EXPLORING KOLKATA, ASSAM & NAGALAND
INCLUDING THE HORNBILL FESTIVAL

NOVEMBER 25–DECEMBER 9, 2018

Join us on an exploration, like no other, to the far eastern states of India, where very few foreign travelers venture. The infrastructure is still growing in this remote area, but rest assured, you will be well cared for in our luxury version of this explorer’s dream. Beginning in the state of Assam, board a deluxe cruising vessel for a journey on one of India’s great rivers, the Brahmaputra. Sail under the shadow of the tall Himalayan mountain range and witness life on the passing river banks. It is a natural history paradise with over 850 species of birds; fresh water dolphins; and four national parks. Stop in remote villages, see the lush Assam tea plantations, and stop for a safari in Kaziranga National Park, with its prized Greater One-Horned Indian Rhinoceros.

The journey then continues to Nagaland in the “wild east.” Its very name emits a sense of otherworldly exploration. This area is not only home to an amazing cache of wildlife and a mixture of rich landscapes, but it is home to 16 tribes, all drawing upon their deep rooted histories, which is what brings us here, to participate in the Hornbill Festival. Held annually, this festival is a way for the people of this region to conserve and sustain their cultural traditions, in a culmination of dance, food, music, celebration and competition.

End in the famed city of Kolkata (Calcutta). Established as the first British capital of the subcontinent, Kolkata is now considered by many to house the “soul” of India and is certainly the intellectual and artistic center of this vast country. Explore along the banks of the Hooghly River and around the city’s shops and temples. Witness the influences of many European powers while diving deep in Bengali culture, cuisine and understanding what has shaped this area’s current and unique personality and how it has shaped India itself.

GROUP SIZE: 12 to 18 guests

PRICING: $13,995 per person double occupancy / $5,450 single supplement

STUDY LEADER: To be announced
SCHEDULE BY DAY
B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner, R=Reception

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25
DEPART USA FOR INDIA
Depart your home city on independent flights to Kolkata, India.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26
KOLKATA
Upon arrival in Kolkata you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel, conveniently located near the airport.
Overnight: Swissotel Kolkata (meals aloft)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27
KOLKATA / GUWAHATI / BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER CRUISE
This morning transfer to the airport for your flight to Guwahati (Jet Airways 9W 7048 departing 10:30, arriving 11:40).
From Guwahati it is about a 4-hour drive to Silghat, where your riverboat awaits. The MV Mahabaahu, the newest boat to ply the mighty Brahmaputra River, features 23 comfortable cabins and service you’d expect from the world’s great luxury hotels.
After settling in to your cabin, enjoy a cultural performance followed by a welcome dinner.
Overnight on the MV Mahabaahu (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28
BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER CRUISE
Rise early and enjoy a hot cup of tea and some snacks before driving to Kaziranga National Park.
The most prized inhabitant of Kaziranga is the Greater One-Horned Indian Rhinoceros, but the park is home to as many as 180 different mammals including wild elephants, tiger, deer, Asiatic wild buffalo, and a rich variety of birds. Upon reaching the Kohora Mihimukh range of the national park, embark on an elephant-backed safari on your way to breakfast at a resort in the park.
Continue to Bagori in the Western Range of Kaziranga and set off in open top jeeps for more wildlife viewing.
Return to the boat for a leisurely lunch and a relaxed afternoon followed by a discussion about Assam’s silk history.
Early in the evening visit Bishwanath Ghat and the temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. Walk through the village, which specializes in textiles, before returning to the boat for dinner.
Overnight: MV Mahabaahu (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29
BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER CRUISE
Take an early morning boat safari near the Eastern Range of Kaziranga followed by a discussion on the cultures that have existed along the shores of the Brahmaputra for millennia.
Proceed for another safari using the boat’s smaller tenders. Look for turtles, water lizards, otters, elephants, wild buffalo, rhinos, darters, herons, pied kingfishers, white throated kingfishers, serpent eagles, and much more.
Return to the boat for lunch followed by a cooking demonstration and lecture on ‘Majuli,’ the seat of Vaishnav culture and the largest river island in the world, which you will explore tomorrow.
In the evening enjoy a bonfire on a deserted, river island followed by a sumptuous dinner.
Overnight: MV Mahabaahu (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30
BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER CRUISE
This morning cruise toward Mishing Village and further on to Majuli Island, the cultural capital of Assamese civilization. This area is
the seat of the unique Vaishnav culture established around the 15th century by the revered Assamese saint Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciple Madhavdeva. Many satras, or monasteries, constructed by the saint still survive and represent the colorful Assamese culture.

