Assam Despatch 2: Rhinos & More

BRAHMAPUTRA UPSTREAM | 7 NIGHTS/8 DAYS |GUWAHATI TO KAZIRANGA

DAY 1
Meet at Guwahati airport and transfer to our cruise at Pandu port. Enjoy lunch while cruising downstream to Sualkuchi. An afternoon walk through Sualkuchi, a bustling little town that is the center of Assamese silk production, offers a chance to visit weaving workshops. Witness the whole process of silk manufacture, from cocoon and spinning, then dyeing to hand-weaving into exquisite mekhela chadars (a two-piece sari, the traditional attire of an Assamese woman). We then sail up to dock close to the great Saraighat bridge.

DAY 2
This morning you'll drive up Nilachal Hill to the Kamakhya temple. This ancient Hindu temple is dedicated to the Mother Goddess and is known for its unique architecture and cultural significance. Join us for a leisurely stroll around the temple's exteriors and soak in the rich history and spirituality that define this sacred place before embarking on your cruise vessel and sail past Kurua on the north bank

DAY 3
Morning cruise and visit to a riverside village with its lush green fields of vegetables. The day is spent mostly cruising upstream and presents an opportunity to catch up on reading, writing about your experiences so far, or simply watching life unfold on the riverbanks and jungle-covered hills that rise on either side. Enjoy an Indian cooking demonstration onboard.

DAY 4
This morning you cruise on to reach Tezpur where, after lunch, you'll visit the 6th century Da Parbatia temple ruins with its beautifully carved portal. Later, explore the town by cycle rickshaw, stopping at Cole Park with its mediaeval stone carvings saved from sites all over the region. Enjoy free time in the local market. The ship will be waiting at the town's waterfront for you to re-board.

DAY 5
After an early breakfast, drive for around two hours to the Nameri National Park at the foot of the blue hills of Arunachal Pradesh, the old North East Frontier Agency. Here, you take a float trip of around two hours down the Jia-Bhoreli River through the park. There are excellent bird-watching opportunities here (look out for the great Hornbills) and, perhaps, the chance of sighting wild elephants. After lunch, take a village walk before returning to the ship. Continue upstream, passing below a seemingly endless bridge across the vast width of the riverbed, to moor at Silghat.

DAY 6
Today, you drive to Kaziranga's Central Range for a morning jeep safari. Enjoy lunch at Diphlu River Lodge before taking another jeep safari in the little visited Burapahar Range before returning to the boat.

Covering an area of approximately 430 sq kms, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kaziranga National Park is home to the world's largest population of the Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros as well as the Indian Wild Water Buffalo. It has also earned the distinction of having the highest density of Royal Bengal Tigers (one every five sq. km.), making this park an incredibly rich biodiversity hotspot. With its marshy swamps and thickets of elephant grass, the park supports large populations of Indian elephants, Indian bison, swamp deer, and Capped Langurs.

Kaziranga National Park frequently draws comparisons to the Serengeti in Africa due to the park's abundance of wildlife and birds and is considered a birding paradise. Bird species found here include the Oriental Honey Buzzard, Black-shouldered Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Himalayan Griffon and many more.

DAY 7
This morning, go on a visit to a local tea garden and the weekly market of Uloni. In the afternoon, drive to Kaziranga's Western range (Bagori Range) for a jeep safari through the lush, biodiverse landscapes of the park.

DAY 8
This morning you bid farewell to the crew and new friends as you set off for the 4-hour drive to Guwahati airport. Alternatively, we can arrange a 40-minute transfer to Tezpur airport or a 2 ½ hour transfer to Jorhat airport.

This itinerary, including the cruise and approximate driving durations, is subject to river and weather conditions. Kaziranga National Park comprises low-lying grassland, which may not be possible to visit when the river is at or near flood level.