive mix of Indian and South East Asian influences. Return to the ship late in the afternoon.

Disembark the next day and transfer by road to the airport for your connecting flight to Kolkata, or take the Kohima extension (see next page). Transfer to the Oberoi Kolkata for your final night and dinner before departing for the airport the following day.



A river crossing



Kohima Extension

Disembark after breakfast and drive to Kohima, the hilly capital of Nagaland. One of the most remote areas of India, with a vivid culture encompassing longhouses and headhunters as well as Shan influences from its position bordering Burma. It is also breathtakingly beautiful with its hills and valleys. It is also the site of The Battle of Kohima, which was the turning point of the Japanese offensive into India against the combined British and Indian forces during the Second World War. Check into your hotel before heading out to explore the hill station.

Next day explore the history of Kohima, starting with the World War II cemetery and the various sites associated with the Second World War - Cameron Highlander, Kuki Piquet, Norfolk Memorial, and the Scottish Memorial. After lunch visit Aradura Spur and onto the District Museum to learn more about the rich culture of Nagaland. In the evening explore the fascinating local markets where you can buy delicacies ranging from clothes and jewellery to *borol* (live hornet grubs), tadpoles, bullfrogs, silkworms, fiery ghost chili peppers, *jabrang* (hill peppercorns), fermented soybeans and a colourful sprawl of vegetables.

Next day visit Khonoma village, famed for its forests and agriculture and home of the Angami tribe, who resisted the British invasion with such courage and determination over many years.

See the Khonoma Gate, which tells the story of this resistance, and explore the village. In the afternoon drive out to see the mithun, local wild buffalo that are traditionally much prized in Nagaland.

The next morning transfer to the airport for your flight to Kolkata and check into the Oberoi Hotel for your final night. Depart Kolkata the following morning.



Kohima Gate (top); Selling ghost chillies at Kohima market (above)

Itinerary 22 March – 1 April 2018

B = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

2 nights Guwahati (Assam) – 7 nights Brahmaputra Cruise – 1 night Kolkata
(Extension: 3 nights Kohima – 1 night Kolkata)

22 Mar (Thur) Delhi / Guwahati **D**
Am Arrive Delhi
Pm Depart Delhi for Guwahati and transfer to the Vivanta by Taj Hotel

23 Mar (Fri) Guwahati **B L D**
Am Sightseeing tour of Guwahati including visit to the CWGC Cemetery, Assam State Museum and Kamakhya Temple
Pm Drive to a local village of Sualkuchi, known for its silk production and traditional textiles

24 Mar (Sat) Guwahati / ABN Charaidew **B L D**
Am Drive to join cruise
Pm Lunch at the MISA Polo Club, a former planters home. Arrive at Steamer Ghat and board the ABN Charaidew
Eve Background briefing and meet the crew

25 Mar (Sun) Cruise the Brahmaputra **B L D**
Am Disembark pre-dawn and drive to Kaziranga National Park's Central Range for a game drive. Return to breakfast on board and cruise upstream
Pm Disembark at Vishnath to explore and see temples including the Ahom-period Shiva

26 Mar (Mon) Cruise the Brahmaputra **B L D**
Am Cruise along the river, with a good chance of spotting Gangetic dolphin
Eve Arrive at peaceful Dhansiri Mukh

27 Mar (Tues) Cruise the Brahmaputra **B L D**
Am Take a jeep safari in Kaziranga's little-visited Eastern Range to spot rhinos and perhaps the rare Bengal Florican
Pm Return to the boat

28 Mar (Wed) Cruise the Brahmaputra **B L D**
Am Cruise upstream. Disembark to explore a traditional rural village

29 Mar (Thur) Cruise the Brahmaputra **B L D**
Am Visit Majuli Island, possessing unique Hindu monasteries famed for their dance-drama performances. Visit a monastery at Auniati with an eclectic museum and attend a dance performance at Kamalbari monastery. Cruise to Neamati Ghat on opposite bank

30 Mar (Fri) Cruise the Brahmaputra **B L D**
Am Visit Horu Charai tea estate. Drive to Sibsagar, the one-time capital of the kings of Assam
Pm Return to the ship

31 Mar (Sat) ABN Charaidew / Jorhat / Kolkata **B L D**
Am Drive to Jorhat airport for flight to Kolkata OR take Kohima extension (see below)
Pm Transfer to the Oberoi Kolkata

1 Apr (Sun) Kolkata **B**
Am Depart for airport (transfer included)

Extension in Kohima

31 Mar (Sat) Neamati Ghat / Kohima **B L D**
Am Drive to Kohima (approx. 6 hours)
Pm Check into hotel and explore the hill station

1 Apr (Sun) Kohima **B L D**
Am Visit the World War II cemetery and other sites associated with the Second World War - Cameron Highlander, Kuki Piquet, Norfolk Memorial and the Scottish Memorial
Pm Lunch at the lodge. Visit Aradura Spur, the District Museum and the Cathedral
Eve Explore the local markets

2 Apr (Mon) Kohima / Khonoma village **B L D**
Am Drive to Khonoma village of the Angami tribe. See the Khonoma Gate and explore the village
Pm Drive to see *mithun* (wild buffalo) grazing in the meadows. Return to Kohima

3 Apr (Tues) Kohima / Kolkata **B L D**
Am Drive to airport for flight to Kolkata
Pm Transfer to the Oberoi and dinner

4 Apr (Wed) Kolkata **B**
Am Depart for airport (transfer included)

NB All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions. This itinerary is ground only and departure and arrival dates may differ.