Set off in the tenders to the riverside village of Mishing where the residents live in houses with raised platforms (called chang ghars). All Mishing women are expert weavers and their creations are sought after all over India.

Return to the boat for lunch followed by a discussion on Sibsagar and the Ahom civilization.

This afternoon visit one of the island’s monasteries for a cultural performance by Satriya singers and dancers. Then continue to Kamalabari Satra to witness Vaishnavite priests dancing to the rhythm of cymbals, drums, and chanting.

Enjoy a traditional Assamese dinner onboard this evening.

Overnight: MV Mahabaahu (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1
BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER CRUISE

After an early breakfast, embark on an excursion to Sibsagar, the ancient city and capital of the Tai-speaking Ahoms, who arrived in the 13th Century and are of Tibeto-Burman origin. Sibsagar literally translates into 'The Ocean of Lord Shiva,' as it is built around a huge, man-made water tank ordered by Ahom Queen. Visit the Shiva Dol, constructed in the year 1734, and believed to be one of the tallest Shiva temples in India.

Also visit Talatal or Karem Ghar, the palace of the Ahom kings, and Rang Ghar, a place of entertainment and meetings for the Ahom royals and their guests. Continue to one of Assam’s famous tea estates for a visit with a family who has been involved in the tea business for over a century.

Return to the boat by sunset and enjoy a special end-of-cruise dinner.

Overnight: MV Mahabaahu (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2
DISEMBARK/ DIMAPUR

This morning say goodbye to the boat’s crew after breakfast and depart on the full-day’s drive to Dimapur in Nagaland.

After settling in to your hotel, take a tour of this seldom-visited city, exploring its Jain temple and local bazaars.

Overnight: Niathu Resort (B, L, D)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 3
DIMAPUR / KOHIMA — HORNBILL FESTIVAL

This morning depart Dimapur on the short drive to Kohima, your home for the next three nights as you partake in the amazing Hornbill Festival.

Your accommodations are at The Ultimate Traveling Camp (TUTC) where you will have individually-designed, safari-style luxury tents. All tents have en suite bathrooms, crisp linen, and the services of a private butler.

This evening enjoy drinks around the campfire followed by dinner surrounded by nature.

Overnight at TUTC Camp (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4
KOHIMA—HORNBILL FESTIVAL

After breakfast depart on the short drive to the village of Kisama for the spectacular Hornbill Festival.

Revel in a marvelous riot of color as the 16 tribes of the region show off the rich fare of diverse cultures and traditional arts that is Nagaland. Witness the attire, folk music and dance forms, exquisite handicraft and handloom, and other intricacies of the varied tribes and sub-tribes of the state.

Having built up an appetite, return to camp for a sumptuous lunch after which you can choose to relax in the serene surroundings.

In the evening you have the option of returning to the festivities of the Hornbill festival. Get
into the spirit of the festival as you enjoy the music of one of the many talented Naga rock bands or scour the night bazaar for local artifacts and relish some Naga delicacies.

Overnight at TUTC Camp (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5
KOHIMA—HORNBILL FESTIVAL

After breakfast this morning return to the Hornbill festival. Enjoy the festivities with the tribes as they enthral with their distinct costumes and perform traditional Naga dances and ceremonies.

Following lunch explore the charming village of Kigwema, a quaint old village of the Angami tribe. Walk through the lanes of the village, seeing the traditional houses with their impressive wooden pillars, arriving at a local house to experience the Angami way of life over a cup of traditional tea.

At dinner sit back and reflect on the Naga way of life whilst the chef indulges you with an exquisite farewell dinner.

Later in the evening you have the option to enjoy the cultural festivities in Kohima for the last time.

Overnight at TUTC Camp (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6
KOHIMA / DIMAPUR / KOLKATA

Following breakfast transfer back to Dimapur for your afternoon flight back to Kolkata. (Air India Limited AI 710 departing 13:20, arriving 14:35).

Upon arrival in Kolkata you will be met at the airport and transferred to your centrally-located, luxury hotel for check-in and a much deserved night’s rest.

Known as the "Grande Dame" of Kolkata, your hotel has presided over the neighborhood of Chowringhee for over 125 years and is considered a colonial-era gem.

Overnight: Oberoi Grand Kolkata (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7
KOLKATA

In the morning begin your exploration of this beautiful and vibrant city. There is no better time to experience this city as it is still waking up, and the residents are making their way to the banks of the great River Hooghly for their morning rituals.

It was here, on the banks of this grand river, where the powers of Europe fought for control of India. Today’s tour traces the path of a journey that literally helped create and define the British Raj. Learn about this city’s history dating back to the time of the infamous Black Hole, as it transformed itself into the ‘City of Palaces’ and up to its place now as one of the great cultural and intellectual capitals of the world.

Visit the famous Writers’ Building, the former Headquarters of the infamous East India Company, as well as the magnificent Governor’s House, and the almost forgotten Charnock Mausoleum. Here lay the administrative, judicial, and political heart of an Empire that stretched from Aden to Burma.

Continue to the Park Street Cemetery and Victoria Memorial—two great institutions left behind by the British—before breaking for a lunch featuring Bengali specialties.

In the afternoon board a private launch for a leisurely cruise along the River Hoogly. During the cruise you will discover a hitherto unseen side of Kolkata, with a ring-side seat of the myriad happenings along the river banks and ghats. This was the same view that greeted many Victorian adventurers.

The remainder of the evening, including dinner, is at your leisure.

Overnight: Oberoi Grand Kolkata (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8
KOLKATA

This morning travel to North Kolkata or "The Black Town", where a parallel culture heavily influenced by the Europeans, flourished among the pioneering families of Bengal. The Jain temple complex is unique with its
shimmering mirrors, ceramic tiles, and chandeliers brought to India by rich merchants from Persia, Japan, and Europe.

Visit the Marble Palace, one of the most bizarre Bengali mansions in the area. Built in 1835 by Raja Rajendra Mullick, a wealthy Bengali merchant with a passion for art collecting, it houses a kitschy collection of paintings, marble sculptures, and Belgian glass. The grounds were one of India's first zoos and are still home to peacocks, hornbills, pelicans, and several species of deer.

From the extravagance of the Marble Palace, continue into the intellectual heart of the Bengali Quarter and bastion of Bengali culture—the home of Rabindranath Tagore, the multitalented poet, novelist, musician, painter, playwright, and Nobel Laureate of India. Tagore’s grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, built this grand mansion in the 18th century and the museum showcases the life of the family and their involvement in the Brahmo Samaj, or Bengali resistance, to the British and ultimately the independence of India.

After lunch visit Kumartuli or the Potters’ Market, where giant lifelike religious idols are created out of river clay, bamboo, and straw for the city’s numerous festivals.

Returning to the city visit Mother (now Saint) Theresa’s home and the center for her Missionaries of Charity. Her modest tomb and the Spartan room where she lived and died embodies her life’s work, with its simplicity and dedication to only helping the poor and needy.

End the afternoon with tea at Flury’s Tea Room, an old Calcutta institution on Park Street where all the culinary action of the city resides, close to the Oxford Bookshop through which you can browse before returning to the hotel.

There will be time to freshen up before your farewell dinner at the hotel.

Overnight at the Oberoi Grand Kolkata (B, L)