Hotels

Claridges (Delhi)

There is the option to spend a night or two at Claridges in Delhi before the tour starts (not included in the tour price – room price is US \$299 including breakfast). This comfortable 5-star hotel has an excellent location in New Delhi.

Vivanta by Taj Hotel (Guwahati)

A very comfortable 5-star hotel with every amenity, including an excellent restaurant, a lovely pool and spa, all set within spacious green grounds in a central city location.

Cruise on the ABN Charaidew

A grand old lady that has been fully refurbished, the 12-cabin ABN Charaidew is full of charm, her polished brass engine room telegraph and enormous wheel bearing witness to her heritage. All cabin accommodation is on the upper deck, as is a bar and saloon opening onto a front deck. A dining room with full length opening glass doors on each side is on the lower deck, while a large top sundeck offers additional comfortable open-air seating in shade or sun. Local handloom fabrics specially woven for the fleet and comfortable cane sofas and chairs contribute to the attractive decor.

Oberoi Grand (Kolkata)

Fondly known as the Grand Dame of Kolkata, the luxury Oberoi Grand is situated in a prime location, near the central business district, bustling markets and cultural landmarks. Dating back to the late 1880s, The Oberoi Grand was frequented by the country's leading figures during colonial times and even today hosts grand functions for Heads of State in the city's largest pillarless Grand Ballroom.

Hotel Vivor (Kohima extension)

One of the best hotels in Kohima, the Hotel Vivor offers a very warm welcome and a clean, comfortable stay with good food. It is situated a little distance away from the centre amidst the mountains.

ABN Charaidew (top); Charaidew side deck; Claridges lobby, Delhi; The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata (above)



Angami children in traditional dress in Kohima

Tour Leaders

Professor John Richardson is Emeritus Defence Professor of Primary Care and General Practice. He has led study tours worldwide and was a medical escort to parties of veterans on journeys of remembrance for the Royal British Legion. He has also run many history of medicine battlefield tours. He has visited 80 countries and worked in 41 of them as a doctor. John has previously led tours for Jon Baines to China, Central Asia, India, Turkey, Central America, Ecuador and the Galapagos, Namibia, Ethiopia, Indo-China and Burma. He has also given lectures and led on cruises.

Susi Richardson has travelled widely across the world either as an expedition nurse, or as a nurse on war grave pilgrimages for the Royal British Legion, co-tour leader for Jon Baines Tours, or accompanying her husband on his British Army medical officer postings. Five generations of her Shakespear family served in India on her grandmother's side, and three generations of Cooke family on her grandfather's side, covering almost continuously two hundred years of the history of British India. Susi has led a number of tours to India, in Vietnam and on cruises.

“John and Susi were outstanding.”

David Forsyth, A Cruise along the Hooghly: Kolkata and Bengal, 2017

Ground only cost of the tour is USD \$5,642 per person sharing

The cost includes:

- UK tour leaders (Prof John and Susi Richardson)
- Comprehensive briefing notes
- Arrival and departure airport transfers
- 3 nights' accommodation on sharing basis with private facilities in first class hotels
- Domestic flights from Delhi to Guwahati and from Jorhat to Kolkata*
- 7 nights' accommodation on sharing basis on the cruise ship

Single room supplement: USD \$1,138

- All meals as per the itinerary
- Water
- All transport and transfers
- A full programme of visits as per the itinerary
- Admission fees and tips

*** Please note if booking flights through Jon Baines Tours we can book these flights as part of the UK – India flight package on Jet Airlines from London Heathrow.**

The cost excludes:

- Meals not mentioned
- Indian visa
- Alcoholic drinks and drinks from the bar on the cruise
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, portorage
- International flights**

**** We can organise flights if required; please contact the London or Melbourne offices for details.**

The extension to Kohima costs USD \$935 per person sharing and includes:

- UK tour leaders (Prof John and Susi Richardson)
- Comprehensive briefing notes
- 3 nights' accommodation in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities in the best available local accommodation (medium grade)

Single room supplement: USD \$234

- Meals as per the itinerary
- Water
- All transport and transfers within India
- A full programme of visits as per the itinerary
- Admission fees and tips

The cost excludes:

Meals not mentioned, alcoholic drinks, personal items such as laundry and portorage

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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Decked out for a honeymoon on the Brahmaputra; A village back road;
A frog marriage in Sivasagar, Assam; A local harvest (above)



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tours

